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# From the Ground UP

A newly built garden house/pool house on the grounds of a home near Bruges, Belgium, becomes a couple's center for socializing and entertaining

PHOTOGRAPHY BY *Claude Smekens* WRITTEN BY *Greet Lefèvre*



Opening pages: Greet Lefèvre, a Belgian-based interior designer, designed a garden house, inside and out, on the property of her sister's home near Bruges, Belgium. The sitting area is defined by vintage blue-gray Belgian stone floors and reclaimed oak beams from Flemish farmhouses. Rattan August lounge chairs and a footrest are from her Belgian Pearls Home Collection. Eighteenth-century Italian sconces and mirror are centered above a long sofa covered in a loose Belgian linen. This page: A linen curtain is used at the kitchen's sink. Earthenware mugs and saucers are locally made. The poplar cabinets are treated to appear aged.



I know my younger sister, Inge, well. I know her style and she knows mine, which is why we get along well. So, not surprisingly, she entrusted me, along with my husband, to design the interiors and exterior of the garden house/pool house on her property outside Bruges, Belgium. What appears to be an old building is largely new.

This garden building was completed in 2019, but it looks as if it has existed since the eighteenth century, which was the intention. In fact, many, but not all, of its architectural elements have been salvaged from old European buildings—the bricks, floor tiles, the orangery's windows, the oak beams that course the ceiling, the roof tiles.

The dwelling functions as its own residence, complete with a kitchenette, a bath, and a wonderful sitting area where guests can gather around a fireplace. My sister and her husband and their guests, which often include us, spend hours here—from the first sunny days of spring well into autumn. In summer, dinner is served on the large table on the terrace, which overlooks the

pool, and on chillier days and evenings, guests dine indoors, with the large steel door opened to the yard and pool.

A goal we set for ourselves was to design and construct a building that would be not only fully functional as a miniature residence distinct from the main house, but one that would also match the style of main residence, which is also of recent construction but which replicates an eighteenth-century French country house. Through Lefèvre Interiors, which my husband and I own, we sourced the right furnishings, commissioned the best craftspeople, and integrated period materials. We wanted everything to feel authentic. For instance, we contracted with the Dankers Décor, a local Belgian firm, to create interior walls that evoked the atmosphere of a centuries-old house. The painters employed a “peel-off” effect, in which multiple layers of lime-based paints are applied.

The project evolved as a family affair—and as a result, it was one of the most pleasant projects of my career. ■