



ASTITCH INTIME

Anna Phillips of knitwear brand Hambro & Miller shares her home overlooking the South Downs

Words: ESTELLE LEE Photography: JOANNA MACLENNAN



esigners Anna Phillips and her husband Jeff Kightly chased their dreams to the country a few years ago. After nearly a decade in south west London they were tiring of the rat race and thinking of having children. Bizarrely Jeff's bicycle being stolen was the impetus they needed to start the search for the perfect family idyll in the country. Like many families before them they were looking for the perfect retreat – a commutable home in a village near the sea. At the suggestion of a friend, they decided to focus their search in the quintessentially English village of

Steyning in West Sussex.

Today they live in a classic Victorian terraced house overlooking the South Downs, that is now testament to their creative instincts. "The previous owners had ripped out all the original features and character", laughs Anna, "despite the yellow paint in each room I knew we could make this house come alive." Everywhere you turn, they have remodelled and rebuilt the house that has become a home for their two children Miller (4) and Herbie (2). Anna has implanted her Danish genes and created a charming space where she not only lives but works on her recently

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launched knitwear brand Hambro & Miller from the glorious summer house at the bottom of the garden.

The daughter of a Danish mother whose knitting talents before her wove the fabric of her childhood, she provided Anna with a real passion for creativity. Interior design has formed the foundation of her career to date, and whilst that business still exists, she had always wanted to create knitwear for children. "My mother knitted constantly for the boys and the seed of the idea came from there." With the help of her mother she worked on patterns for the collection and sourced independent knitters the length and breadth of the country. "I love popping into my local knitters for a cup of tea," she muses. This is not just a business for Anna, it's a way of life.

The heart of the home is the kitchen, an airy, light space that was built onto the back of the original house. The zinc kitchen table is often the workspace for Anna and Jeff whilst the children run around. Incredibly good with his hands, Jeff has built much of the house and indeed the cabinetry in the kitchen is made from wine crates that the couple reclaimed and reused. "I do get seduced by mod cons," admits Anna,"but I couldn't live with them myself". Their only concession to modernity is underfloor heating and of

course a TV which can be cleverly hidden away in a cabinet.

Most of the furniture and objects throughout the house are vintage and for good reason: "You can't be precious with furniture when you have young children," she says. A lot is sourced from Ardingley antiques market, the source of her





Hambro & Miller founder Anna Phillips has created a playful and peaceful family home; the zinc kitchen table often doubles as a workspace for the knitwear brand.



"You simply can't be precious with furniture when you have very young children"

vintage sofa, which has been patched and repatched through child-related wear and tear. Anna is most definitely a magpie and picks things up from their Scandinavian summers each year. Danish pieces from markets are dotted throughout the house, as well as family heirlooms. "Ordered clutter" is how she describes the eelectic interior decor.

The children's bedrooms are a step back in time. The twin handcrafted beds could be from the pages of a fairytale, made from reclaimed pottery boards in Staffordshire (also thriftily used to make floors in the bedrooms). There are vintage toys and a quirky light crafted in the shape of a dog from London designer James Plumb. On the wall is a little printing drawer from Anna's mother — "as children we always had one in our rooms, full of secret little trinkets."

There's no doubt that the house is a labour of love for the family, taking almost six years before Anna considered it complete, thanks in no small part to having two children in between. But there's no time to draw breath, already she is planning to extend her business



to include a few adults' pieces – larger versions of her collection which have proved so popular already. But where does she see it all going? Remarkably she is keen to keep things close to their handmade roots; quality over quantity, handed down from generation to generation. * www.hambroandmiller.co.nk*







