



Stéphanie Surply

HOME TOUR

A quintessentially French cottage is where Stéphanie Surply blends minimalism and grandeur, creating a relaxed family home

Just a two-hour drive from Paris, in a small village amongst the verdant Normandy countryside, lives Stéphanie Surply, her husband, Benoit, and two of their children, Maya and Louis. Their rustic home, bought 14 years ago, dates back to the 1850s with traditional stonework, low ceilings and exposed wooden beams.

Stylistically, the house remains faithful to the region's architectural style, maintaining much of its classic asymmetrical plan and decorative half-timbering. But the couple's renovations have since brought a more contemporary openness to this cosy and romantic cottage.

"We have knocked down walls and relocated the kitchen, installing an extension and then another onto the dining room," says Stéphanie. "A company carried out the first extension, to the kitchen, but it went badly, so we stopped working with them and continued the work ourselves, which took several months."



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WHICH ALLOWED US TIME TO SEE OUR REAL NEEDS"**





HANDS-ON RENOVATION

With the experience of the first extension behind them, the couple worked to extend the dining room space themselves, including the roofing and the installation of a glass windowed roof, which Stéphanie sourced from a flea market. They renovated their fireplace, too, installing a wood burner, exposing the stonework and adding a plaster mantelpiece to match the raw stone stucco effect of their home's walls.

"What guided our renovations was that we lived in the house before starting the work, which allowed us time to see our real needs," she says. "The priority for us was to expand our living spaces, as we did with the kitchen and the dining room. We didn't want to feel cramped with our four children (the couple's older children, Anna and Raphaël, live away for university)."

Now fully renovated, the family's home is a testament to Stéphanie's insatiable love of antiques and passion for restoring second-hand furniture, many of which she sells online, and she and Benoit have refurbished all their home's furniture. Her online store, Steph Since 1979, sells an eclectic mix of designs such as Eastern European pottery, Parisian sideboards and original vintage cabinets. "I started selling the furniture I renovated three years ago, I had wanted to do this as a job for a very long time," she explains.

LOVED PRELOVED

Her work overlaps with her own home plans, and she is constantly on the hunt for items to sell or use in their space. "The dining room's glass roof is the most impressive thing I found. When I saw it, I knew straight away that it was perfect for our house, and we created the extension thanks to that."

For the kitchen, Stéphanie sourced a second-hand sink from an old factory, an antique window, and the cupboard doors - which they made with wooden planks found in a barn. The only items purchased brand new were household linens and appliances; everything else, from crockery and chairs to the tables and storage units, are antique or vintage pieces that needed loving repair.

This penchant for re-envisioning furniture comes from Stéphanie's long-standing desire to experiment with a piece's potential. "The first pieces I renovated were those in my bedroom when I was a teenager. My parents had chosen them, and I didn't like them at all. They were dark and classic, so I repainted them, but that didn't quite work. It wasn't my best idea!"





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A SIMPLE GRACE

At home, Stéphanie’s interior style is more distinguished and minimalist than led by the fancies of her eagle-eye for flea market finds. “I may work in the flea market and source a lot for my shop, but I don’t like to have too many things in my interiors. I like it to be refined, and I like vintage and rustic styles, raw wood, terracotta and natural materials.”

“Our house is used to take photos of the furniture I sell, and it quickly becomes messy, so I’m happy that once the photography shoots are finished, it’s a much calmer scene with few things in it,” she says. “I don’t feel the need to have more objects or furniture when the essentials are there.”

But some special pieces, ones beyond repair, have found their way into Stéphanie’s home. “Sometimes, if I can’t renovate a piece of furniture because it’s in too poor a condition, then we keep just the front and embed it in a plaster box, like in our bedroom. The sink in our bathroom came from a local school, and my husband created the tap using copper. We also used an old window to create a separation behind the bathtub.”

Part of the couple’s approach to designing their home in this way is focused on sustainability, both for environmental and economic reasons. “When we renovated, we did it with a lot of recycled materials,” says Stéphanie.

Despite being what she describes as a “fairly simple home” stripped of busyness and clutter, it is certainly not one short of sentiment and intention. Old furniture or objects that show the traces of time, uninhibited by small defects that show their age, are what give this home abundant character. “There’s no need for great resources to create a house to our taste,” she says. “It’s not necessary to spend a lot of money to add soul to your home.”

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