



THIS PICTURE The larch-clad and concrete tower took a year to build RIGHT Lisa, Lincoln and Ellie on the beach, which is reached from the house by a short walk through the woods

a natural
RETREAT

Tucked into an ancient wood and just a *stroll from the beach*, LISA and LINCOLN's new home on the *Isle of Wight* sits perfectly in its environment. It's hard to believe it was once a tired old bungalow

WORDS *Alison Jane Reid* PHOTOGRAPHS *Chris Tubbs*





ABOVE The entrance to the house has a graphic floor-to-ceiling mural by artist friend Garry Whitehead, which was based on a Fifties advertising campaign. Simple recycled wire baskets are used for shoe storage. Vintage Atomic coat hooks hang on a ceramic-tile wall

On one of those halcyon, late-summer afternoons, the Solent resembles an Impressionist painting. There's a solitary yacht sail fluttering in the breeze and the pale blues and silver greys of the sea merge with the rose gold of the setting sun. The scene prompts Lisa Traxler, her partner Lincoln Miles and their dog, Little Susie, to leave the camaraderie of their local pub, The Fishbourne Inn, in Ryde on the Isle of Wight and head to the beach. After they have spent some time on the deserted shoreline, they have the further delightful prospect of ambling back to their woodland retreat, hidden away in an ancient canopy in Quarr on the north side of the island. 'The island has that X-factor,' Lincoln says. 'There's something about living close to water, I can't explain it, it just pulls you back. And Ellie, Lisa's daughter, absolutely loves it here.'

Lisa is a fashion editor-turned-artist and Lincoln is a designer, who has won awards for his thoughtful, sympathetically designed buildings. Together, they have done what most people only dream of: bought a modest, 1970s bungalow of no great architectural merit and reinvented it as a dream home. But instead of knocking it down, as is often the case, they recycled it, improved its carbon footprint and married it to a twinkling glass, wood and cement tower that soars into the canopy.



ABOVE Lincoln greets their dog, Little Susie. He chose burnt-larch cladding to blend into the natural surroundings. In time it will 'disappear' into the forest. A sweep of concrete paving curves up to the front door over a still pond

Blending two styles

It is hard not to be smitten by what they have created. The entire structure inhabits its woodland setting, floating and disappearing into the trees. The luxuriant burnt-larch cladding, wrapped around what was once the bungalow, gives it the snug appearance of a hunting lodge and would look equally at home in the Canadian Rockies as in an idyllic English wood.

Lincoln looks pleased when I mention this. 'I could have designed something grand and pretentious, but that is not our style. Everything about the house is designed to make it blend and disappear into its environment. Over time, the cowshed cladding will weather, it will be colonised by moss and lichen, and will appear as if the forest has reclaimed it.'

The couple lived in the modest, two-bedroom bungalow for three years and exchanged many ideas before they were ready to embark on their great upcycling project, which would take them nine intensive months to complete. The result is a testament to Lincoln's pragmatism as a designer and Lisa's love of colour and works of art, along with her flair for mixing retro and new. Take the row of salvaged cinema seats from The Trinity Theatre in Cowes: the colour of fine red wine, it brings a touch of decadent living



THIS PAGE Ellie and Lisa at the metal dining tables from Skylon Interiors in St Leonards. Red cinema seating was found in an old Cowes theatre. The sculptural ceramic is by local artist Matthew Chambers OPPOSITE, FROM TOP LEFT The family take a walk along the shoreline; Lisa's use of colour extends to the storecupboards; the kitchen units are by Linear Kitchen, based in Newport. The 1950s Kandya Frank Guille stools are covered in Lucienne Day fabric





ABOVE Lisa added warmth and colour to the house with a collection of original Fifties and Sixties furniture and textiles, which she picked up at various markets and vintage shops on the island and in London. The stone fire surround is part of the original bungalow

to the dining area and offers a tactile foil to the stunning, ultra-modern steel grey and lime-green kitchen. Throughout the interior, the functional simplicity of the glass, wood and cement structure is softened with colour, vintage flourishes and the hypnotic effect of passing clouds caught in the glass skylight. Lisa has a passion for furniture and prints of the late 1950s and early 1960s, and has a knack for finding them: a treasured pair of Parker Knoll chairs, colourful Lucienne Day cushions and a set of skinny Frank Guille bar stools for Kandya give the house its individuality. A reclaimed parquet floor – a find from a school in Yarmouth – and a battered leather sofa add warmth and texture, and the illusion that the house is already a cherished, lived-in home.

