

*When everything is
the same colour, it's
less jarring than a
single dark wall.*



Real Homes
CASE STUDY

CUSTOMISED GARDEN STUDIO

In need of a space for her fledgling art career, Kim Somerville decided a light-filled garden room would be the perfect solution

WORDS LAURA CROMBIE PHOTOGRAPHS GILL MURRAY



BEFORE



AFTER

GENEROUS SPACE

The old summerhouse was demolished and replaced with this Highlander garden room with triple-glazed aluminium windows, reclaimed slate tiles, cast-iron gutters, exterior LED lights and Siberian larch cladding. JML Garden Rooms ▶

SIMPLE INTERIOR

The focal point of the room is Kim's **easel**; for similar, try Lawrence Art Supplies. The old farmhouse **desk** was sourced from a house clearance company in Perth, while the couple bought the **chair** in Chicago. **Walls** painted in White Tie; built-in **furniture** painted in Pavilion Gray, both Farrow & Ball. **Painting**, Kim's own. **Garden furniture**, B&Q.



When professional artist Kim Somerville steps inside her bespoke garden room, she's able to completely immerse herself in her painting and drawing. 'It's almost like I'm going out to work for the whole day,' she says. 'When I'm in there, I completely lose myself, even though I'm just a few feet from the house. It's the perfect space for me.' Having already altered their family home in the Scottish town of Auchterarder – extending on both sides and adding two bedrooms – Kim and husband Ian felt a garden room was the perfect finishing touch. 'The house was completely dilapidated when we first came to view it,' recalls Kim. 'But Ian had decided we were buying it before we'd even made it up the drive. We just loved the garden and how much character it had. Over the years, we've done a huge amount of work and now it's exactly how we want it to be.'

The need for a garden room arose from Kim's passion for art, which she nurtured when the family was living overseas for Ian's work as an engineer. Although she'd been a hairdresser before having her children, she realised art was her real passion. 'Having a studio has been a lifelong dream of mine, and creating somewhere in the garden seemed like the ideal solution,' she says. 'Paint just gets everywhere, so I've never felt at ease working in the house.'

But the new garden room had a lot to live up to, thanks to the legacy of one of the property's past owners. The house was built in 1917 by a local doctor and inherited by his daughter and her husband, a keen bird watcher, who added a summerhouse to the garden. Although Kim loved the location of the summerhouse and wanted to refurbish it, the building had fallen into a state of disrepair by the time they moved in. 'I knew we were going to have to dismantle it, but our children joked that I'd end up being haunted,' she says. 'It sounds ridiculous but I remember going in there and apologising to it before it was demolished!'

With the perfect location, Kim began searching online for companies that supplied garden rooms, but was

THE OWNERS

Kim Somerville, an artist, and husband Ian, an engineer, live here with their Labrador, Amber. The couple's two children are at university

THE PROPERTY

A five-bedroom detached home in Auchterarder, Scotland, self-built in 1917. An existing summerhouse was added by previous owners

KIM LOVES

Malaysia
Apple, orange and carrot juice
Maserati sports cars
Vegetarian food from Georgia
Yellow
The book *I am Pilgrim*
Yoga
Fashion brand Mint Velvet
The film *Pretty in Pink*

SHE HATES

Negativity

frustrated to find the vast majority were in the south east of England – meaning the transportation costs to Scotland would be considerable. It was by chance that she tried one last search online and discovered JML Garden Rooms, Scotland, located just down the road in Auchterarder. It transpired that the company's owner, Katie Langley, had only launched the website that day – something Kim believes was fate. The couple visited Katie's own home to view her garden room and fell in love with its style and size. 'I adored the exterior finish,' recalls Kim. 'It was clad in larch and I could see how it would weather beautifully as it aged and really become part of the garden. I knew the reclaimed slate tiles on the roof would match our house perfectly, too.'

Kim and Ian decided on a garden room measuring almost five metres by three metres, and then worked with Katie to customise the space. Kim chose to include two rooflights to maximise the natural daylight she needs to work by. 'It was very important to me that the light was just right,' she says. 'I didn't want to be blinded by the bright sun during the day, so the whole room is actually orientated slightly away from direct sunlight. But the large doors,



‘I love the larch exterior. It will weather beautifully as it ages and really become part of the garden’

windows and rooflights allow just the right amount to filter in.’ Incorporating electricity and heating was also a key factor in the design. ‘I like to be able to have the TV on in the background when I’m working, so it made sense to include electricity,’ she adds. ‘And I want to be able to work out here in all weathers, so heating was also important.’ The triple-glazed aluminium doors and windows were imported from Denmark to help the room feel robust and secure.

Due to the size and location of the garden room, work was able to proceed last April without the need for a formal planning application. It was constructed on site from structural insulated panels, which make the building extremely energy efficient. In total, the build took four weeks, including the creation of a large, curved decked area to surround the room. ‘We enjoyed looking out the window every day and seeing how the work was progressing,’ recalls Kim. Because the garden was already tiered, the room has far-reaching views, and will have a beautiful wild garden as a backdrop once new planting becomes established.

Now it’s finished, the garden room’s bespoke features, such as built-in storage for Kim’s sketchbooks and canvases,

are proving very useful, and in keeping with her wish for an inspiring space, the room has been left quite simple. ‘I didn’t buy any new furniture at all, as I prefer older pieces that tell a story,’ says Kim. ‘I sourced the farmhouse desk from a clearance company and the chair is one we bought when we were living in Chicago.’ Already, the impact on her life is substantial. ‘I feel completely at home in here. I love the way the light changes with the time of day and the seasons, and the influence that has on my work. I still find it very strange calling myself an artist, but having my own studio definitely helps it to feel more real.’

THE COSTS AND CONTACTS

Design, installation, decking, exterior and interior finishes

£27,500

TOTAL

£27,500

Garden room JML Garden Rooms, Scotland, 01764 663668, jmlgardenrooms.co.uk

Rooflights Velux