

The open-plan kitchen/
dining area, with Sarah
Spackman painting
above the fireplace



like living in a barn," says gallery owner and art consultant Josie Eastwood. "I enjoy the scale of the buildings, the high ceilings and wooden beams." Eastwood, her husband John and their three children, Rose, Harry and Eliza, now 17, 15 and 13, moved to Hampshire when the children were small and did up a number of other barns before converting a couple of 19th-century cattle sheds into an L-shaped house. "Some of the adjacent outhouses had fallen down, so we collected and cleaned enough bricks to carry out the repairs. At one end we dug up and lowered the floor to give us sufficient head height to create two bedrooms upstairs, without disturbing the roof line," Eastwood says.

When the building works were nearing completion Eastwood set to work on the garden, turning what had been yard and pasture into well-planted borders and lawn. Unfortunately the local rabbits have little regard for her efforts, and seem to view the carefully nurtured plants and flowerbeds as their pantry.

As a self-confessed "junkaholic", Eastwood had little trouble furnishing the house. "I bring back stuff from holidays and find things that I keep for ages until I can locate the right place for them. The kitchen dresser is made from Gothic-style doors that I bought in a junk shop two houses ago, but when we were doing up this room I knew they would be perfect in here."

The dressing table in the main bedroom, with its delicate cut-crystal knobs and tapestry inset panels, was a similar find. "It was in a junk shop and turned so that the front was facing the wall. Some friends think that I should replace the rather worn tapestry panels, but I love them the way they are," she says.

When it came to arranging the interior of the house and choosing colour schemes, Eastwood took a more focused approach. "Each room started with a painting," she says. "Some time before we moved here John and



THE KITCHEN THAT USED TO BE A COW SHED

Take two barns, furnish with antiques-shop bargains, and what you get is the elegant family home of gallery owner Josie Eastwood. REPORT Vinny Lee PHOTOGRAPHS Darren Chung



Clockwise from top left: the bathroom; the sitting room, with a painting by Judy Buxton over the fireplace; dressing table with inlaid tapestry panels in the main bedroom

I bought a picture that we both love of a row of vases by Sarah Spackman, and we decided that it should be at the centre of the open-plan kitchen and dining room.

“We found the perfect place to hang it, then built the fireplace underneath based on one we had seen in France, and took the colour scheme for the curtains and walls from the painting. So basically the whole room evolved from the picture. I drove John mad trying to find the right paint colour, but in the end I went for the wonderfully titled *Quench the Gloom* from the Paint & Paper Library.

“It was much the same in the sitting room: this time everything started with a painting I absolutely love by Judy Buxton. I found a stone fireplace that was of the right proportions for the painting and made the picture and fireplace the focal point of the room.”

Elsewhere in the sitting room and hallways there are artworks by two of the artists Eastwood represents, Oliver Akers Douglas

‘We took the colour scheme for the curtains and walls from the painting. So the whole room evolved from it’

and Emily Gregory Smith. “When people ask me about hanging art in their home, I advise them to look for something with atmosphere and feeling, rather than a style statement,” says Eastwood. “It’s not about choosing artwork to go with your wall or curtain colour. It’s about having a picture or a piece of sculpture that you love and want to live with for the next 80 years.

“From time to time I rehang some of the pictures in our house and John will come in and ask me if I’ve got a new piece of furniture

or changed the lighting, because by varying the paintings you can change the mood or appearance of a room. Position and lighting are all-important, and although it is good to have some strong punchy pieces, there are certain places where softer colours are good: they allow you to let your mind go, to be calm.”

Eastwood has so enjoyed living in a barn that she now works in one, too. Five years ago, John converted another tumbledown outbuilding into a long gallery for Eastwood, and when it isn’t being used for exhibitions, it doubles as indoor entertainment space for Eliza, Harry and Rose, with a table tennis table and darts board. “The house has more character, whereas the gallery is a blank canvas,” says Eastwood. But with her love of colour and passion for collecting, the gallery walls are never short of fascination for long. ■

josieeastwood.com is showing at Art London until Monday (artlondon.net)