

# Perfect English Farmhouse

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with photography by Jan Baldwin









**ABOVE LEFT** Next to the more formal living room downstairs is a 'snug' that is almost filled by a deep corner sofa piled with cushions and, in front of it, a buttoned velvet footstool from George Smith. Facing the sofa is a wall-mounted flat-screen television.

**ABOVE RIGHT** Just outside the front door, Joanna found a stone-lined well, which she uncovered and built a low wall around.

**FAR RIGHT** The house has cottage proportions and retains its original planked doors, here seen open onto an upstairs corridor. The shiny metal door handles are Joanna's addition.

**OPPOSITE** In the roof space, lit by dormer windows, Joanna has created a suite of bathroom and bedroom with, between them, this sitting room, which is furnished with a characteristically interesting mix of pieces, including a pair of Victorian buttoned armchairs from Amy Perry Antiques. The glass dome encloses gold foil flowers and part of a broken china doll. A step leads up into the bathroom, with its antique copper bathtub.

## CHIC & CHEERFUL

*Behind the Aga in the kitchen of Joanna Berryman's Cotswold farmhouse is a big sheet of mirror glass. This impertinent juxtaposition of country kitchen deity and city bling could be vulgar but isn't. In fact, the effect is handsome, a refreshing change from the more usual blue and white wobbly tiles decorated with hand-painted rabbits, and a testament to interior designer Joanna's eye for a bold, decorative gesture. Adding to the sheen of this large, light room are work surfaces in smooth white marble and splashbacks of shiny, white brick-shaped tiles. Undercutting the gloss is a well-used butcher's block that functions as a kitchen island, its top so worn by years of cutting and chopping that anything placed on it is likely to slide off again.*









Joanna fondly describes the house as 'a bit of a Frankenstein', by which she means it has been added to over the centuries to become an architectural hybrid. Unlike the monster, however, this mix-and-match creature is delightfully pretty, built in golden stone with a façade that may date back as far as the 17th century under a roof of stone tiles cushioned with moss and speckled with lichen. There is a stone barn facing the house, which Joanna has converted into an office and extra guest accommodation, and there is an ancient well to the right of the front door.

'I have always liked this part of the country,' Joanna says. 'And I was looking for a bolt-hole to escape to from London at weekends. This was the last of several properties I viewed and the one I fell in love with. I saw it on one of those beautiful autumnal days when everything seems gilded, and I knew I wanted to buy it before I even stepped inside. I loved the location – down its own little road, but on the edge of a pretty village – I loved the tennis court, and I loved the fact that the house has cottage proportions but also a feeling of light and space. We exchanged contracts over New Year 2010, and the builders started work the next day.'

Joanna made very few structural changes. Rather than major cosmetic surgery, what the house required was a gentle face-lift and some glamorous make-up. Out went all the fitted carpets to be replaced by stone and reclaimed floorboards downstairs, and sisal matting upstairs. In went bookcases, a raised slate hearth in the inglenook and antique bathroom fittings. With walls painted in Farrow & Ball's Hardwick White and French Gray, the scene was set for the furnishings, many of which were bought locally.

Joanna's is not a conventional take on country house style. She has used some of its elements – there are paintings and sculptures of horses, antlers, big

RIGHT In the living room, Joanna has solved the common problem of a smoking inglenook by raising the hearth on slabs of slate resting on dry stone supports. The room is cosy and tactile, with fabrics in contrasting textures: rough sackcloth on the squashy window seat cushion, cotton velvet on the deeply padded stool, silk ikat on the chairs and a soft rabbit fur throw draped over the back of the sofa. The huge book resting on the stool is Vivienne Westwood's *Opus*.





cushioned sofas, an old pine dresser in the kitchen, a brass bed in one of the bedrooms – but the effect is far from traditional. The equine theme, for example, is announced in the living room by a vibrant 1950s oil painting of two white horses against a scarlet background. Two large, sculpted horse's heads, one terracotta, one bronze, arch their necks on top of a small desk in the same room, while a pair of crystal horses rear up on a side table. Over the door is a ceramic tile with a lustre silhouette of a horse, and there is also a metal relief plaque of a racehorse hung above a plant stand supporting a vintage typewriter. One of the bedrooms has a metal bed moulded to look like harness facing a giant oil painting of a hunting scene. As for the antlers, the skulls to which they are attached are studded with crystals, while the pine dresser is stacked with cookery books and contemporary white crockery from Made, and is watched over by a rather kitsch painting of The Madonna.



