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'I CAN MAKE A HOME ANYWHERE'

With more focus on our homes than ever before, *Grazia's Laura Antonia Jordan* asked TV presenter, writer and lifestyle whizz Laura Jackson how she created her gorgeous feelgood home

PHOTOGRAPHS JON GORRIGAN
FASHION RACHEL BAKEWELL

LAURA JACKSON, DOMESTIC goddess of the Instagram generation, has always had an eye for interiors. Growing up in Huddersfield, every Sunday her favourite game would be 'changing my room around, which basically just meant moving my bed from one wall to another', she laughs. When the family went on holiday, she would bring her Take That posters from her bedroom to put up in her hotel room. 'I can make a home anywhere!' she says.

Where she has made a home today is a Victorian terrace in east London with her one-year-old daughter, Sidney, husband Jon Gorrigan – a photographer, who shot her for this week's *Grazia* cover just as the UK was going into lockdown – and Barry the whippet. When on the property hunt her

brief was simple: she wanted somewhere with a garden and a place with enough space 'to be able to dry my clothes somewhere that wasn't in the kitchen', she explains. 'I once rented with six people and there'd be knickers and socks on every radiator. I just wanted somewhere where my clothes were not gonna smell like chip fat.'

She got that – and more. What Laura loved about this property was its history. Previously owned by a former schoolteacher who had raised her own children in the house, the building felt like it had stories in its nooks and crannies. 'As soon as we walked in, Jon and I looked at each other and said, "This is so lovely," she says.

When it came to decorating, Laura has filled the house with pieces that have a ▶

STAY AT HOME

Dress, Emilia Wickstead;
shoes, Zimmermann;
earrings, Anni Lui

EATING SPACE

The most recent part of the renovation, the small galley kitchen has been replaced with a larger and lighter space. 'I didn't want a fitted kitchen,' says Laura. 'I wanted it to feel like a curated space but one that is functional, too.' Quoted £16,000 for the terracotta tiles, she went elsewhere and found maitlandandpoate.com, who sourced them from Serbia for around a sixth of the cost. The striking kitchen cabinet doors are made from repurposed Italian church floors from retrouvius.com and finished with travertine worktops. Laura plans to swap out the mustard yellow walls. 'I think it's a beautiful colour for a small room but, for a kitchen, a more neutral colour is better,' she says.

Dress, Batsheva at matchesfashion.com; shoes, Kalda; earrings, vintage YSL from 4Element



MAXIMALIST MIX

Jon convinced Laura to keep the original wallpaper (from Sanderson), which gives the less formal living room real character, or, as Laura describes it, 'a Palm Beach vibe'. 'I'm really pleased he did because it's such a part of the house,' she says. The armchairs, found on eBay, were re-upholstered, while the vintage chest of drawers is from vinterior.co. Flowers from weareworm.com.



GREEN ROOM

The front room has been painted in a deep green (Bancha by farrow-ball.com) which, with richly coloured furniture and coffee table styled with books, creates a cosy feel. A quiet place for reading, it's also where Jon plays music on his vintage record player.



Dress, Emilia Wickstead; shoes, Kalda; earrings, vintage YSL at 4Element

but Laura is adamant that you don't need to spend lots of money in order to make your home special. 'So long as you love it, it doesn't matter if a cushion was given to you by a neighbour, you got it on eBay for a fiver or it was really expensive,' she says. 'You do it because it makes you happy. I'm such a firm believer in that; I love the high street and I love second-hand.' Her current coronavirus quarantine activity plans include a foray into art. 'We gave ourselves a budget of £100 and bought two massive canvases and Jon and I are going to make our own art,' she laughs.

Laura is refreshingly frank about how building a home has been an emotional and financial commitment, despite being an avid eBay shopper. Bought three years ago, the couple saved for two years before starting work and had to remortgage to do the kitchen ('None of this is here because someone said, 'Oh here's a deposit.''). Indeed, getting the space to where it is today has been a little-by-little renovation project. If you are one of the 110,000 people who follow Laura on Instagram (@iamlaurajackson) you'll already have been along for the ride. 'I feel very 50/50 about social media. I don't want to be showy – I find that crass and embarrassing and not very me. But I also feel really proud that this is my house that I bought, which I never thought would happen,' she says. 'I try to be thoughtful. I don't want anyone to ever think, "Well, that's OK for you because you can have a dinner table that fits 10 people around it." I get that but I also once had a flat that was the size of this table.'

The thing is, people want Laura's time, knowledge and advice – in part because she seems like the kind of refreshingly un-snooty girl you'd want to be friends with. I've known Laura for a few years after ▶

