







**PORCH**  
Erik and Tori Odell-Romanoff with Harry, six, and Thea, three, outside their wisteria-covered cottage near Wye

**MANTEL**  
The couple inherited the fireplace seat that sits in front of the open fire. Either side of the mirror are prints that were bought at auction



**LIVING ROOM**  
Accessories reflect Erik's American heritage and the couple's love of travelling. The ottoman is covered in a striking fabric by Manuel Canovas and the shutters on the wall were sourced at Wishbarn Antiques in Rye. The lighthouse painting is by Erik's brother, artist Misha Rostislav Romanov

It was while their London home was being renovated that Tori Odell-Romanoff, her husband Erik and their baby son Harry discovered life in the countryside. They'd moved in with Tori's sister in rural Hertfordshire while their house in Tooting Bec underwent a total overhaul, and when they returned home nine months later, Tori says, 'something didn't quite fit'. In April 2013 Thea was born, and the couple realised that the capital was no longer for them.

Tori says: 'One evening, not long after Thea arrived, Erik looked at me and said, "You're not happy, are you? Shall we move to the country?" And that was it. We put our house on the market the next day and it sold that afternoon.'

Next, the couple faced the dilemma of where to move to. 'We knew we wanted to live in Kent,' says Tori, 'so we drew a triangle between London, where Erik works, and both sets of parents – mine near Sandwich and Erik's in Rye. Wye in Kent's Great Stour Valley was the middle point.'

One summer's day shortly afterwards, the family piled into the car to check out the area.

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COUNTRY COTTAGE

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‘Our home is comfortable and relaxed. I’m a maximalist – I’d describe our



**DINING ROOM**  
Erik limewashed the inglenook fireplace and hung two molas (embroidered fabric panels) from Panama inside it. The baskets were bought at TK Maxx

**KITCHEN**  
Overhead cupboards have been replaced with handmade open shelving

**MAIN BEDROOM**  
A headboard covered in a Nina Campbell fabric works well with the blanket from John Lewis. The print above the bed was bought from Galerie Dei Barri in Gassin near Saint-Tropez

**BATHROOM**  
The couple bought the towels at Bed Bath & Beyond in the US and then had them monogrammed



Once they left the M20 and were met by hedgerows frothing with cow parsley and astounding views of the Great Stour Valley, their minds were made up. They househunted online and found a beautiful weatherboarded cottage near Wye. The wisteria-dad property had pretty green window frames offsetting the white cladding and at the bottom of the garden was a seating area with a breathtaking view of the rolling countryside. ‘I rang the estate agent and they put me in touch with the vendor,’ says Erik. ‘I called and told her we were cash buyers and begged her not to show anyone around until we could see it. She agreed and we put in an offer straight after our viewing, which was accepted.’

The sale of the London house went through quickly and the family briefly moved in with Tori’s parents near Sandwich in Kent while waiting to complete on the purchase. The vendor was chain-free too so, by August 2013, they had the keys.

When they bought it, the house was in good shape but it needed a little cosmetic updating. Tori and Erik also decided to convert part of the upstairs landing into a nursery for Thea, turning the cottage into a four-bedroom home. Erik, who works for London architectural

style as modern classical, with a touch of clutter,’ SAYS ERIK



designer Staffan Tollgard, oversaw the project. The couple also revamped the kitchen by hanging new tiles and removing the overhead cupboards, which they replaced with open shelving crafted by Erik. He also limewashed the stunning inglenook fireplace in the dining area.

To make the house bright and airy, they had the dark beams lightened and opted for a calming palette of off-white, taupe and green for the walls. Now the couple’s home is filled with pieces that reflect their love of travelling as well as Erik’s American heritage – he spent his early years living in Chicago and moved to the UK when he was 12, returning to go to university in upstate New York.

‘We’ve collected things from almost everywhere we’ve been,’ says Tori. A carved wooden giraffe peeping out from behind an armchair is just one example. ‘When I was 18, I made my father bring it back from Kenya after a family holiday,’ Tori laughs. Meanwhile, the smattering of American flag motifs, bright piping, plaid fabrics and readaimed shutters on the living room wall lend a New England feel to their new home. Tori – a former managing director of an upscale floristry business – has also



injected her design flair, which has included placing a glorious white indoor hydrangea in a huge blue and white china trug in the hallway. The couple describe their style as ‘modern classical, with a touch of clutter’. ‘I’m a maximalist,’ laughs Erik. ‘Our home feels comfortable and relaxed.’

Upstairs, the bathroom has been spruced up with a lick of paint and the bedrooms feature an eclectic mix of fabrics, including lace and a happy mix of checks and toile from various sources including Dunelm and Nina Campbell.

It’s clear the family love their country life. ‘When I leave the confines of London, the sky opens up and my tension levels drop,’ says Erik. ‘This place is my tonic. One of our favourite things to do is take the children for a walk, meet friends for a drink by the fire in the pub and then all head back to ours for a roast.’

As for the house, there are further plans afoot. ‘We’re planning an L-shaped extension to create more space downstairs and two more bedrooms upstairs,’ Tori explains. ‘This is our forever home.’

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