'Lisa really is my humanising element,' says Lincoln, laughing. 'I'm afraid that my preference is for the stark lines of communist bathhouses, when it comes to properties!' How the couple work together is the key to the house's success. Lincoln has designed the clever, high-performance shell, with the emphasis on space and light, low-energy heating and rainwater harvesting, plus expansive balconies and decking so they can enjoy life outdoors to the full. Then Lisa has quietly stepped in with her artist's eye and added the layers that personalise it and make it feel like home.




ABOVE RIGHT Once the house was finished, Lisa painted the courtyard side of the building with an abstract mural. She used enamel-coated steel panels, which were then fired locally. It makes a striking backdrop to the outdoor terrace

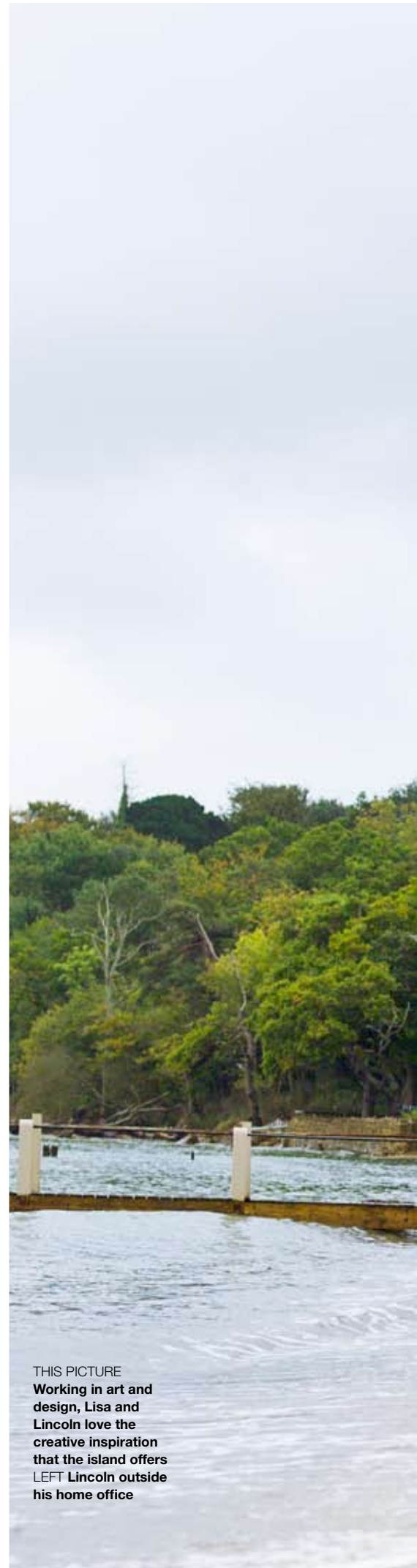
An artistic community

Everywhere you look, walls are adorned with Lisa's serene, feminine canvasses. In the main sitting room, there's a recent triptych in warm, glamorous hues of pink turning into gold. The couple are not the only creatives to have been drawn to the Isle of Wight – they are at the centre of the island's artist colony. Lisa teaches fashion master classes at the local arts centre and they both barter and collect the work of other local artists they admire. Alan Boyes's timber onion light, for example, glows from the sitting-room window, and a Garry Whitehead mural inspired by an old Brylcreem ad hints at a love of nostalgia as you walk through the door.

The island's light and landmarks influence Lisa's work hugely. 'I think all artists are affected by their environment,' she says. 'Every morning, I take the dog for a walk along the beach, then I am ready to go into the studio and paint. Life is simpler now. Lincs and I don't have to leave the house to work – our studios are in the garden. In the evening, we hop over the stile, go into a magical, ancient wood and burst through the trees onto the beach. We sit and soak up the activity on the Solent with a glass of wine – what could be lovelier?'

For more information on Lisa and Lincoln's house, see treehouseisleofwight.co.uk.

 For more coastal houses around the UK, see allaboutyou.com/homes



THIS PICTURE
Working in art and design, Lisa and Lincoln love the creative inspiration that the island offers
LEFT Lincoln outside his home office

Lisa and Lincoln's Isle of Wight address book

For hot chocolate and treats 'We love Chocolate Apothecary Café for its top-quality confections.' *4 Esplanade, Ryde (chocolateapothecary.co.uk).*

For local news 'The Ventnor Blog really fosters a sense of community and tells you what is happening on the island.' *(ventnorblog.com).*

For nostalgic accommodation 'Vintage Vacations hires Airstream caravans with magical attention to detail in great locations.' *(vintagevacations.co.uk).*

For woodburners 'Charnwood, which is where we found our stylish and super-efficient one.' *(charnwood.com).*

For lunch and groceries 'Bluebells Café – delicious local food.' *Bridlesford Lodge Farm, Bridlesford Road, Wootton (bridlesfordlodgefarm.co.uk/cafe).*

