

no 18



PURE JOY

*You can't help but feel happy upon entering
Julia Seppänen's colourful home – there's a
uniqueness to it that's completely heart-warming*

FEATURE RACHEL LEEDHAM | PHOTOGRAPHY JAMES BALSTON



HOME TRUTHS

THE PROPERTY

Detached late Victorian house

LOCATION Surrey

ROOMS Sitting room, family room, library, kitchen, breakfast room, conservatory, office, playroom, utility room, cloakroom, five bedrooms (two en suite), two bathrooms

PREVIOUS PROPERTY

'We were living in an 18th-century house in Cape Town,' says Julia.



CONSERVATORY

Julia loves how the rich purple shade contrasts with the natural tones of the timber and it is a hue that matches the boldness of some of the accessories.

Bespoke Madison carver chairs, from £1,268 plus 2.75m fabric, The Odd Chair Company. Chairs in Parmos in Smokey Blue, Constanza in Antique Pink and Constanza in Bosphorus Blue, all £154m; Mini Weave in Moss and Sky Blue, both £140m, all Susan Deliss. Chandelier, Mischa Fritsch. Samona three-seater sofa in Vintage Ochre recycled velvet, £999, Made, has this look





BREAKFAST ROOM

The relaxed seating area includes an unusual coffee table made from wooden cigar boxes and wine crates. Roubel sofa, £4,570, Pinch. Walls in Lavender lime paint, €30 for 1ltr, Bauwerk

KITCHEN

New oak cabinetry incorporates practicalities such as an island unit and an iron rack for the batterie de cuisine. For similar cabinetry, try Naked Kitchens. Try the Toledo swivel bar stool, £79, Cult

SITTING ROOM

Artwork pops against the yellow walls. Penguin and Ostrich paintings, Miguel Macaya. Walls in Peter's Ochre matt emulsion, £36.81 for 1ltr, Francesca's Paints



Planning a house renovation from afar can be fraught with difficulties but when Julia Seppänen was organising her family's move from South Africa to the UK in 2020, she had the advantage of already knowing their future home well. 'The house had belonged to my parents, who had downscaled to a smaller property three years previously,' she recounts, adding, 'They had moved here when I was 11, and my son was 11 when we returned, so it somehow felt like it was meant to be.'

Fortunately, Julia had met with interior designer Ana Engelhorn on a visit to the UK just before the world went into

lockdown. 'The original plan had been that I would travel back to England so that we could work on the house together but of course, the pandemic changed all of that and I had to hand over the reins to Ana,' she says. She continues, 'From the outset I sensed that we were very much on the same page: I loved the fact that she was prepared to push the envelope with colour as I'd always wanted to use it in my previous homes but I had never quite known how to.'

Julia, who is half Spanish and half German, has a creative eye and over the years she and her Finnish husband have amassed a collection of striking pieces, from

art and vintage furniture to one-off designs made by artisans they have met on their travels. 'Ana had the tough job of working out where all these pieces would fit,' laughs Julia, who emailed the designer an itinerary of everything they owned, which includes a chandelier featuring lights resembling shoe lasts and a pair of huge carved clouds that came from an old theatre set.

Ana also had the job of fixing a late Victorian house that hadn't been properly renovated for many years. 'When I brought in the contractor, we realised that a lot of the plumbing and electricals needed updating,' explains Ana, who opted to save the parquet



MAIN BEDROOM

The lime paint gives a lovely textural feel to the space.

Penelope bed upholstered in Loro Piana Alchemy velvet in Cipresso, from £26,490, Savoir Beds. Walls in Lillypilly lime paint, €30 for 1ltr, Bauwerk

MAIN BATHROOM

Positioned on an angle, the bath gets great views of the garden.

Spey bath, from £3,570, Drummonds

BEDROOM

Bluebell-hued walls and a lime green lamp have a modern look.

Cactus table lamp, from £474, Hector Finch. Walls in Bluebell lime paint, €30 for 1ltr, Bauwerk

floor by having it painstakingly cleaned and repaired. 'We kept whatever we could reuse: for example, when we turned the library on the first floor into a nursery for the couple's daughter, who is now two, we retained the built-in bookshelves on one wall and had a fitted desk made to match,' she says.

At over 500 square metres, the house is large, and Ana has used colour to help unite some of the spaces. For example, the same lavender hue was used in the kitchen and the adjoining breakfast room as well as the nearby conservatory which houses a larger dining space and seating area. 'When I was asking Julia about her preferences, the

colour purple came up a lot and I felt it was a nice contrast to the natural tones of the brick and the timber,' notes Ana, who used a deeper shade of purple for the couple's main suite on the level above.

Bold shades of blue and an upbeat yellow are just some of the other colours that inform the schemes, the latter serving as a punchy foil to artwork in the sitting room. 'The colours seem to bring everything together and they have helped us to see our collections in a new light,' Julia observes. 'Before this, our pieces were displayed against white walls and they looked very different. I think that the colours have made everything feel more homely.' 25