

# Bold Strokes

New York painter Kathryn Windley didn't tiptoe toward the artistic life she desired. She rushed in heart first, ditching her big-city career in search of the country's simpler rewards—and found love along the way.



**THIS PAGE** The kitchen garden—composed of raised beds edged with Belgian block stone—yields a mix of edibles and cutting flowers. Behind it, a glass-enclosed passageway connects the 1830 farmhouse to the new, barn-like addition.

**OPPOSITE PAGE** Kathryn Windley, in the addition's ground floor studio, built this mobile painting cart using a nearby orchard's apple crates.





LEFT Windley's oil painting of the 20-acre property sits atop an elm sideboard her husband, Gary DiMauro, bought in Shanghai for \$400. DiMauro made the beautifully bottled infused grappas (center).

ABOVE The artist snapped up this circa-1870 pine cupboard at a local antiques store—without knowing that DiMauro had consigned the piece. Today, it stores the couple's collection of ironstone and transferware.

BELOW Tired of scraping ice off their cars in winter, Windley and DiMauro designed this garage to masquerade as a historic barn.



"It was the farmhouse sink that sold me on the property," says Kathryn Windley, who designed her new kitchen around the fixture.

### bright idea!

Salvage a damaged rug by having it cut down and rebound into a chichi kitchen mat.

Windley purchased the ax-handle stool—the room's most prized perch—years ago in Los Angeles, and ordered the cheery yellow roman shades from Smith+Noble. The rustic bench cost \$40 at a yard sale.

If you're a harried New Yorker who harbors fantasies about ditching the urban grind for some historic Hudson Valley idyll, realtor Gary DiMauro is the guy to call. Which is exactly what Kathryn Windley did back in 1998. Recently divorced and burned out by her career as an art director for Manhattan ad agencies, she yearned for a major life change. "The only thing I knew for certain," Windley says, "was that I wanted to live in the country."

Indeed, DiMauro led her right to the door of her dream house, an 1830 three-bedroom in the tiny hamlet of Milan, New York. Eventually, he'd also mend her heart. In 2005, the couple exchanged vows on the 20-acre property the groom helped the bride find. "Gary showed me

this place and moved in a few years later. How's that for a full-service broker?" Windley jokes.

**Before planning a wedding,** though, she had a home to renovate—the first one she'd ever purchased on her own. "Despite what my husband might say, it was the cast-iron farmhouse sink with the double drain boards"—not his charming sales techniques—"that really sold me on the property," says Windley, who designed a whole new kitchen, complete with a pine-topped island and open shelves, around the 1920s sink. She also removed textured plaster to expose the first floor's ceiling beams, uncovered wide-plank floors beneath decades of tired linoleum, and brushed





In the evenings, DiMauro and Windley bring wine up to their custom-built, red-cedar gazebo and listen to the frogs.



ABOVE The living room's Lillian August chair and Crate & Barrel sofa, both slipcovered in classic white denim, get a graphic jolt thanks to a striped rug and diamond-patterned throw pillows. The 1930s baby grand was crafted by Wm. Knabe, Francis Scott Key's preferred piano maker.

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fresh coats of green, blue, and pale-yellow paint on the walls.

"I'm not into fine antiques, and cost was definitely an issue," says Windley. "so going to flea markets became a fun way to explore the area." All that driving around paid off, as evidenced by discoveries like a circa-1870 pine cabinet she distressed by rubbing coffee grounds into the cracks. (If this were a romantic comedy, her purchase would hint at fate, for it was DiMauro who had consigned the piece.) After she sourced what she could locally, Windley filled in the blanks with affordable catalog finds: a slipcovered Crate & Barrel sofa, varnished steel chairs from Sundance, and roman shades by Smith+Noble. Delighted with her evolving interior, Windley admits that her

biggest fear was that she'd meet someone special and have to move.

**As it turned out, happily,** her only concern was making sure DiMauro felt like an equal partner in creating their home. He put his stamp on the landscape, outlining paths to crisscross the 20-acre parcel, while Windley tended their organic garden. "Instead of long rows of a single variety, I mix old-fashioned cutting flowers—bee balm, black-eyed Susans, Shasta daisies—right in with the herbs and vegetables," she says.

Inside, 2,300 square feet accommodated the couple beautifully when they spent all day outdoors, but come winter, the space felt...cramped. DiMauro had grown weary of sharing the one full bath





**ABOVE** A flokati rug demarcates the boundary between a small sitting area in the original house and the modern addition's master bedroom beyond.

**RIGHT** Tongue-and-groove planks line the walls of the master bedroom and cover its headboard, which conceals a closet (accessed on the other side). The sconce is from Restoration Hardware; the navy blanket from Layla.

**BELOW** Faced with reclaimed white pine, the gas fireplace's chimney hides a surprise: a flat-screen TV.



with frequent weekend guests. And Windley, who had followed her passion, painting full-time, felt hemmed in by her tiny office. "I had full-blown outbuilding envy," she confesses. "That said, neither of us wanted to live in some boardinghouse that just goes on and on." Together with architect Peter Sweeny, they landed on an ingenious solution: a detached barn with studio space for Windley on the ground level and a second-floor master bedroom and bath—connected to the main house via a glass-walled walkway that's all but invisible when viewed from a distance.

**Unfortunately, little unfolded** as planned. In 2008, four months late and already over budget, DiMauro reports, "Our contractor walked off the job on the

very same day Kathryn was diagnosed with breast cancer." When she lost her hair during chemo, DiMauro shaved his head in a show of support. He also vowed to complete the project—clearing out every last worker, hammer, and nail—by the time his wife finished treatment. Today, between the cast-iron soaking tub and the remote-controlled gas fireplace at the foot of the bed, Windley marvels, "We feel like we're in some wonderful spa every night."

Cancer-free for three years, she notes how the small things in life have become much more important. Windley relishes having earned the world's shortest commute. "You can't imagine how great it is to shut the door and walk to my studio," she says. "Granted, it's only eight feet away, but it's an important eight feet." ♦

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### bright idea!

To save big on the right lamp, hit the "wrong" department. This outdoor fixture cost just \$40 at Lowe's!



A zebra-print ottoman from Ballard Designs sidles up to Randolph Morris's cast-iron tub in the master bath, outfitted with white china sinks from overstock.com. The Restoration Hardware mirrors slide open, barn door-style, to reveal a recessed medicine chest.