



A cozy yet open, spacious area is flooded by natural light coming from many windows and a series of skylight-like windows. A raised floor defines the master bed loft area above.

MITRA DESIGNS

INSPIRING AND REJUVENATING

PHOTOS BY SUSAN TEARE



Mitra's design for the exterior is a blend of modern design with subtle modern Asian influences. The wooden trellis and the two large boulders positioned at the entryway set a welcoming and artful architectural tone before you enter the house.

Despite her 25 years in the business, Mitra Samimi-Urich still gets excited when she begins a new design project. Getting to know her clients—who they are and what excites them—enlivens her. “I am fascinated by the diversity of people’s lifestyles and, at the same time, the common thread that unifies us all as human beings—the desire and urge in all of us to be inspired and to nourish ourselves both physically and spiritually,” she says. “I love developing design concepts that inspire and rejuvenate.”

Mitra’s interest in design began as child, when she first saw the architectural drawings for the house her parents were building. “They were full of details . . . all drawn freehand. I was fascinated by them!” she says. “It was right there and then that I developed a deep respect for the art of architecture and building design.”

THE CLIENT AS DIRECTOR

Before creating her own firm, Mitra Designs, Mitra worked at several architectural design firms, as well as design-build agencies, and she credits that experience for her ability to seamlessly meld the planning and construction aspects of her projects. She knows what it takes to successfully bring a design to life, and she has the skills required for working effectively with builders who share her vision.

But collaborating with clients remains her favorite part of the process. Also being an artist, Mitra likens her role to that of a set designer, with the client being the director. “I read the script and listen to the director—my client—very carefully, so I can understand the narrative needs of the storyline and main characters. Then I can design the stage setting, which is my client’s physical living environment, to best reflect his or her needs.”



To keep the living area uncluttered, a small kitchenette area was designed with concealed maple storage. Mid-century furnishings were selected for simplicity, elegance, and function.

Below: A loft was designed with a cathedral ceiling and large windows on all sides to further suggest the feeling of a treehouse. Two beds with backrests and built-in cabinets function both for sleeping and as an area for play.



CREATING A MODERN RETREAT IN VERMONT'S WOODS

A recent project allowed Mitra to take advantage of Vermont's natural beauty while providing a retreat from the hustle and bustle of the client's urban life. The original building began as an artist's studio, and though the client wished for

a simple design, the existing space was a bit too Spartan with just a workroom, a composting toilet, and a washbasin.

Mitra created a design that reflects the natural world just outside the guesthouse's numerous windows, with a modern style that features a subtle Asian influence reflecting the location of the client's full-

time home. The house "floats," much like a treehouse, over the rocky ledges that cover the immediate property. Views of Vermont farmland and treetops pour in from every direction. Mitra maintained the architectural consistency of her design throughout every space, from the exterior to the interior planning concepts, through the furniture



Thick concrete shelves echo the texture of the stone ledges outside. A vertical window in the shower provides a view outside, emphasizing the feeling of showering under a waterfall with river pebbles beneath your feet.

custom-built beds provide additional sleeping space as well as a play area for children. The treetops just outside the windows and the white and soft-blue color scheme continue the treehouse feel of the home.

The new bathroom welcomes the outdoors in with its stone-pebble floor bringing to mind a riverbed, thick concrete shelves whose texture resembles the property's rocky outcrops, and golden glass panels that reflect warmth, much like the summer sun. Mitra included a long vertical window strategically positioned in the shower to provide a glimpse of the ledges outside, which "further emphasizes the feeling of showering under a waterfall as you feel the stone beneath your feet."

In selecting the furnishings, color scheme, and artwork for the space, Mitra stayed with the functional, the comfortable, the simple, and the modern. Several pieces, including the master bed, loft beds, and sofa, contain concealed storage to keep clutter to a minimum. A mid-century armchair and ottoman soften the harder lines of the modern design.

The tone of the natural wood in the furniture and the posts and beams of the loft evoke a warm feeling, one that, according to Mitra, "will be much appreciated in cold Vermont winters." The client asked Brooklyn-based photographer and filmmaker Sierra Urich, who is also Mitra's daughter, to capture natural elements from the property to put the final touches on bringing the outside world into their retreat.

RENOVATING A HISTORIC VERMONT FARMHOUSE

Mitra switched gears from the modern design of the guesthouse to a more traditional feel for the renovation of an 1820 brick Georgian farmhouse. The homeowners

choices, the color schemes, and the artwork.

A wooden trellis over the entrance to the house greets visitors, creating a natural transition from the outside world to the interior. The stone patio and large boulders arranged like sculpture echo this feeling.

The interior of the house is comprised of a cozy yet spacious area flooded by natural light. The full kitchen is in the main house nearby, so the food-prep needs of the guesthouse are basic. The open living space contains a kitchenette featuring custom maple cabinets that conceal storage space and a small under-the-counter refrigerator, keeping the lines of the space clean and uncluttered. The solid stone countertop and stone vessel sink reflect the

rocky ledge on which the house is perched.

To provide more room for the client's family, Mitra expanded the building's original footprint. In the lower part of the addition, the master bedroom sits atop a raised floor, which not only delineates the sleeping area but also provides space for new ductwork and insulation. A custom-built maple queen-sized bed features a comfortable backrest to allow the family to linger in repose and enjoy the views through the enormous windows that wrap the space.

