



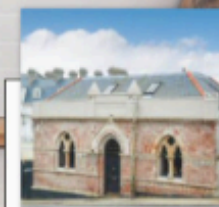
## FUN HOUSE

Laurie and Solomon Parker's bold vision and tenacity helped them reimagine a derelict former bathhouse into the ultimate playground

FEATURE AMY MAYNARD  
PHOTOGRAPHY RICHARD GADSBY



**LIVING AREA**  
Mismatched sofas are arranged to create a relaxed snug area. The Vivienne sofa in Milan Raspberry Mix is a match, £3,599. Sofology. Try eBay for a similar antique rug



### HOME TRUTHS

**THE PROPERTY** Former Turkish bath house, built in 1864  
**LOCATION** East Sussex  
**ROOMS** Kitchen-diner/living area, mezzanine, cinema room, utility room, three bedrooms (two en suite), bathroom  
**PURCHASED** 2013  
**PREVIOUS PROPERTY** 'Before this, we were living in a rented Victorian terrace in southeast London,' says Laurie.





## INSPIRATION

*'I love sourcing old pieces,  
reconditioning them and then  
working out how and where  
I can use them'*

## LIVING AREA

The vintage bowling alley once  
belonged to Roman Abramovich.  
The Fitz chair in tan leather is  
comparable, £499, Swoon. Similar  
reindeer skins, from £145,  
Nordic Hides And Skins





#### KITCHEN-DINER

The carcasses were bought online and the couple hired a carpenter to make the bespoke doors from old pallets. Similar antique workbench, £947, Pamono



#### EN SUITE

A concrete sink gives a modern edge, offsetting the retro orange metro tiles. Arla basin is a match, price on request, Kast Concrete Basins. Engineered oak flooring, price on request, Hawwoods



#### COASTAL | 25BH

#### BATHROOM

Monochrome flooring and fittings are lifted by green tiles. Minton Hollins dark green tiles are comparable, £123.56sq m, Topps Tiles



The bijou frontage of Laurie and Solomon Parker's house, on a quiet street near the sea, gives little clue to the magical land of wonder that lies within. The couple have painstakingly transformed a former Turkish baths into a playground for children and adults alike, featuring a vast living space bedecked with original fairground signs, arcade games and a vintage bowling alley. 'We were renting in London and found this house randomly after driving down to

Camber Sands,' says Laurie. 'We followed the road along the coast to Hastings, and thought it was a marvellous place.'

This trip prompted Solomon to look at property for sale in the area, which is when he came across a former bath house. The Grade-II listed building was built in the mid 1800s, before being converted into a swimming pool during Victorian times. After a brief spell as a church, it was then used as a glass factory before lying empty for a decade. 'The previous owner wanted

to turn it into a family home and already had planning permission, but then ran out of money,' says Laurie. 'It had become derelict – the roof had fallen in and trees were starting to grow through the walls.'

It would take a huge amount of vision – and funds – to turn the building into a home, but having secured a developer's mortgage, the couple bought the property in 2013. They then obtained new planning permission to create a three-bedroom home. What followed was an arduous three-year

process. 'We were constantly caught between the planning and conservation departments,' says Laurie. 'Also, managing our mortgage was stressful because you get the money in stages, but we kept running out and having to find cash elsewhere.'

The couple added a staircase and converted the roof space into a master bedroom with en suite, while downstairs, they created a stunning kitchen-diner/living area and mezzanine, and two bedrooms. While the Victorian pool still sits beneath

the living space and is used for storage, the other portion of the basement has been turned into a cinema room and utility space.

The couple kept their rental property in London while the work was being done and, a year after their son, Eli, was born in September 2015, they finally moved in. Fortunately, furnishing their new home didn't involve many difficult decisions. 'We decided to only buy things we both loved and it all just came together,' says Laurie. While, on paper the house seems like the

ultimate party pad, in reality, it now makes the perfect family home – as well as Eli, the couple often have Solomon's sons, Louis, 13, and Miles, 10, to stay.

Living in such a unique space is the realisation of a long-held dream for Laurie. 'As a child, I used to love exploring derelict buildings and drawing them,' she says. 'Now, I've been able to convert and live in one. The conservation officer told us that we're just custodians of this building – and now I understand just what she meant.'



#### DINING AREA

The table offers plenty of space for homework or Sunday lunch. Try the industrial chic sleeper dining table, £495, RCC Furniture on Etsy



#### MASTER BEDROOM

The wooden partition acts as a headboard and separates the en suite from the main space. The Bateau copper bath is a match, price on request, William Holland



#### EN SUITE

Moody blue walls are a pleasing contrast to the patchwork tiles. Walls and vanity in Hague Blue estate emulsion, £46.50 for 2.5L, Farrow & Ball



#### BEDROOM

The antique French shutters were custom fitted to the windows. The Chantilly king-size bed is a match, £499, The Cotswold Company