



"Clocks and candelabra are two of our favourite things to collect and adorn almost every mantelpiece"



"The entrance hall has a huge impact. We shipped the carved archway back from India after a holiday"



"We're surrounded by things we love"

A chance encounter led Emma and David Mann to this seaside villa, which is a striking backdrop for their antique collection, as well as a cosy family home

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Nestled in the pretty coastal town of Hastings, Emma and David Mann's home is a hybrid of a museum, a curio shop and a relative's welcoming abode. It's hard to decide whether to gaze at the objects covering every surface or curl up in front of the fire with a cup of tea.

During a spur-of-the-moment visit to trawl the town's junk shops almost a decade ago, the couple noticed the beautiful houses in the area. Not long after, they swapped their small home in West London for this vast, four-bedroom Victorian villa in the East Sussex town. They transformed it by stripping back

layers of paint, relocating the kitchen and filling the house with beautiful antiques. Then, in 2015, they turned their passion for collecting antiques into a business and opened a vintage shop on the seafront. Now, the house is a living and breathing storeroom, with pieces constantly coming and going.

With paintings, religious artefacts and antique furniture all residing together, the surroundings have become the norm for the couple's two children, Harvey, 14, and 12-year-old Milly. In fact, their parents' love of collectables has been woven into the fabric of their lives for as long as they can remember. 'Most

children would return from a holiday in France with colouring books in their rucksacks, but we made our two carry antique breakables,' laughs Emma. 'And, when Harvey was a baby, David made him a mobile from a carved gilt phoenix and Sanderson fabric remnants. Now, he has a 19th-century Breton oak wardrobe in his bedroom, but there's also Lego everywhere, so it's very incongruous!'

Despite this, the children remain 'generally indifferent' to the activities of their parents. 'When I eventually roll over, all this stuff will be going to the charity shop,' laughs David. Jokes aside, the house is obviously a much-loved >>>



The family spend a lot of time in the sitting room, enjoying a roaring log fire almost every day in the winter

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LEFT David is a fan of British naval prints, like these ones on the hallway wall

BELOW AND RIGHT The kitchen is by Mobalpa at HKS in Hastings and the hanging lamps from a French flea market are almost like an art installation

BOTTOM RIGHT A bottle of little bulbs creates a unique feature. A former shop cabinet shows off a collection of vintage beer and wine glasses



"The island doubles as a workspace for my ceramic painting. I can easily spend many hours working away."



LEFT AND BELOW Emma and David enjoy views over the treetops of the local park from their light and airy bedroom. Vintage floral fabrics alongside

French gilt antiques create a feeling of faded grandeur

BOTTOM The loo is painted in a hue inspired by shutters the couple saw in Spain



family home for the children, and Emma and David have a relaxed approach to parenting, meaning that they don't have to constantly tell the children not to touch this candelabra or that painting. Instead, there is a quiet, mutual respect.

With various career incarnations under their belts – David was a theatre production manager and Emma a civil servant and teacher – when a black weather-boarded toilet block right by the sea came up for auction, the couple set about realising their dream of running an antiques business. The result is Flushed; a quirky shop-cum-café not far from the house.

Now, Emma and David have the perfect excuse to spend even more time at auction houses and flea markets, which begs the question: do they end up getting attached to things they've bought for the shop? The answer is, of course, yes. 'We buy stuff to sell at the shop and store it at home. Emma puts a price tag on it and, if I like the piece, I take it off again!' says David. 'My dad and I used to read naval fiction; I love the sea and have lots of nautical memorabilia. Among my

favourites are a collection of early 19th-century engravings of sea captains in the hallway.' For Emma, her most treasured items are ones from the early days of the couple's relationship. 'David recently tried to take an ornamental brass box from the house to sell at the shop, but I wouldn't let him, because we found it on a trip to India years ago, and every time I look at it I think of that holiday,' she says.

The couple met in London more than 20 years ago, when they lived in adjoining flats. David used to leave flowers (and on one occasion a *tarte Tatin*) on Emma's doorstep, and eventually she gave in to his charms, moving across the hall into his place. A discovered mutual interest in interiors, coupled with their creative flair, resulted in the perfect partnership. 'It's fortuitous that our passion for antiques indirectly led us to this house,' says Emma. 'We love its feeling of faded grandeur and the sense of calm and comfort we get from being surrounded by the people and things that we love.'

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