



MY STYLE

A work in progress it may be, but we couldn't wait to have a peek at what editor, Ciara Elliott, had done with her home, near Colchester, so far

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PHOTOGRAPHY **MALCOLM MENZIES AT 82MM.COM**

LIVING ROOM Ciara had the Heals (Heals.co.uk) sofa reupholstered in a sunny yellow linen and layered it with a selection of Moroccan-inspired cushions from Anthropologie (Anthropologie.eu). The artwork above, is by graphic designer, Darren Howat





Dubliner and editor of *Essential Kitchens Bathrooms and Bedrooms*, Ciara Elliott's move to the UK, in many ways, resembled an episode of *Escape to the Country*. Despite having a busy career in the media, the farmhouse she returns to every night, is akin to a whimsical and inviting film set. Ciara often documents this juxtaposition on Instagram, @ciaraelliott.

From the get-go, Ciara, and her partner Ben, knew that the Red House was the kind of country oasis that came with its own brand of magic. The Georgian farmhouse once belonged to artist Peter Coker, who maintained the garden in a French Monet-style; a lily pond surrounded by lavender, pretty flower beds and magnolia, pear, fig and olive trees. Just twenty minutes away is where the Romans built their capital Camulodunum, or Colchester as it's now known, when they conquered England. A short drive from there, Ciara, Ben and their two daughters Edie, 8, and Astrid, 6, often spend their weekends at the seaside. Indeed, the kind of stuff *Escape to the Country* dreams are made of.

Immediately after winning the property at an auction, however, things became a lot more *Room to Improve*. Peeling wallpaper, rising damp and dry rot; "You name it, it was here," Ciara explains. "The house was in such a bad state that we had to go back to bare bones and build it up from there." During the renovation, Ciara had time to think about the style she wanted to decorate the house in. "I have too much choice in my job and I change my style all the time. I am drawn to beautiful shapes, sculpture, artwork. I couldn't live without colour, embellishment and pictures everywhere, so maybe I am sort of hippy/boho?" What's Ciara's take on budgeting? "I do believe in paying a price for original furniture and

artwork and would rather hold out and have nothing than fill my house with lookalikes."

One thing the couple were committed to investing in were the windows. "Reinstating proper sash windows costs a fortune and I, literally, feel like weeping every time we get one done." Once the renovation is completed and the house is fully furnished, Ciara has another investment in mind: "In the future, my dream investment would be a painting of the garden that was done by the artist who I lived here. He also designed prints for stores such as Heals and Habitat."

For now, though, Ciara is still busy collecting bits and pieces for the remainder of the renovation. Her knack for creating soulful, layered vignettes requires some legwork. "Without sounding like a total cliché, I really do shop everywhere. Most of our furniture has been bought at auction or on eBay and then given a new lease of life." And for anyone visiting England's south east, Ciara has some interior hotspots she recommends for stylish Scandi pieces; "Vanil (Vanil.co.uk) and Tea and Kate (Teaandkate.co.uk) – I could buy from either shop and furnish my whole house."

"Nothing is too contrived or trendy. A home should be about who you are and what you do," Ciara says. One way this house has avoided looking too overdone is through neutral paint colours and soft lighting. "I prefer pools of light, in different corners of a room, to overhead lights – a chair with a reading light, or a table with hanging pendants, defines a space."

When asked about her favourite part of the house, Ciara tells me that it's the charm of Red House. Giant windows, high ceilings and quaint features, like the original maids' bells, aren't something every homeowner is lucky enough to have and thankfully, in this case, they are far from underappreciated. **H**

BATHROOM The roll-top bath is from Homebase (Homebase.co.uk). The sideboard has been painted in colours by Bert + May (Bertandmay.com). The towel ladder is from Next, and was also painted. The wall is painted in Tuxedo Blue by Valspar at B&Q (Diy.com). **OPPOSITE** Laura Ashley (Lauraashley.com) glasses and planters from Marks & Spencer (Marksandspencer.ie) and Anthropologie sit on the sideboard that Ciara bought at auction



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Heradia **cushions**, from
€98, Anthropologie.eu



TEO plate orange **clock**, €79,
Timeless-everyday-objects.de



Ladder **bookcase**,
€204.14, Puji.com



Silk **vase**, €93.32,
Black-by-design.co.uk



STEAL THE STYLE

Emulate Ciara's eclectic look
with vibrant colours, punchy
pattern and animal motifs



Oola rabbit **vase**, €22,
Joythestore.com



Copper **storage basket** pair,
€33.25, Designmyworld.net



Concrete **planter**, €12,
Dawanda.com



Heradia **cushions** from €98,
Anthropologie.eu



Angle **lamp**, €97.50,
Debenhams.ie