

AT A GLANCE

Names Jane & Michael Topping
Ages Both mid-40s
Location Lake Ontario, Canada
Property Timber- and steel-framed farmhouse
Bedrooms 3 **Bathrooms** 3
Project started 2009
Project finished 2011
Size of house 290sqm
Project cost CAD\$1million (approx £556,704) excluding landscaping

MODERN *interpretation*

This new farmhouse in Canada blends show-stopping contemporary interior design with a traditionally inspired exterior that suits its natural surroundings

Words Sophie Vening
Photography Tom Arban

this picture The continuous gabled ceiling features Douglas-fir plywood sheathing, creating a patchwork effect that gives the interior a raw, barn-like feeling

this picture Clad in grey porcelain tiles, the private guest unit is a perfect cube



The key to a successful project is, more often than not, a hardworking team that understands and respects the client's brief. And as Jane and Michael Topping had already worked with architect Cindy Rendely and builder David Wyse on three successful builds, they knew that their latest property would be in capable hands. 'I had worked on their city home, the office space that they rented, and their office building,' says Rendely. 'We have a 10-year history, so I know them and their lifestyle really well.'

In 2007, Jane and Michael started looking for a plot of land near Lake Ontario. They wanted somewhere they could escape to at weekends, as well as a property that had the potential to become their main place of residence when they retire. 'It took them about two years to find the ideal spot, as they had their hearts set on this particular area of the countryside,' says Rendely. 'The chosen site is a 100-acre plot with rolling hills. It had been a working farm growing corn feed for cattle, and there was a very old, rustic barn on the land. It was very much a natural setting, with views of Lake Ontario, which is one of the largest lakes in the area.'

With the plot found, Rendely started to sketch designs for the new abode. Visually, the couple wanted it to blend in with the local vernacular, which meant Rendely had to design a traditional pitched-roof farmhouse – something that she had never done before, as her signature style is very contemporary. 'I struggled with it at first and it really pushed me outside of my comfort zone,' she says. 'However, I've done a number of pitched-roofed projects since, and I thank them for the experience. Their house is still one of my favourite projects.'

While Jane and Michael were adamant that Rendely should take her cue from the plot's existing barn for the exterior design, when it came to the interior they were →



this picture Custom-built kitchen furniture is made from the same Douglas fir as the ceiling. Porcelain floor tiles have also been used throughout



above Douglas fir rift-cut veneers feature on doors and inlaid panels above; the material is also used for interior window frames

happy for her to create a more contemporary home. 'They wanted something that was maintenance-free and focused on the amazing countryside views,' says Rendely. 'They were also keen for me to design a place that they could grow old in, including access to living quarters in case they couldn't use the stairs in their retirement years,' she says.

The finished design is a bar-shaped building with two six-square-metre cubes. One cube sits at the end of the bar at a 15-degree angle, and is Michael's private studio. It has been skewed slightly to take advantage of the scenic views and help create an external courtyard area between it and the main house. The other cube sits at the opposite end of the bar, inside the main house, and acts as a self-contained guest unit. 'This can become the master suite if a time comes when they can't navigate the stairs,' explains Rendely. 'It's clad entirely in grey porcelain tiles both inside and out, to help emphasise the cube form and separate it from the open-plan ground-floor living space.'

To provide a maintenance-free home, Rendely designed a timber- and steel-framed build with durable timber cladding that won't need any work done to it. Spray-foam insulation has been installed in the walls and floors to keep the structure well-protected, and radiant floor heating is the main source of warmth, alongside a wood-burning stove for winter top-ups. The galvanized-aluminium roof won't need to be replaced during Michael and Jane's lifetimes.

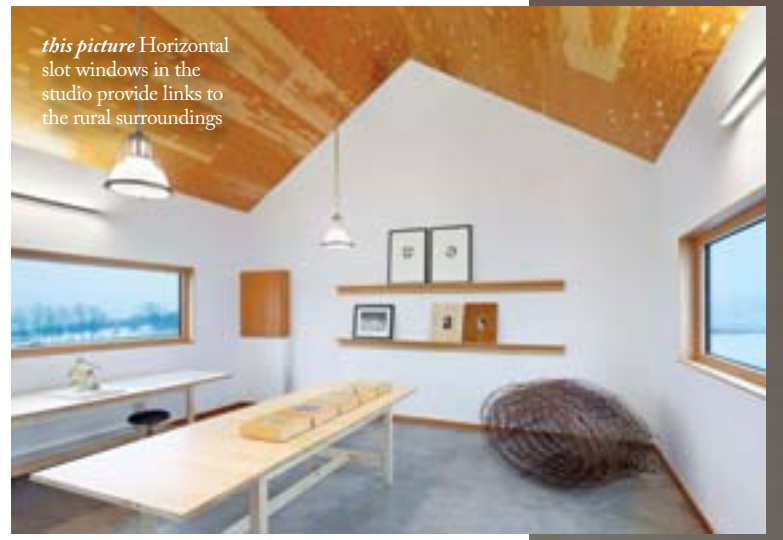
For the interior, Rendely designed an open-plan ground-floor living space in an attempt to encourage a relaxed, sociable and casual lifestyle. 'They entertain a lot and Jane is an incredible cook, so they often have lots of company

'I encourage my clients to paint their walls white... colour in a home should come from life'

to stay,' says Rendely. 'The fireplace helps to create separate zones but it is also double-sided, so that you can view the flames from both the living and dining areas – this keeps the internal spaces connected.' When privacy is required, either the couple or their guests can retire to the studio, the self-contained unit or the master suite, which takes up the whole of the first floor.

