



The high-ceilinged living room pops with colour and pattern. Helena has mixed things up by teaming 20th-century artworks (including a Gillian Ayres piece above the fireplace) with Philippe Starck stools, Victorian chairs, a Moroccan rug and a 1930s coffee table

Festive cheer

Vibrant colours, bold patterns and large, striking paintings, fill the Dorset home of lighting designer, Helena Barrowcliff

FEATURE **JOHANNA THORNYCROFT**
PHOTOGRAPHS **ANDREAS VON EINSIEDEL**



NEED TO KNOW

The owners Helena and Peter Barrowcliff their four children, Matilda (16), Johnnie (14), Digby (12), and Rohan (11), and their three dogs live in this large 19th-century house in Dorset, which they bought 15 years ago.

The house The entrance hall leads on to the library and living room, which has double doors that open on to the kitchen/diner. Upstairs, there are seven bedrooms and three bathrooms.



THIS PAGE, FAR LEFT Underneath the stairs, rich dark browns are contrasted with bright jewel colours. The painting is by Ana Maria Pacheco and the floor lamp is an old milk churn topped with a TMO shade **ABOVE** Helena with her 16-year-old daughter, Matilda **LEFT** Find similar tree decorations from Cox & Cox **BELOW** Fresh foliage, baubles and a hanging acorn decoration up the festive feel in the impressive hallway **FACING PAGE** Removing the exterior wall and roofing over the veranda instantly made the living room lighter

Helena Barrowcliff spent her childhood growing up in rural Scotland and the Cotswolds, something that, 15 years ago, prompted her and husband Peter to move from London's Notting Hill to west Dorset. 'We wanted our four children to experience the same active, outdoorsy upbringing that I did. Lots of swinging across streams on ropes and cooking sausages in the woods,' says Helena, who runs her own company, TMO Lighting. So much so, in fact, that she admits that finding an unspoiled rural setting with some land attached was more important to her and Peter than the actual house. When it came to the hunt, they didn't mess about. Before arranging viewings, properties were carefully checked using Ordnance Survey maps, which meant they only needed to see one other house before finding this one.

LIGHT AND BRIGHT

Given that Helena and Peter weren't too fussy about the building, they were lucky to discover such a gem. Built in 1892, it's all high ceilings, large windows and airy, light-filled rooms. 'The potential was obvious from the start,' says Helena. 'Just opening up the closed-off entrance hall by removing the wall that had separated it from the staircase made a big difference.' The amazing picture window in the living room – which floods the space with light and brings in that all-important countryside – was another »







“The home is given a further injection of colour with foliage, candles and paper decorations”

of the Barrowcliffs’ additions to the house, created by removing an exterior wall and roofing over the veranda. No surprise then, that Helena cites being able to watch the changing of the seasons as one of her favourite things about the house. Oak floorboards and terracotta tiles were also fitted and, aside from a striking lilac colour in the kitchen, walls painted in off-white shades to ensure that the bright, unusual furnishings and accessories do the talking.

Throughout the interior, there’s a feeling of craftsmanship – from the coloured glass lamp bases and one-off TMO Lighting shades, designed by Helena, to African fabrics, hand-woven rugs, original paintings and Murano glass – something which nods to Helena’s design background. ‘My father was an art dealer and taught me about shape and form,’ she says. ‘I’ve always been fascinated by colour and pattern. After studying textile design I went into knitwear and from there, made the move into lighting.’

TIME FOR TRADITION

At Christmas, the home is given a further injection of colour as Helena decorates with ivy and berries, candles and strings of paper decorations. Tradition is important, too, with the



PICTURES

A closer look

‘My father was an art dealer and always said “follow your heart, not a budget or fashion”,’ says Helena. ‘Start with drawings, they are the basis of all art. There aren’t any hard-and-fast rules about hanging pictures – they can be hung in tiers more successfully in big rooms and roughly at eye level in smaller spaces.’





FACING PAGE, TOP There's a warm, modern feel to the kitchen, which has been partially painted with 'Dirty Lilac' from Rose of Jericho **FACING PAGE, MIDDLE** Helena loves rustic, coloured glass, and, for the Christmas table, has chosen amethyst and green, to pick up the colours of the china. Banquette seating, below an enormous plate-glass window, fills the width of the kitchen **THIS PAGE** Double doors - now framed with ivy and faux-berries - connect the living room to the kitchen. Large paintings and an oversized shade make the most of the grand proportions of the room

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Nordman Spruce tree decorated in a mainly green and red palette. ‘I like to set the table the same way each year – with old china and a crisp tablecloth. This year the centrepiece is a bit different though, a glass bowl filled with tiny electric tealights and candles.’

And as for the big day itself, Helena prepares as much as she can in advance so time can be spent enjoying being together as a family. ‘We love the chaos and excitement of stockings and presents. I have one rule: no tidying up on Christmas day, the mess can be ignored. We go to church in the morning, have champagne and smoked salmon at midday and, after the Queen’s speech, comes a very traditional roast turkey lunch.’ Boxing day sees the family walking to the beach and ‘maybe a spot of gardening.’ ■
TMO Lighting, 01935 891525; tمولighting.com

HELENA'S FAVOURITE PIECES

1 ‘The early 19th-century mahogany **writing desk** in the entrance hall (p34) was a gift from my father. I keep it just beside the door to the kitchen so envelopes, stamps and paperwork are all in one handy place.’

2 ‘I don’t know anything about this old African wooden **chair** (p32) in the living room other than it’s unusual, low, comfortable and everyone wants to pull it up beside the fire.’

3 ‘We bought this distressed old Romanian painted **cupboard** (p36) at an antiques fair. Everything about it appealed to me: the unusual colour, the size, the shape and the fact that it works with any decorative style.’

4 ‘Of course I love lamps and shades and this 1950s French vintage **china base** in the hall landing (p39) is arty and so of its time.’

5 ‘I love the French **chairs** on the landing (p39). They’re quirky, neat and small – ideal for this spot.’





FACING PAGE In the bedroom, a wicker headboard creates a relaxed and casual vibe, especially when paired with vibrant fabrics **THIS PAGE, ABOVE** Similar bathroom fittings can be found from Catchpole & Rye **BELOW, LEFT** A chest, antique chairs and striking paintings have been symmetrically arranged on the landing **BELOW, RIGHT** Johnnie (14), Rohan (11) and Digby (12) brave the weather for Christmas Eve sports with Rita, the



GET THE LOOK



Key pieces White walls allow warm, dark furniture and bright lamps to take centre stage. Mahogany Georgian **bureau**, £1,495, Driscolls Antiques. 'Tree Bark' **lamp shade and base**, £305, TMO Lighting



Accent colours In the kitchen a bright pink and muted lilac ensure a homely look. 'Rhubarb' interior egg shell, £47, Paint & Paper Library. 'Pamplona 6' tailor-made kitchen paint, £18.99 per 2.5l, Dulux.



Textiles Layers of pattern and colour are key to Helena's eclectic scheme. 'Roses' **cushion cover**, £49.99, Amara. 'Shift' **rug**, from £420 per sq m, The Rug Company

Accessories

Helena loves bright glassware. Dartington crystal flower bottle **vase**, £37, John Lewis. Apple green 'Medici' **glass**, £11.50, BTC by Design



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