

Organised LIVING

For Emma and Rob, a serious clear-out plus plenty of new storage has created a calm, clutter-free family home

DESIGN CLASSICS

A 70s David Field coffee table, from vittorioragone.com, takes pride of place in the sitting room. The comfortable Jackson sofa from sofa.com has been covered in Sarona Porridge fabric by romo.com.



ON THE SHELF Emma and Rob had so many books, having shelves made was essential. Mixing antique and contemporary furniture works well – the old console table sits happily next to the funky armchair from donghia.com.



PERSONAL TOUCH

The sitting room can look bare after Christmas decorations come down, so a collection of paintings arranged in a grid design adds a touch of colour and interest. These are Emma's "egg" paintings.

Having lived in separate maisonettes in the same London street for nine years before friendship turned to romance, artist Emma Alcock and her writer husband Rob McGibbon were firmly wedded to the area.

"Living here for so long, we'd both made friends," says Emma. "It's a proper London street, with lovely Victorian buildings next to the river and a real mix of people. We lived three doors apart, and we used to go with neighbours to the local pub, which is where we realised that there was something more between us."

Marrying in 2007, the couple started focusing on getting more space.

"We wanted a house with a garden, room to entertain and a studio where I could paint, but we were worried we would have to move out of London to get a whole house," admits Emma.

Then a saviour, in the form of kindly neighbour Ted Maund, offered a solution.

"We had a real connection with Ted, who was a local legend; his family have been here for generations," recalls Emma. "He owned and rented out three houses in the street. When he heard of our plight, he offered to sell us one." >>



Emma and Rob have created the perfect family home for their son, Joseph, now five

“The house isn’t always this tidy, but we put in plenty of storage to make sure everything has a place”



The basement and ground floors of the three-bedroom Victorian terraced house had become neglected as the elderly tenant moved to the upper floors, and the garden was so overgrown that it had been boarded in. Since she’d died, the property had stood empty.

“We paid the market price, but Ted waited until we had sold my flat, and the house never went on the open market,” says Emma. “I think he liked the idea of a family living there again. Although he sadly died aged 96 in December 2011, he was very interested in what we were doing, and we have some lovely photos of him inspecting what was going on.”

Organising two flats into one home

It was wonderful for the couple to be able to stay in an area they had grown to love, but the next issue was sorting through the contents of two flats, and reducing it down to move into a house.

“It was a mammoth task, but we didn’t need two of everything and didn’t want to take clutter to the new house. We had to bite the bullet and be ruthless with what we kept,” says Emma.

Doing everything correctly, but on a budget, was Emma and Rob’s driving

ENTERTAINING SPACE Knocking the small basement rooms into one large space has created the perfect entertaining area. An oak table from heals.co.uk is teamed with various old chairs, all painted white by Emma.

WORDS STEPHANIE SMITH | PHOTOGRAPHS DAVID GILES



LIGHTEN UP To keep the basement kitchen/diner light, Emma chose a modern Italian Schifffini kitchen and bright splashbacks, both from designspacelondon.com, and limestone tiles in Moleanos Blue from stonehousetiles.co.uk.

CLEAN LINES The sash windows in the bedroom were replaced by oakjoinery.com. Emma opted for white blinds, Tarlatan by paintlibrary.co.uk on the walls and a painted floor. The Norwegian wool throw was a wedding present.

force, and they rented a flat nearby during the eight-month building project.

“Everything needed doing – walls were replastered, windows replaced and damaged fireplaces changed,” says Emma. “The only original fitting left is a doorknob, which I keep on my desk!”

Following the structural work, the past three years have been a slow but enjoyable process of getting the house just how they like it. “Everything in the house means something to us,” reflects Emma. “It’s not my style to rush out and create a room set – we couldn’t have afforded to anyway. It’s a mix of older and contemporary pieces, with pale walls, some in colours I mixed myself, and space to display my paintings.”

The couple would like to add another bedroom and bathroom for guests, but for now it’s finally time to relax. “It’s like the house told us what to do,” says Emma. “That may sound odd, but we had an instinctive feel for what was right.” To see more of Emma’s work, go to emmaalcock.com. >>

“We didn’t want to take clutter to the new house – we had to be ruthless”



SPLASH OF COLOUR

The bathroom fittings and nickel brassware were salvaged from a house in Belgravia by their architect. Emma painted the roll-top bath a glorious green, 0-009, from papers-paints.co.uk.

