

THIS PAGE “The oak staircase was the result of a two-year hunt online but it was worth the wait. Visitors always believe it is original to the house and are surprised to learn otherwise.”



Labour of love

HOW ONE DETERMINED COUPLE BROUGHT AN ABANDONED FRENCH FARMHOUSE BACK FROM THE BRINK

Photography: **PETER BAAS** Words: **LOTTIE STOREY**



THIS PAGE “We restored the old wooden cabinet that we found in the cellar by painting it using Chalk Paint in Antibes Green and waxing it with Dark and Black Chalk Paint Wax. It looks lovely at home again in the kitchen.”



“We like it when the rooms and living areas have their own different style and feel. Behind every door there should be a surprise”

Anyone who has ever renovated an old house will know that everything takes longer and is more costly than planned. Dutch actress Cynthia Abma and Belgian commercial producer Tom Raeymaekers live in Amsterdam but wanted a French holiday home. Their hunt for the perfect place led them to this 19th century farmhouse in Puy de Dôme, a tiny countryside village. Abandoned for a decade, it took another four years to make it habitable again.

“It was a lot longer than we thought!” laughs Cynthia. “We had to tackle everything....really everything. As there was only one bedroom we had to build a new additional floor to create two extra rooms. We knew we had to change the roof tiles but soon discovered that the beams were rotten as well so had to replace the whole roof. Plus new plumbing, electricity, heating, windows,

floors, toilet, kitchen, bathroom... the whole shebang!” The pandemic didn’t help, either, restricting how frequently the couple could travel to France.

But that’s all a distant memory now that the renovation is complete. Cynthia’s favourite room is the kitchen. “I absolutely love the kitchen!” she explains. “I love the geometric tiles on the floor and the combination of black cabinets, oak worktop and blue handmade Moroccan zellige tiles above it, and the walls painted in Wall Paint in Aubusson Blue.” This daring scheme is thanks in part to Cynthia and Tom’s fearless attitude towards colour. “With paint, you can just try something and if it turns out horribly try again with another colour. We like it when the rooms and living areas have their own different style and feel. Behind every door there should be a surprise.” www.gitemaismayet.com @maisonmayet AS >>

THIS PAGE Finding real French furniture and decorative elements was a priority. The original Jieldé wall light adds an industrial feel to the country-style living room **OPPOSITE LEFT** The kitchen is Cynthia’s favourite room, painted in her beloved Wall Paint in Aubusson Blue **OPPOSITE RIGHT** Painting wooden beams in light colours help to modernise old buildings and give the illusion of space





TOP LEFT A set of antique oakwood shutters didn't have a home until the couple decided to use them as a headboard for the bed, giving the bedroom a robust look **TOP RIGHT AND BOTTOM RIGHT** Original features help to ground the home, giving it a sense of history **BOTTOM LEFT** An ornate mirror in one of the farmhouse's three bedrooms **OPPOSITE** The couple loves bedlinen by the Dutch brand Malagoon because of its quality and range of colours. "It feels very cool in summer and warm in winter. And it gives your bedroom that rich hotel feeling."



Get the look

ECLECTIC FARMHOUSE CHIC



Secret Source

"Being in France, it made sense to source a lot of our furniture locally. The town of L'Isle-sur-la-Sorgue is famous for its antiques stores and weekend markets and we became regulars at the brocantes in the area. We also found a lot of treasures on internet sites like leboncoin.fr and Catawiki, such as our staircase, several lamps and the old enamel Ricard advertising sign."



REBEL WALLS (ABOVE)

Jungle Land Wallpaper
www.rebelwalls.com

SOHO HOME

Arielle Entryway Mirror
www.sohohome.com

MEMORY BOX (BELOW)

Muse Spoon Walnut Photo Frame
www.memory-box.co.uk



ABIGAIL AHERN

Beasley Vase
www.abigailahern.com

MALAGOON

Native Stripe Cotton Black Throw
www.malagoon.com

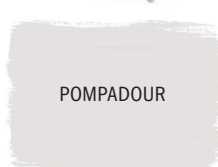


SOHO HOME (LEFT)

Cassia Square Cushion
www.sohohome.com

MALAGOON (ABOVE)

Multicolour black cushion
www.malagoon.com



CYNTHIA'S COLOUR PALETTE Chalk, Wall and Satin Paint by Annie Sloan. See Colour Chart on Page 126