The project ran smoothly throughout, and Rendely credits this efficiency to the hard-working building team; when the bad winter weather set in, they moved on site instead of travelling from the city and back every day.

Once the structural work was out of the way, Rendely was able to focus on making the interiors as bright and inviting as possible, and whitewashed walls and exposed timber feature throughout. 'I always try to encourage my clients to paint their walls white,' she says. 'I'm a big believer that colour in a home should come from life – such as the owners' books, art, accessories and upholstery. As in a museum or art gallery, the white walls allow these →



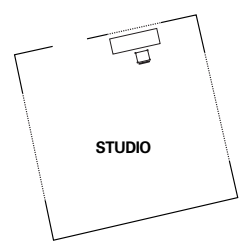
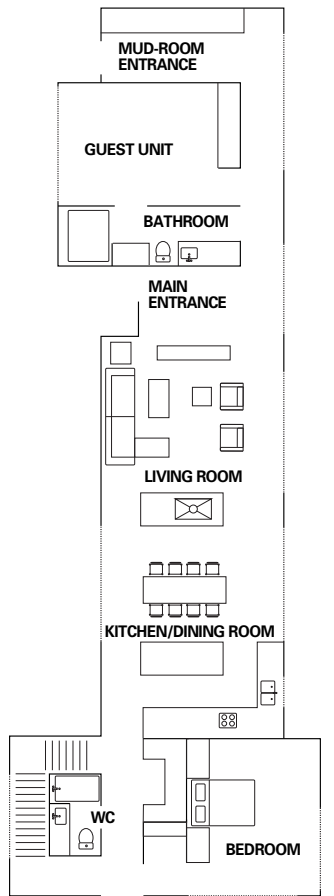
this picture Horizontal slot windows in the studio provide links to the rural surroundings



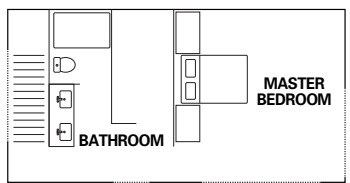
this picture A tiny square window near the apex of the peaked roof in the bedroom is reminiscent of the plot's original barn

The layout: 290sqm N ↙

GROUND FLOOR



FIRST FLOOR





belongings to really make a statement – like the Coca-Cola sign does in the living room, for example.’

Rendely doesn't like to mix materials, so a porcelain floor tile that looks like natural stone has been used throughout. And all the internal timber is Douglas fir – a relatively cost-effective material that looks great and is extremely durable. 'The clients and I all love the pattern of the woodgrain – it's very graphic,' Rendely says. 'We were going to paint it white, but decided to leave it exposed instead.'

The result is a stunning farmhouse that sits beautifully in its surroundings. Rendely has skillfully blended past and present, and the house is a modern, functional place that takes full advantage of its picturesque setting – providing the perfect weekend retreat for Michael and Jane. **GD**



above From a distance, the house and studio appear as traditional farm buildings

above right Beneath the house is a large storage space and garage, shielded from incoming snow by concrete slab walls

PROJECT TEAM

Architect Cindy Rendely Architecture (+1 416 924 9696; crarchitexture.com)

Builder David Wyse at Reno King (+1 416 821 9376; renokingcontracting.ca)

Structural engineer Gideon Shaffir at Gescon-Shaffir (+1 416 636 0700)

STRUCTURE

Windows and doors Sterling Windows & Doors (+1 647 244 0581)

FIXTURES & FITTINGS

Kitchen designer Cindy Rendely Architecture (as before) **Kitchen millworker** Richard Dubicki (+1 416 543 0662) **Bathroom designer** Cindy Rendely Architecture (as before)

Porcelain wall tiles and floor tiles

Stone Tile (+1 416 515 9000; stone-tile.com)

FURNITURE & ACCESSORIES

Custom-built furniture Designed by Cindy Rendely Architecture (as before)

Living room sofa Client reupholstered a vintage sofa **Living room armchair** Client reupholstered a vintage armchair

Dining chairs Eames chair by Herman Miller (+1 888 798 0202; hermanmiller.com)

Kitchen and dining room lighting Artemide (+1 514 323 6537; artemide.ca)

Master suite green rocking chair Client renovated a vintage chair **Studio tables** Designed by Cindy Rendely Architecture (as before)

STYLE FINDER

Copy this mid-century look by combining grey tones with splashes of colour

Compiled by *Sophie Vening*



▲ **Organic shape** Sophie white glass ceiling light in opal glass (H130xDiameter20cm), £15, Habitat (0344 499 1111; habitat.co.uk)



▲ **Brick effect** Sloane Square tile with bevelled edge in ceramic in grey (H10xW20cm), £19.75 per sqm, Walls and Floors (01536 314 730; wallsandfloors.co.uk)



▲ **Simple storage** Decorative ladder in elm in red lacquer (H170x W53xD6cm), £195, Orchid (01264 811 111; orchidfurniture.co.uk)



▲ **Textured textile** Linen edge velvet throw in cotton in grey (H200xW150cm), £100, John Lewis (0345 604 9049; johnlewis.com)



▲ **Modern take** Gardenias indoor armchair in leather in green (H92x W70xD79cm), £2,097, Jaime Hayon at Chaplins (020 8421 1779; chaplins.co.uk)