



Wonder on the water

A cosmopolitan couple took on a bold project when they decided to extend their Cotswold lake house

WORDS: Victoria Jenkins
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left:

The teak table on the balcony was made for them by JL Antiques

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above:

The main room comprising kitchen-dining-living room. The kitchen is bespoke with veneered oak units and Neolith worktops and backsplash. The dining table is of weathered limed oak with bronze detail from Andrew Martin. The *faux* leather chairs came from a Belgium trade show

Manuela Hamilford met her husband in 2005 while on holiday in the Caribbean. ‘I’m from Vicenza in Italy but had been working in New York for 15 years,’ she says. ‘Mark is British but was then working in Russia.’

‘We found we were both ready to leave our respective countries and start a new life together. But I never thought I’d be living in the Cotswolds.’

However, having married in Italy in 2007, the couple later bought a four-bedroom Lakes by Yoo house in North Cerney; and it’s where they spend as much time as possible away from their working lives in London.

‘And it’s now a five-bedroom, five-bathroom house,’ says Manuela who is an interior designer with her own company Hamilford Design.

‘We’ve just finished building on a two storey extension of some 1000 sq ft. There’s a TV/pool room below and an en suite bedroom above. It’s for the boys really.’

For now, the Hamilfords have two sons, Lucca, 12, and Theo, 14, plus their Boston terrier Simba.

‘But it was quite tricky because when adding the extension we had to take the lake into consideration,’ says Manuela. ‘The extension is installed with a screw effect platform – like a spiral lift – so that it isn’t affected by high water or strong water movement. The screw (like a cork screw) moves with the water underneath so that the floor always remains fixed.’

The Lakes by Yoo architect designed the extension and planning permission was quickly granted. The build took six months, and the house is now L-shaped and no longer rectangular.

‘The house is on Lake Bowmoor and we bought it off-plan in 2009; it took a year to build,’ says Manuela. ‘You’re

given a few choices as to its design as they all have to blend in. We chose the site because Bowmoor is a conservation lake, and no houses are allowed on the opposite side. Nor are we allowed to put lighting on the exterior as it affects the fish. We are allowed candlelight on the balcony though – which we prefer anyway.’

Residents are not allowed to use motorised boats or jet skis either – ‘but we can use electric boats which supply just enough power to take us to the other side and back,’ says Manuela. ‘We can swim too. But not to the two islands in case we threaten the birdlife – hundreds of duck, geese, pheasants and other species lay their eggs there every spring. It can get quite noisy but it’s great to see the little ducklings swimming after their mother in a long line.’



right:

The front sits out over the lake and there is also lake water close to the rear where the extension was built





The islands are designated Sites of Special Scientific Interest. Other wildlife includes deer and rabbits.

As a designer Manuela chose all the kitchen and bathroom fittings. 'I had a joiner make my kitchen units of veneered oak as I wanted a rustic grained finish,' she says. 'We then stained them dark.'

'The worktops and backsplash are oversized Neolith tiles – Calacutta Oro. It looks like marble but doesn't get damaged like marble which I'd never choose because it's so porous.'

Neolith is very lightweight and is made from fusing together natural minerals and materials with pressure and high heat.

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The same practical attitude applies to the wallpaper in the bathrooms. 'I chose vinyl because water just rolls off it,' she says.

And in the boys' bedroom she had their bunk beds made as a unit to her own design.

'It's very difficult to get ready-made bunk beds to fit the space you want,' she explains. 'I actually made the unit to resemble a house as it has a slanting roof and I >

above and right:

Main bathroom.

The acrylic bath with metal detail is from Living etc, the vinyl wallpaper is by Elitist, the ceramic basins are made of grey terrazzo



right:

The boys' double-decker bed was designed by Manuela and made for them by a local joiner. The tartan wallpaper is from Arte



DINING TABLE:

Andrew Martin, 0203 887 6113;
andrewmartin.co.uk

FLOORING:

EcoHardwood,
0203 759 0771;
ecohardwood.co.uk

HAMILFORD DESIGN:

0203 887 6900;
hamilforddesign.com

LIGHTING:

Visual Comfort,
0203 925 0708;
visualcomfort.com

WALLPAPERS:

Arte, 0800 500 3335;
arte-international.com



even added curtains until the boys made me take them down.' The same year they bought their home Manuela began her interior design company Hamilford Design and her projects range from palatial Italian villas to opulent residences in The Hamptons, from prestigious country estates to luxurious hotels throughout Europe.

'When I decorated and furnished our lake house, I wanted a muted colour palette with natural materials and some jewel tones,' she says. 'I love shopping in obscure antique shops and little-known markets for unusual items such as the African drum in the boys' room. But I also designed and had made a great many items such as the green velvet headboard and bedside tables in the main guest room and the four-poster bed in our own room. Also, the sofa and bookcases in the Snug.'

She finishes: 'This is the perfect setting to reconnect and unwind with family and friends. Our new extension means the kids now have their own space to play pool and have fun while having an extra guest room is ideal. And we all love spending our evenings out on the deck by the water for every season brings a new energy.' ●

top and centre:

The main bedroom – Manuela designed the four-poster, the cabinet is from Ligne Emil

above left: The chest of drawers and drum in the boys' room are from a local antique shop

above right: The guest bedroom with a fur throw and green velvet bedhead. The armchair is from Lots Road auction house and the wall lights from Porto Romano