**LEFT** The hall at the back of the house opens into a large utility room to the right. The door ahead is open into the kitchen where the wall to the left has been painted with blackboard paint and acts as a giant memo board.

**ABOVE** The kitchen is an L-shaped room at the back of the house, the portion beyond the old ceiling beam a glass-roofed extension that allows light to flood into the space from above. Behind the Aga Joanna has installed a

wall of mirror glass, which reflects more light and visually extends the space, making the room seem twice as long. Orange Le Creuset pots, pans, casseroles and kettle almost glow against a background of glossy white. The butcher's block shows its age with a surface worn away by years of use.

**OPPOSITE** Off the kitchen is a dining area with French doors that lead out onto a terrace where there is another table for alfresco summer dining.







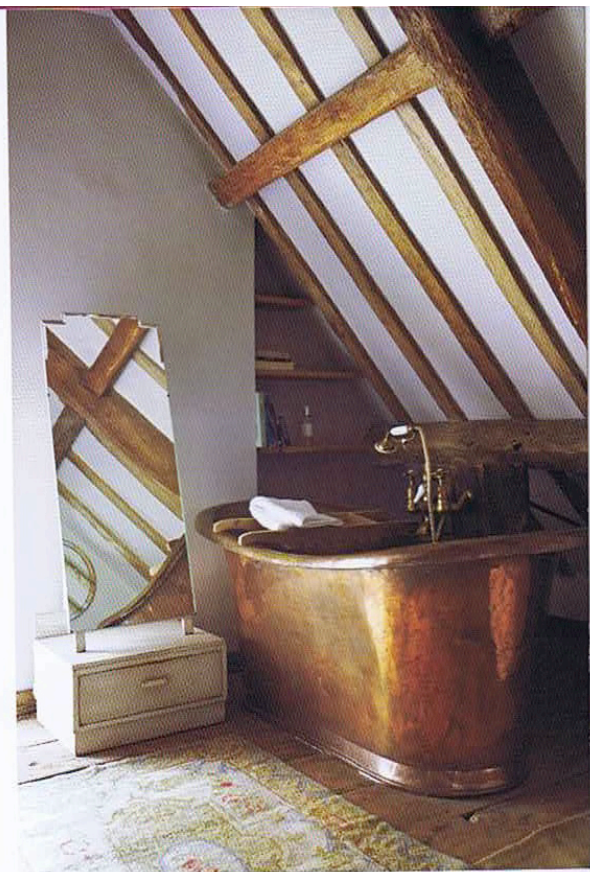




On the top floor, under the steep sloping beams of the roof, the glamour quotient reaches its apogee. Here Joanna has created a suite of bedroom, bathroom and sitting room, the mood of which she describes as '*Boogie Nights* meets Marie Antoinette' with a gilded bed from Graham & Green, an antique copper bathtub and her signature mix of antiques, unusual vintage pieces and visual jokes, like the grey knitted lampshade and the cushions printed with Edwardian portraits.

As glamorous as her rooms, and the ex-wife of Coldplay's bassist Guy Berryman, Joanna is still a relative newcomer in the world of interior design, having started her career in fashion. But her young, modish yet comfortable style is already in demand and her company, Matrushka, is juggling half a dozen or more projects that, at the time of writing, include a Gothic lodge in Barnes for a sports celebrity, a house in Maida Vale and a shop for trendy tailor Gresham Blake on Commercial Street in London.

