



GARDEN
Large windows look out onto the garden of this Victorian home in Lewes

LOVELY LAYERS

Decorated with gentle brushstrokes of colour, this house is a testament to a decade of creativity

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LIVING ROOM
With a relaxed, informal feel, the room features soft colours and pretty accessories. The wooden chairs came from a flea market

SITTING AREA

The modular leather sofa from Ikea and bespoke built-in bench are both strewn with cushions from the Black Edition range, a collaboration between Jessica and fabric company Romo



A huge bespoke mirror throws light into the stairwell



The kitchen overlooks the rose- and honeysuckle-filled cottage garden



Blooms are displayed in an old test-tube holder

Jessica's home is dotted with her evocative canvasses



An antique station clock adds vintage charm to the garden



'This house was nothing more than a shell when I bought it. I saw it in the same way as I might have looked at a stage – an area that needed to be designed,' SAYS JESSICA

Having replaced some sheds with an extension, Jessica now uses it as an office



Artist Jessica Zoob often takes many years to finish a painting, gradually adding layer upon layer of subtle colour until everything looks just right. The same process has been at work in her Sussex home, which has evolved in a similar way over the past ten years.

'The house is Victorian and was totally empty when I bought it,' recalls Jessica. 'It was nothing more than a shell, but I could tell that it had the right bones. If anything, it was easier to see its potential because there was nothing to get in the way.'

Jessica is quite accustomed to transforming spaces because, before turning to contemporary art in 2000, she worked as a theatre designer at venues such as the Royal National Theatre and the Bristol Old Vic. 'I saw this house in the same way as I might have looked at a stage – an area that needed to be designed.'

Its location – in the town of Lewes, just a 15-minute-drive from the sea – was the ideal place in which to raise her daughters, Ana, now 18, and 15-year-old Kat. 'I love to pick up the girls from school and head to Seaford or Birling Gap to spend the rest of the day on the beach,' she says. 'It's utter bliss.'

The only significant drawback was that the new house is a lot smaller than the one the family was leaving behind in London. To solve the problem, Jessica decided to convert the loft into an extra bedroom and went on to replace some old sheds that stood at the side of the house with an extension. At first she used this addition as a studio but, since moving her ever-expanding creative life to separate

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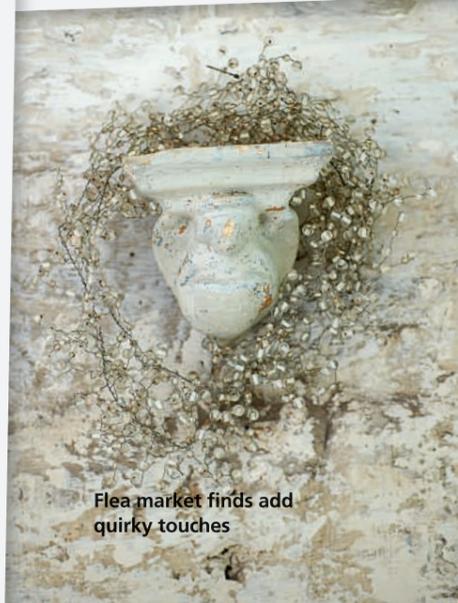
An extension maximises space



Jessica's partner, sculptor and furniture maker Karl Smith, made the dolls' house



Flea market finds add quirky touches



KAT'S BEDROOM

A built-in bed in front of the window is swathed in a blue fabric called Big Smile from the new Romo Black Edition collection

**MAIN BEDROOM**

The converted loft is fitted with white shutters to keep the look beautifully simple. Find similar ones at Shutterly Fabulous

**BATHROOM**

Jessica's new bathroom and separate loo feature her trademark bare French plaster walls and painted wooden floors

premises on a nearby farm, it has become not only a spare bedroom for guests but also an office and a den for her daughters to relax in.

Once soulless walls in the main house are lined with white plaster, a material that is popular in France but overshadowed by its pink counterpart in the UK. 'I love its understated look and leave it unpainted as it has so much life and catches the light in different ways,' she says.

Jessica also added tongue-and-groove panelling to the lower sections of wall and laid wooden floors that look entirely authentic because they are made from planks of varying widths. 'The girls and I had a painting party and covered the floor with giant dots in different colours before adding the plain top coat,' she recalls. 'The colours beneath have now been revealed in places through wear and tear, which looks lovely. It's a brilliant surface as the children can rollerblade across it. Any scrapes, scars and scratches just make it nicer.'

Practicality has been at the heart of every decorating decision since the outset, such as choosing washable linen seat covers and including many clever cupboards that lurk behind the tongue-and-groove. 'There is storage galore in this house,' laughs Jessica. 'I treated it rather like a boat, stowing things away by making use of all the strange corners and angles. You have to do this if you live in a small space, otherwise the clutter becomes overwhelming.'

Even so, the interior is filled with carefully curated vintage furniture and flea market finds, plus Jessica's many dreamy canvasses that add a delicate sense of colour, pattern and texture. 'I like being

surrounded by my paintings,' she reflects. 'Some of them are permanent fixtures – I'm so attached to them I'd never sell them; others change fairly frequently. It's always good to spend some time living with them before they're sold and head out on their next journey.'

Selected paintings have recently been transferred onto fabrics, wall coverings and cushions for fabric company Romo's Black Edition brand. Examples of this are now dotted around her house – from curtains in Kat's room to heaps of cushions on the sofa – intensifying its painterly atmosphere.

Inspiration for all of Jessica's work comes from her surroundings, including the nearby beaches, where she often heads for a swim in summer, and the beautiful Sussex countryside, which is only a few minutes' stroll from the house. But, though she tries to spend as much time as possible exploring the South Downs and the coastline, she never paints in the field. 'I work largely from memory, but the feeling of the landscapes and the seascapes is always filtering through my mind as I go,' she says.

After a decade of decorative tweaks and adjustments, every room of Jessica's house displays the same lightness of touch as her most evocative canvasses, and has as many fascinating layers as one of her most intricate paintings. 'Even though this house appears at first to be quite plain and simple,' she muses, 'it is full of things I love.'

Find out more about Jessica's work at jessicazoob.com and romoblack.com

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