



Above and below, a thin slab of pre-stressed concrete lifted on steel columns tops the main part of the project, which also features a west-facing floor-to-ceiling glass wall opening onto a generously planted courtyard with a small swimming pool

Sebastian Szafarczyk, English Faktoria rises from a steep slope covered in lush greenery in the western part of Kazimierz Dolny. From the outside, the architectural intervention seems rather discreet. First, Miller-Lovegrove and her team meticulously restored the historic limestone walls. Then they added two new volumes, extending the property to contain a new entrance zone and a living area, and encircled the plot with a high retaining wall. A glazed strip traces the top of the walls, separating them visually from the ceiling structure, marking the difference between old and new.

The historic part of the 494 sq m residence contains more intimate spaces, such as bedrooms, bathrooms and a studio, while the new areas house a large living space and a mezzanine. Interestingly, almost none of the individual rooms has a door, creating a relatively continuous open space. The interiors feature a restricted palette of colours (mostly shades of white and grey) and materials (limestone, marble, concrete and Corian dominate). There are very few pieces of furniture, mostly designed by Lovegrove Studio. The most spectacular spatial element, and the composition's real centrepiece, is the sculptural, nature-inspired 'DNA Staircase'. Made of fibreglass and polyester resin (and built by Delta Rafał Mikke, a company that specialises in manufacturing gliders, with the help of Lovegrove Studio's Matt Longbottom), the spiral design is an evolution of the DNA concept realised in 2005 for Lovegrove Studio's former office in Notting Hill.

Designing your own house can be a real challenge, made trickier if the design has to consolidate the seemingly irreconcilable: tradition and modernity, local craftsmanship and cutting-edge technology, privacy and openness towards nature. In Kazimierz Dolny, Miller-Lovegrove has done just that, creating a perfect retreat in one of Poland's lesser-known rural gems. ★ mmlstudio.com



It took Miller-Lovegrove almost two decades to transform the dilapidated building into her perfect retreat