

# Highly DESIRABLE

Francesca Rowan-Plowden injected vintage style and a delightful dose of colour into her beautiful house atop a hill

**FEATURE** AMY MAYNARD | **PHOTOGRAPHY** RICHARD GADSBY



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#### UNIQUE



#### HOME TRUTHS

**THE PROPERTY** Detached house, built in 1740

**LOCATION** Kent

**ROOMS** Hall, drawing room, sitting room, kitchen-diner, utility room, cloakroom, conservatory, four bedrooms (one en suite), bathroom

**PURCHASED** 2012

**PREVIOUS PROPERTY**

'We had a flat in London before buying this house,' says Francesca.

#### CONSERVATORY

This lush space offers incredible views across the marsh.

Table, £300, McCully & Crane.

Red painted chairs, £25 each, Strand Quay Antiques

## GEORGIAN DETACHED | 25BH



#### KITCHEN-DINER

The palette of cream, yellow and blue creates a cheerful feel in this scheme.

Cushions, £57 each, Pale & Interesting. Walls painted in Cooking Apple Green estate emulsion, £39.50 per 2.5 litres, Farrow & Ball. Ticking fabric on chairs, £9.50m, Merchant & Mills







**DRAWING ROOM**  
The huge fireplace is a focal point. Walls painted in Light Blue estate emulsion, £39.50 per 2.5 litres, Farrow & Ball. Blue sofa, £250, Strand Quay Antiques. Persisk Kelim Gashgai rugs are just like these, from £150 each, Ikea



Three years ago, Francesca Rowan-Plowden and her husband, Piers, were in the middle of what had been an exhausting search for a new home. One day, after making their way through the gate at the top of a long drive, navigating cattle grids and bumps in the road, they first set eyes on a Grade II listed Georgian hilltop house in the middle of the Kent countryside.

After many months and viewing more than 30 properties, Francesca was overwhelmed with relief. 'After seeing inside the house, I got into the car and promptly burst into tears,' she says. 'I was exhausted after visiting so many places, and was so happy to have found the right one.'

Seeing past the property's dated decor, Francesca and Piers were captivated by its large rooms, an incomparable view, and the intact

period features. 'I loved the quarry tiles and huge drawing room fireplace,' says Francesca.

A stressful few months followed, during which the purchase was nearly scuppered. 'At one point, we thought we had lost the house because the sale of our flat in London fell through,' says Francesca. 'Luckily it was still on the market by the time we got another buyer.'

Once they were finally in, it wasn't long before Francesca replaced the garish wall colours with a rich and varied palette, and painted over the orange-hued pine kitchen units. She also used her experience as an interior designer to introduce a vibrant mix of fabrics and accessories. Her artistic flair is evident at every turn – from groupings of pretty glassware and china to revamped soft furnishings. A recent project was a

#### **1 SITTING ROOM** Pale walls showcase the artwork.

Hay estate emulsion on walls, £39.50 per 2.5 litres, Farrow & Ball. Find similar Ikat cushions, from £5 each, Etsy

#### **2 HALL** High-level bookshelves add interest. The green enamel pendant from Dowsing & Reynolds is just like this, from £60

#### **3 BATHROOM** A big bath is a must to fit all four boys. Wicker chair, £60, House of Bath, is a match. Scandi rug, £44, Hunter Jones

#### **4 MASTER BEDROOM** Colours, textures and patterns blend harmoniously in here. Headboard, £500; cushions, £45 each, all Rowan Plowden Design

## GEORGIAN DETACHED | 25BH

blue-and-white Aztec-print headboard that now crowns the bed in the master bedroom.

It's no wonder Francesca was keen to put her own feminine stamp on the place, as she is somewhat outnumbered. As well as Piers, there are four other males in the house – Finn, 10, Mylo, 8, Rafe, 6, and Barnaby, 11 months. 'We moved in here when Rafe was only 18 months old and I still remember him tripping over a threshold and giving himself a black eye on the stone floor,' says Francesca. 'But apart from that, there have been no real dramas and it's a fantastic family

home. The children love it here. The garden is wonderful for kicking a football around and the older two enjoy riding their bikes up and down the drive.'

Francesca describes the property as a party house and the couple certainly make the most of it, with friends coming from far and wide to enjoy their hospitality. 'Piers and I enjoy throwing parties, especially in summer. He knocks up a tasty one-pot dish and all our guests fill the kitchen and spill out into the conservatory. There is a giant jasmine growing up the wall in there

that smells heavenly and a fig tree in the centre, which we drape with fairy lights and lanterns – it looks magical at night.'

The hill the house sits on top of overlooks marshland and in Roman times, that very spot would have been a cliff dropping directly down to the beach. Now, it looks out over miles of land that is a patchwork of green pastures and zesty yellow rapeseed during early summer. 'I grew up in London,' says Francesca. 'So I can't believe I now live in a home that regularly has sheep wandering into the garden. It's wonderfully different.' 25

**DESIGN TIP** *'Don't be afraid to mix fabrics and textures – it's the perfect way to create an English country look'*

