



AT HOME



My own home in the Valdres valley is an old restored log house; the ground floor is more than 350 years old.

We moved this house to its current location in 1967. At the time we were renting a house, but there were only two months left before we had to move out. We already had this lot on hand, but not a lot of time if we wanted to build a house.

We soon realized that the only way we could get ourselves a new house this quickly, would be to find an old log house that we could move. Conveniently, log houses can be taken down and re-erected rather more easily than ordinary houses. This would at least give us a roof over the head in the short term, until we could afford something else.

This house stood on a nearby farm — it

had been vacant for awhile and the owners were unsure what to do with it. With winter just around the corner and no time to waste, I bought the house for a symbolic sum.

Official bureaucracy was not as widespread in those days, so we were granted permission to start the building work immediately. Two months later the roof was on and shortly after we could move in.

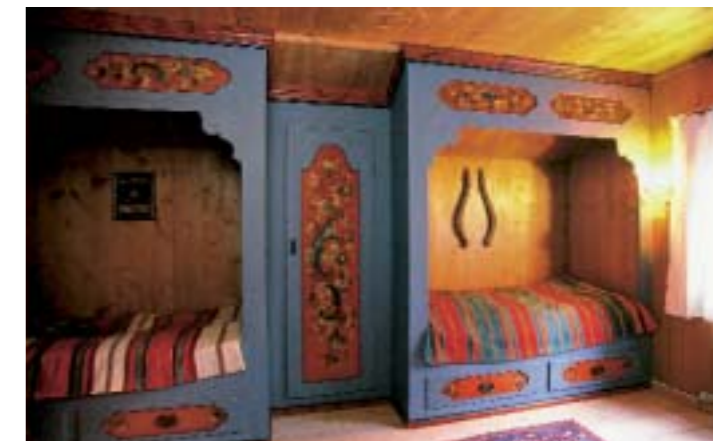
Not everybody were convinced that it was such a great idea to spend time moving this old, virtually derelict house. Many doubted whether it would be possible to live in it at all over any length of time. Thirty years on, and a few extensions later, I think it is safe to say that they have been proven wrong!



The house may be antique, but we have made no attempts to treat it as a museum: it is an old house adapted to modern times. We have extended the house both towards the back and the sides, in step with our requirements and the growth of the family.

Over the course of thirty years, every room has been painted. The only exception is one bedroom (below) where the original hand-planed wood paneling has survived from when the house was new. There are a variety of styles — this is more a natural development over time than a conscious decision. To some extent I guess the house documents my own artistic development: this is where I often tried out new ideas, so some rooms inevitably reveal my professional interests at the time I decorated them.

- ▶ Decorated cupboard doors in the kitchen
- ▲ Large stencils dominate the 'weaving room'
- ◀ A door that combines folk art and modern influences
- ▶ A traditional hanging shelf in the kitchen
- ▼ The guest bedroom with built in beds and untreated wooden walls and ceiling.





The Hallway

In the hallway our visitors get a festive welcome with a painted floral festoon ‘hung’ along the ceiling. This style of decor is commonly known as ‘Valdres roses’ and is characteristic of the Valdres region where we live. The decor is not made with stencils, it is all painted freehand. Viewed up close you will notice that each bunch of roses is slightly different.

Closer inspection of the door which leads from the hallway into the living room (above left) reveals that it is unusually thick. It is actually two doors made into one and it is solid wood throughout. This door dates back to when the house was fairly new, more than three hundred years ago. The family who lived here at that time was known for their fierce tempers. One story tells about a family argument that resulted in the son being thrown out of the house. Undeterred, he tried to make his way back in with the aid of an axe he found in the shed! It is said that his father had this heavy-duty door fitted as a practical precaution after this incident.

The Kitchen

For a long time we had the kitchen (right) divided into two rooms. After adding an extension to the house some years ago, we decided to make it into one big room again.

Like most old log houses, the windows are smaller than what you would usually get in a modern house. The kitchen only has these two windows, so there is not very much daylight coming into the room. This prompted our decision to give it a lighter, ‘sunnier’ appearance by painting it yellow. The decorations on the doors and cupboards are also done in a light style and color.