A solid ladder leads from the foot of the master bed to the loft space above. A glass railing not only keeps people in the loft from falling but also allows the sunlight to shine through to the living space below. Two



From top: To complement and preserve the architectural integrity of this house, a new sunroom was created with a new porch. Custom cabinets were painted in creamy white and yellow and distressed to blend with the farm kitchen. A master bedroom was made by opening two existing bedrooms. The original stairs were sanded, repaired, refinished, and repainted. Right: All existing historic brick work was refurbished and saved. Deteriorating cornice boards were replaced to match the originals, and shutters were repaired and reinstalled.



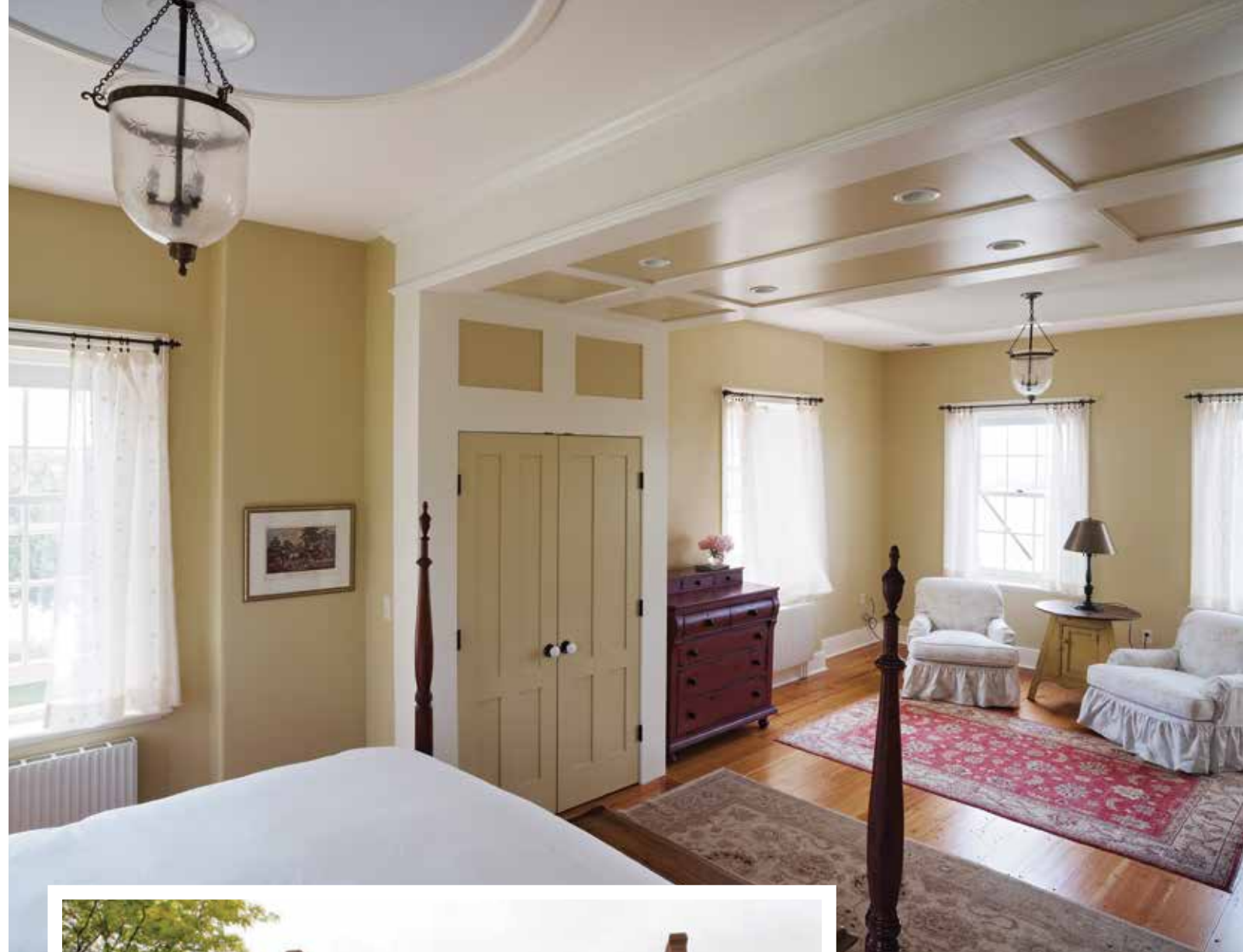
wanted to rework this historic home to lighten its dark interior, improve the flow of the living space, and take advantage of spectacular mountain and meadow views.

Mitra started by raising the low ceilings and adding larger, energy-efficient windows, which brought in more sunlight and created the feel of a larger space. To keep the farmhouse vibe, she left in place the brick that was discovered under plaster and repurposed wood in the kitchen, and she added Vermont slate and other salvaged

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farmhouse materials for the breakfast bar.

Throughout the house, Mitra refurbished existing built-ins to enhance the home's historic details. The addition of new, period light fixtures and ceiling panels also help to maintain the house's original style. Moving

walls and adding interior French doors opened up cramped, cut-up spaces and allowed the clients to take advantage of the views. A new sunroom was designed to look like part of the original porch, with wall-to-wall windows bringing

ample light into the home.

Mitra also updated the interior color scheme. Keeping in mind how color is affected by both natural and artificial lighting, she created a soft, relaxing palette, with each room having its own character. Trims and ceilings are mostly off-white, and the wall colors gently evolve from room to room in shades of green, blue, yellow, and gold.

Mitra welcomes the change in styles from client to client. When asked to describe her favorite design style, she explains that it shifts from project to project. "The space not only needs to address my clients' architectural and interior design needs but also needs to nourish their spirit and provide inspiration," she explains. "I often find myself so immersed in the creative process for a design that my clients' desired style becomes my favorite at that time."