



Arts and crafts

A love of mid 20th-century furniture and design has shaped the Lewins' transformation of their north Norfolk home

PHOTOGRAPHS BY CHARLIE COLMER | STYLING BY HESTER PAGE | WORDS BY LOUISE ELLIOTT



OPPOSITE PAGE Contemporary ceramics are displayed beneath a piece of wallpaper designed by Edward Bawden.

THIS PAGE A 1950s Ernest Race sofa takes pride of place in the sitting area

THIS PAGE Original Ercol chairs surround a hand-crafted wooden dining table.

OPPOSITE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT

Exposed brick walls strike a contrast with more modern elements in the kitchen; the traditional exterior; screen-printed fabrics by Angie





With its mellow red-brick exterior, low pantile roof and neat rows of cream-painted windows, Angie and Simon Lewin's home in a tiny village just outside the Norfolk market town of Aylsham looks every bit the classic country cottage. Inside, however, they have left the rather predictable world of Welsh dressers and chintzy florals far behind. "We don't believe that because a house is of a particular age you have to fill it with pieces from the same period," Angie explains. "We prefer to contrast the old with the new, juxtaposing different styles and influences."

Fortunately, when the couple bought the property two years ago it was in the perfect condition to allow them to put such ideas into action. The three farmworkers' cottages, parts of which date back to the 17th century, had been

knocked into one by the previous owners but they hadn't got much further. "It was basically just an empty shell that we could make our own," Angie says.

And this they have achieved with style. In the kitchen, the exposed brickwork around the large inglenook fireplace, ancient bare beams and cream-coloured Aga contrast with more contemporary elements – a sleek stainless-steel fridge, modern wooden table and funky stools, curved plywood units and Marmoleum flooring in a bold chequerboard of cream and blue – to create an appealing fusion of homeliness and design. Elements from the Thirties through to the Sixties are also part of the mix: maroon-topped Formica worksurfaces, for example, and pieces of Rye pottery displayed on windowsills and in brickwork niches.

Both Angie and Simon are keen collectors of furniture, ceramics and ▷





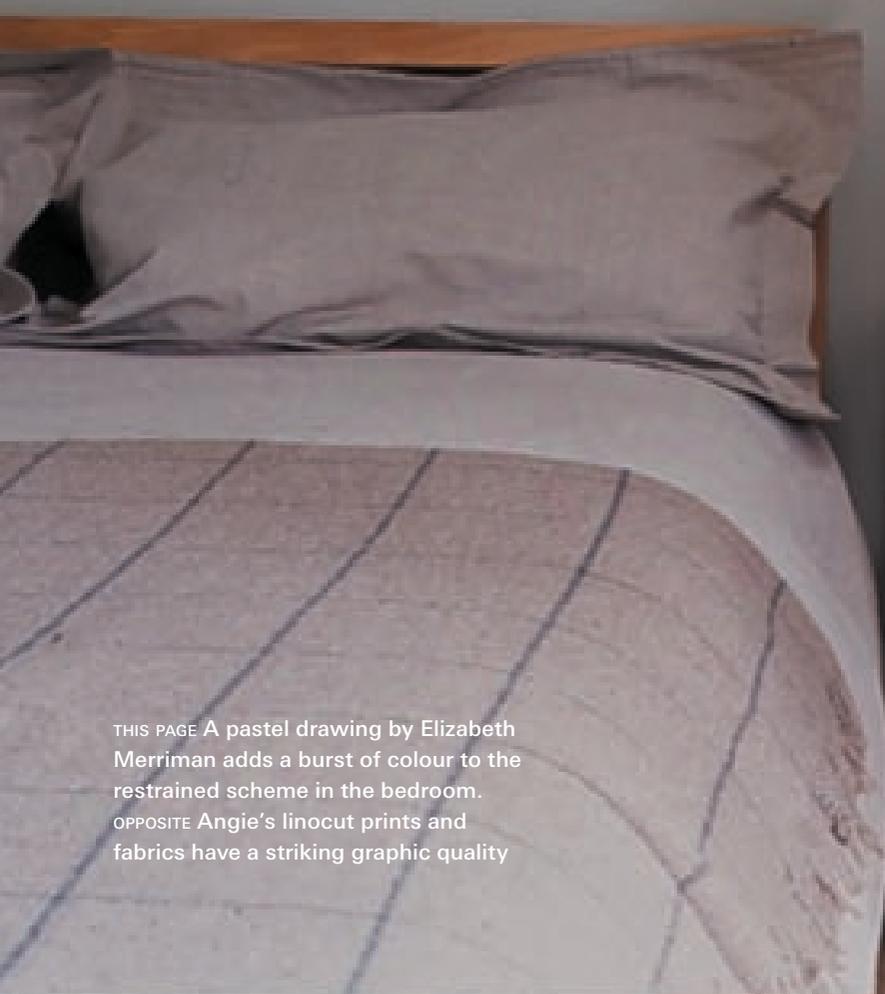
artwork from these eras. “We love the Festival of Britain period,” Simon explains, “when designers were shaking off the sense of post-war austerity and introducing more playful shapes and forms, such as Lucienne Day with her abstract fabrics and Ernest Race with his neatly curved furniture. But we’re not obsessed with the Fifties, we like earlier 20th-century artists such as Edward Bawden and Eric Ravilious, who both worked across a range of disciplines, as well as contemporary craftspeople.”