Yellow is, in fact, not a particularly common kitchen color in Norway, at least not in this region. On the farms in the area it was very common to paint the kitchens light blue. Many believed that this color helped to keep the flies away.

The kitchen ceiling had previously been covered by smooth boards. The old planks underneath saw the light of day again during our refurbishment. It was immediately apparent why we had originally chosen



to cover them up. The planks were rather rough and uneven, with noticeable cracks between them. It would have taken days to fill all the cracks, so we almost considered covering it all up again.

In the end I decided to decorate the ceiling exactly as it was. The decoration can thus be said to serve a dual purpose here. The bold brush strokes effectively disguise the uneven surface and make the cracks significantly less prominent.

Notice the characteristic shelf suspended from the beams above the kitchen table. Such shelves are common features in traditional kitchens and dining rooms in the Valdres region. They are very useful for storing bowls, jugs and much, much more.



The Weaving room

We have started calling the room above ‘the weaving room’ after it became the home of this old loom. The room is one of the newest additions to the house, created when the bathroom and hallway below it were extended. There is a touch of continental sophistication to this room—the color scheme is reminiscent of a Rococo or Baroque interior. The stenciled friezes are also highly original features, although I took the inspiration for the patterns from traditional folk art designs.

As with all the other additions we have made to the house, I personally made the

architectural drawings for the extension above. Even at this stage I tried to keep in mind how we might paint the room once it was finished. This allowed me to get the details of the interior perfect for later decoration.

Bedroom

The bedroom (below) was originally a separate little log cabin. We moved it onto our lot and connected it to the main house a few years after this was erected.

We have kept the high gabled ceiling in this room. To further emphasize the open feel, we painted the ceiling bright blue with stylized white clouds.

Expanding on the idea of “waking up under a blue sky”, I painted the walls green with a stylized pattern of foliage and red berries along the ceiling. The paintings on the walls are also mine, they are from a series of folk art inspired pieces that I created prior to painting this room.



Library/office

Before we added this new extension to the house, I had seen several examples of ‘earth sheltered homes’ in the United States. The point of this concept is to retract the house into a mound or hillside in order to conserve heat and save energy. This idea seemed to lend itself to the valleys of Norway, where the winters can often be extremely cold. We took advantage of the naturally sloping hill towards the back of our property and partially receded this extension into the ground. (It is the structure to the left on the photo on page 16).

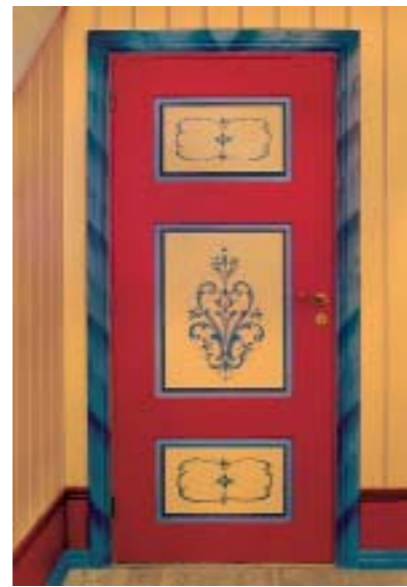
We have not kept the newer additions to the house as traditional as the original parts. In this room the brick walls are painted white, continental style. The doors and windows follow the conventions of brick architecture; they have been inset in the walls without wood frames.

The ceiling ornament features a number of different elements. The fishing boat represents my childhood in a fisherman’s family on the West Coast. There’s also a painter’s palette, which I assume requires no further explanation. To the right is a ‘family tree’ with five figures below it to represent our family. The cryptic symbols

in the center are the little known ‘Mørske runic alphabet’, which is only known from the West Coast region where I grew up.

Over a period of several decades, I have decorated virtually all the doors in the house. The styles range from traditional *Rosemaling* to figurative art and modern abstract ornaments. Among the many human figures on the doors around the house you can sometimes recognize members of our family.





A warm welcome

First impressions are always important, and in architectural terms it is surely doors that provide the first impression of a building or a room. Every place requires something different, so here is a small selection of some of the many different solutions I have come up with over the years.