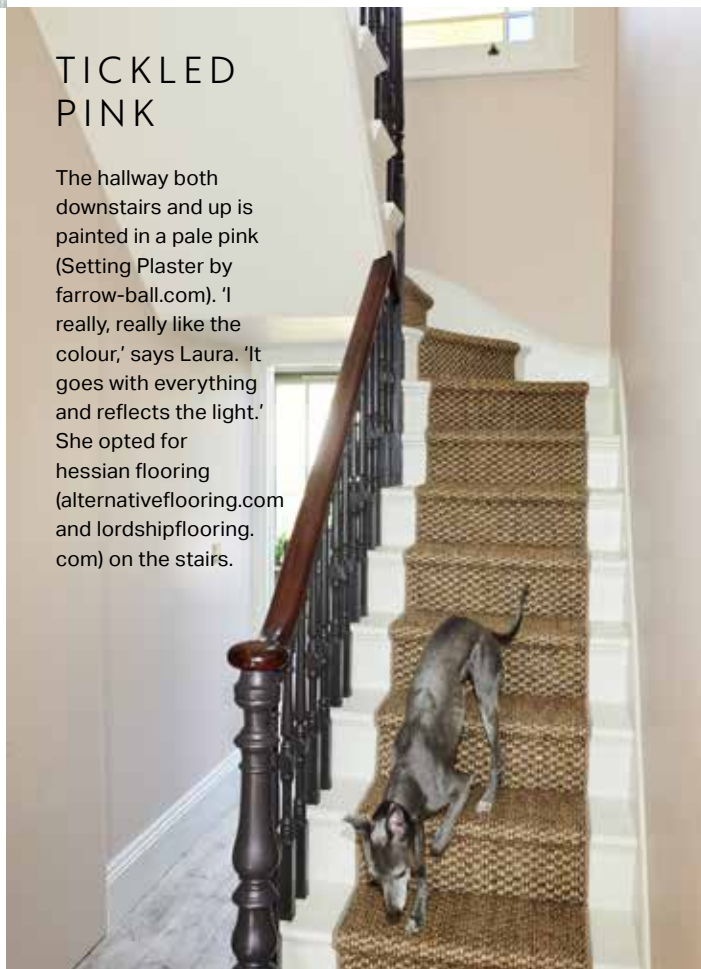
past too. 'I never wanted anything too done,' she says. 'I am messy and I have got a lot of stuff, knick-knacks and bits and pieces. Pretty much everything in here has a story, whether it's my 11.30pm chair win from eBay that I sat up and waited for, or a fabric on a bedhead inspired by something I'd seen in a hotel.' She confesses she even has a toilet that belonged to Mark Owen.

Unsurprisingly for someone who has written a cookery book and launched a lifestyle website, Hoste – which includes a newsletter and podcast – the kitchen is at the heart of the home. 'I wanted a kitchen where I could cook for people,' says Laura. 'I like having a house where anyone feels welcome and I want people to be able to pop to the fridge and get a drink or feel comfortable enough to make a cup of tea. I just want to create a home where people feel they can pop around anytime.'

The kitchen was the biggest expense,

TICKLED PINK

The hallway both downstairs and up is painted in a pale pink (Setting Plaster by farrow-ball.com). 'I really, really like the colour,' says Laura. 'It goes with everything and reflects the light.' She opted for hessian flooring (alternativeflooring.com and lordshipflooring.com) on the stairs.



Top, skirt and boots, all Miu Miu; earrings, Anni Lu



BATHING BEAUTY

The original bathroom was so small, Jon could not get into the bath. To create a larger room, the pair knocked down a wall between it and the small box room, doing the work themselves to save money. The walls are finished in the Moroccan waterproof plaster tadelakt and tiles by cevica.es, which Laura spotted in a hotel. The vintage bath, sink and brassware are from originalbaths.com.

meeting through a mutual friend, and can confirm she's as kind, funny and goofy as she appears on her Insta-grid. Despite her profile, she remains resolutely One Of Us. 'I love seeing the celebrity houses in *Architectural Digest*. They blow my mind!' she says. 'But who lives like that? It's kinda great for a bit of escapism for a few clicks or so, but it's about pulling out the elements, extracting things. So if you see this insane house and they have, say, a red bedside table, you can think, "Oh red's an interesting colour for a table."'

That's why, when Laura herself is asked what works and what hasn't, she says she responds. 'I'm a real sharer, to my detriment at times,' she says. 'If anyone ever messages me, anyone, on Instagram, "Where's that from?" I always reply,' she says.

Once the current crisis is over, Laura is planning on sharing her house quite literally: hosting pop-up dinners in the kitchen. Until then, she'll be doing live cook-alongs on her Instagram, starting Easter weekend.

She's also making an occasion out of food, launching #makeamealofit to inspire us all to make lunch and dinner something to look forward to. Tonight's meal is a jacket potato. 'I'm going to set the table and make it really nice,' she says. 'I'm sure a lot of people feel a bit helpless because lots of horrible things are happening and they wish they could change it. That's how I feel. I'm trying to do what I can for local charities, to remain positive and just hope that in doing that, I can also inspire other people to be positive about the situation they're in as well.'

STYLING ASSISTANT: KATE SINCLAIR

THERE ARE NO RULES – DECORATE YOUR HOME HOWEVER IS BEST FOR YOU

SERENE SLEEP

A country house hotel in Boston was the inspiration for the pale blue of the bedroom (Fair Blue by edwardbulmerpaint.co.uk). 'I found it a really calm colour,' says Laura. 'It feels warm and is lovely to wake up to.'



CHILD'S PLAY

In Sidney's room is a lovely mural painted by decorative artist Tess Newall (tessnewall.com). The second-hand cupboard was painted green by Laura; the rug is by weavergreen.com.



LAURA'S TIPS FOR MAKING YOUR HOUSE A HOME

Bring the outdoors in: Whether it's a plant, flowers from the garden or herbs in a plant pot, bringing the outdoors in not only looks nice, it's been proven to help our mental health, too.

Display your favourite accessories: A book, vase or glasses in the kitchen – or whatever you love – really makes a home personal.

Add some personal details to furniture: We bought our daughter's wardrobe for £50 at an auction and painted it ourselves. That's a great way of giving an old piece of furniture new life.

Be creative about what's in your home: For years I used an old chair as a bedside table, and I tiled the top of an old piece of wood I found in a skip to use as a countertop.

Add photos to the walls: I rented for many years and there were always rules about how you could decorate. I used to get lots of Ikea photo frames up on the wall with photos, posters or even pressed flowers inside them.

Re-arrange your furniture: When I am bored, I spend a day rearranging and reorganising; it can completely transform a room.

Follow your gut: Taste is so subjective. This is your home and you should decorate it however is best for you. If you like pattern and colour go for that; if you like natural whites that's great too – it's all about what works for you.