This interest is particularly evident in the open-plan, L-shaped sitting-dining room that takes up the rest of the ground floor. A collection of 1950s Ercol chairs in elm, a few of which belonged to Angie’s parents, surrounds a modern wooden dining table, while an Ernest Race ‘Wing’ sofa and armchair have been re-upholstered in a subdued checked fabric that closely matches the original. Natural wood is a strong feature of the

room, emphasised by the newly laid wide oak floorboards, with the different types unified by a similarity of tone. The overall colour scheme is based on typical Fifties hues of muted browns, greens, yellows and oranges. Yet the effect is far from dowdy, the colours offset and lifted by the white-painted walls and beams and the preponderance of pictures, cards and ceramics, again a juxtaposition of mid-century classics and modern.

The pair of fireplaces and staircases that rise from either end of the house bring a sense of symmetry but posed a problem when it came to installing furniture in the small upstairs rooms. “The staircases were so narrow that we couldn’t bring in any cupboards, so everything had to be built in,” Angie says. These range from a traditional tongue-and-groove affair to a more contemporary oak-veneer design.

Although plainer than downstairs, the upstairs rooms continue to reflect ▷



THIS PAGE A pastel drawing by Elizabeth Merriman adds a burst of colour to the restrained scheme in the bedroom.

OPPOSITE Angie’s linocut prints and fabrics have a striking graphic quality





Simon and Angie's love of interesting designs and artistic crafts united by a Fifties-inspired palette. It was this passion that led them to open their own gallery, St Jude's, in Aylsham in January 2006. It specialises in unusual British art, craft and design, with paintings and prints alongside modern and vintage furniture, ceramics, glass and fabrics – pieces that evoke the mood of their own home.

Throughout the house, seed heads and pods, rather than fresh flowers, fill simple pots, jugs and jars – evidence of Angie's fascination with plant forms, which also shapes her work as an artist-printmaker. "I studied Fine Art and Printmaking at Central St Martin's but I later trained as a garden designer and my increased knowledge of plants and appreciation of their skeletal, graphic forms began to influence my linocuts and wood engravings," she says.

Today the wild flowers and grasses of the north Norfolk countryside, as well as her own garden, provide her with a rich seam of subject matter – the sculptural seed heads of plantains, dandelions, goat's beard, poppies, cow parsley, teasels, and sea lavender outlined against sea and sky are captured in her beautiful, limited-edition prints. The colours and

designs are evocative of the Fifties and yet refreshingly original.

In their garden they have built a wooden studio where Angie can work on her prints and range of screen-printed fabrics. "I'm quite obsessive about my work," she says. "I spend hours cutting out the designs. In winter the lino can get almost too cold, so I just pop over to the house and warm it on the Aga."

And she always takes a few moments to soak up a little more inspiration from the world of design that informs every room of her fascinating Norfolk home. 🐾

To see a selection of Angie's work, visit www.angielewin.co.uk or St Jude's (01263 735777; www.stjudesgallery.co.uk). Her prints will also be on show at the Bircham Gallery, 14 Market Place, Holt, Norfolk (01263 713312) from 26 May to 20 June.

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The muted Fifties hues are lifted by a preponderance of pictures, prints and ceramics



OPPOSITE PAGE, CENTRE Angie hangs prints to dry in her studio. THIS PAGE Retro fabrics and a design by Angie complement the colours of a lithograph by Edward Bawden