Initially designed as a country retreat for Joanna, her daughter Nico, her family and friends, the moment pictures of *The Folly* appeared in a magazine people were clamouring to rent it. Joanna has since found that she is happy to share it, as she says guests are so appreciative, and she is pleased that it has become a successful commercial venture, albeit almost by accident. 'I had been planning to spend Christmas there this year,' she says almost plaintively from her studio in London, 'but I have had an offer I can't refuse, so I will probably go to Sri Lanka instead!'



ABOVE Another unusual antique bathtub in polished copper, bought at Ardingly antiques fair, tucks under the sloping roof of the attic bathroom.



LEFT The equine theme that recurs throughout the house is represented in this bedroom by the 'Handel' bed from And So To Bed, which is made to resemble harness. The painting hanging opposite the foot of the bed is a hunting scene, and the luscious pink velvet bedspread is Matthew Williamson for Debenhams.

OPPOSITE All the bathrooms feature charming antique fittings, such as this roll-top bathtub with its giant, fixed shower head from Catchpole & Rye. Joanna has lined the room with painted matchboarding, on which she has hung framed Edwardian prints, and emphasized the old-fashioned, feminine feel of the room with a broderie anglaise shower curtain.



## FUNKY FARMHOUSE elements of style

• **SURPRISE** A surprise may be good or bad, but is invariably intriguing. Behind their demure, period exteriors, all of these houses hide unexpected interiors, whether Clerkenwell-loft contemporary, louche neo-baroque or rock-chick chic. Making this culture clash a good surprise is a matter of having the courage of your convictions allied with the visual sensitivity to ensure that the architecture and period character of an interior are enhanced and highlighted by the contrast, rather than swamped and dominated.

• **CONTRAST** While the headline contrast in these interiors is between their architecture and the style in which they have been furnished and decorated, each also features contrast at a more detailed level, whether the polished contemporary door handles on Joanna Berryman's cottage-style doors, or the glitzy Venetian mirror propped in the rustic fireplace of Sam Denny Hodson and Paul Vogel's bedroom. Often the contrast is between textures as well as styles, and this is a particular feature of Mark Brazier-Jones and Julia Lowery's farmhouse, where rough, rustic plaster and timber are the setting for high-gloss furnishings.

• **WIT** When a witty gesture falls flat, it sinks into pretension. Battered straw hats balanced on the heads of marble busts are more likely to prompt a groan than an appreciative chuckle. The diamond tiara on Mark Brazier-Jones' stuffed boar's head, however, is definitely worth a smile, as is the sheer incongruity of photographs of rock legends Keith

Richards and Charlie Watts staring from the Tudor brickwork of a wooden staircase in Sam Denny Hodson and Paul Vogel's Suffolk farmhouse. Joanna Berryman spices the shopping lists scribbled on the blackboard paint that covers a wall of her kitchen with joky comments such as 'Charles and Camilla for tea!'; a reference to the proximity of Highgrove.

• **ODDITIES** Both Mark Brazier-Jones and Joanna Berryman have elevated early 20th-century typewriters to the status of ornament by placing them on pedestals (plant stands). They both also like to put strange things inside Victorian glass domes, in Joanna Berryman's case bits of broken doll, in Mark Brazier-Jones' a bird's skull and the wire from a champagne cork among other things. Changing the context of an object invites you to look at it afresh – whether a urinal in an art gallery, or a typewriter on a pedestal.

• **SCALE** According to Mark Brazier-Jones a chandelier can never be too big. 'The mistake most people make with chandeliers is too small, hung too high,' he says. Neither are mistakes he could be accused of in his own house. The chandelier in his kitchen, for example, is the size of a tractor wheel and hangs over the table at the level of the mantelpiece. None of these owners are afraid of scale. Sam Denny Hodson and Paul Vogel hang pictures that nearly fill their allocated bits of wall, while Joanna Berryman fits huge sofas and giant beds into small rooms.

