

## MOVE



**Left: the furnishings for Keith Kissane and Lorna Mayne's Within the Village project in Co Galway were selected by the designer Aoibheann McNamara**

**W**hen Keith Kissane and Lorna Mayne took on their first renovation project eight years ago the brother and sister could not have anticipated what they were starting: a family business that breathes life back into old, neglected buildings.

In 2015 that first renovation started with the purchase of an old nursing home in Salthill, Co Galway. They transformed it into a boutique hostel called the Nest and from there they took on more developments. "They are the buildings people didn't want to touch," Kissane says.

Their most recent project, Within the Village, is a labour of love. They have transformed three old townhouses into five self-catering accommodation options, with the work of Irish artists and craftspeople at its heart. It is a novel addition to the village of Roundstone in the Connemara region of Co Galway.

"My sister and her close friend Maria Murphy were staying near Roundstone," Kissane says. "They passed through the village and they saw a pub with its houses up for sale. They came back to me and asked, 'What do you think?' I said, 'It's possible.' We saw there was a huge market for self-catering cottages in the Connemara region. We put a shovel in the ground in 2021 and it's now nearly two years to the day from when we started the project."

Kissane, who has a background in hotel management and plumbing, explains that seeing the buildings at the start of the project was daunting. "They were very dated. Next to the pub was the original house. Another house was built behind the pub and the owners would move into it during the summer and use the house next to the pub as a B&B."

The team was careful to work with the existing structures. "We did not want to demolish the whole thing. If you demolish a building in the middle of a town it takes away from the landscape. We wanted to work with the footprint that was already there. We split the pub in two and got five units out of it. There is a communal area at the back that all five share."

While there were setbacks along the way, some chance discoveries proved bountiful. "Within the buildings there was an awful lot of solid stone and we were able to expose it," Kissane

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# Restoration that speaks to the past

*Elle Gordon* meets the siblings who are breathing new life into old, neglected buildings and the communities around them

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MAKE MERRY  
CRAFTY GIFTS BY  
IRISH ARTISANS





# Move



CLIODHNA PRENDERGAST

**Left: a feature was made of the uncovered stone walls. Below: the colours of the countryside were brought inside. Right: a view of the west coast. Below right: a locally made countertop**

authenticity. “Everything we have done ties in what is outside with what you see inside,” Kissane says.

“We wanted to drag the colours from Connemara and put them inside. It is the jewel in the crown of the projects we have done to date.”

The arts and crafts throughout were curated by the designer Aoibheann McNamara, who is the co-founder of the Tweed Project, which creates handmade pieces that combine Irish fabrics with modern tailoring. “When Maria and Lorna asked me to get involved I said I would if we could use everything local and sustainable, bring the regional area in,” McNamara says.

“I wanted to use artists such as Dorothy Cross, Cliodhna Prendergast and Joe Hogan, so that was the first thing. Then it was about homing in on the furniture

and the garden. There are lots of different elements on how things function and how things work within the context of design and then softening it with the furnishings and the art. [The result] is beautiful. It is such a special place.”

Opening for guests in the west of Ireland in winter may seem like a tricky endeavour but it’s a deliberate move. “We are selling the wilderness of the winter. We want it to be a place to escape to year round, a place you can unwind and detach from city life,” Kissane says.

“The locals are delighted because the lights will be on in the building for the first time in 15 years and more business will be coming to the village year round. We have created the feel of an Irish cottage but brought it into modern times.”

*For bookings, see [withinthevillage.ie](http://withinthevillage.ie)*



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says. “And at the rear there was a boundary wall that was collapsing so we took the stone from it and used it as cladding on the rear walls.”

Kissane credits his sister and Murphy, who acted as the creative director on the project, with the beautiful finishes. “We worked carefully with as many local people as we could to keep it as authentic as possible. Paddy O’Malley is a local tradesman who made all the countertops for our sinks.”

Other local suppliers included the flooring specialist Matt Britton and Gabriel Furniture, which is a bespoke kitchen business run by Ben Gabriel and his son Joshua.

“All our occasional furniture we got in Galway market. There is a gentleman there called Brendan and he makes tables and chairs from reclaimed timber,” Kissane says.

The finished restoration blends contemporary style with

