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HOUSE STYLE IDEAS FOR RUSTIC RENOVATIONS



Rustic CHIC

The restored servants' quarters
of a grand country mansion
in south-west France provide
an inspiring setting for
a creative young couple

WORDS BY CAROLINE ATKINS
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THIS PAGE,
CLOCKWISE FROM
LEFT A red farmhouse
table and mismatched
chairs provide a quirky
contrast to the exposed
beams and antique floor
tiles in the kitchen; open
rustic shelving holds a
practical yet decorative
mix of utensils and
ceramics; a feathered
Cameroon hat creates
bold decoration in the
living room **OPPOSITE:**
The sky blue wall in the
bedroom is offset by a
quilt in a rich old gold



180 square metres of country house to fill. The furniture from their flat looked lost and out of place here, so they've gradually replaced it with more sympathetic pieces gleaned from local flea markets and vintage sales.

The narrow hallway gives an immediate taste of what is to follow. Inside a glazed door that lets in the strong sunlight, a tall workbench (found in the house when they arrived) stands against one wall with shelves above it to display new porcelain produced by Figure, the ceramics workshop Justine started in 2011. Vases and bottles create their own silhouettes as well as holding grasses, seed heads and paintbrushes, and streamlined porcelain shapes provide overhead light shades, all in a subtle white-on-white palette.

In the spacious beamed living room leading off it, a couple of large sisal rugs are laid on the sun-dappled boards, and a low coffee table – cut down from a larger piece found at a market – sits between two linen-covered sofas. The natural plaster of the walls matches the colour of the stone fireplace and prevents its grand design from dominating the room; an antique painted shutter leans against the wall to one side and, on the other, a long 19th-century dining table is flanked by simple refectory style benches. Wool curtains and cushions handmade by their neighbour Mathilde Labrouche (part of the same family who originally restored the house) add subtle textural accents in this otherwise neutral room, and intriguing contrasts are introduced by accessories such as 18th-century silver candlesticks alongside an outsize Cameroon feathered headdress.

Meanwhile, in the kitchen, the sense of quiet restraint gives way to a more practical, rustic feel. Taking a lead from the varied colours and uneven surface of the ancient floor tiles, Justine has mixed everyday ceramics with family treasures and set mismatched chairs around the painted table. Chopping boards, measuring spoons, pans and cooking ingredients cram the worktop and sink unit, which Jean built against one wall from old floorboards and salvaged zinc. Facing it, a former shop display cabinet, topped with a marble slab at one end, creates a freestanding island and extra work surface.

Upstairs, Justine has introduced a stronger sense of colour: a wall of sky blue, specially mixed for her by a painter friend, soars up into the eaves above their bed, accented by the rich old gold of



Introducing a stronger sense of colour, a wall of sky blue soars up into the eaves





OPPOSITE: The outbuildings are linked to the main house by a covered courtyard, which provides a year-round space to relax and entertain THIS PAGE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: Shelves with boxes and baskets

create a simple storage unit in the bathroom, where mosaic tiles echo the turquoise walls; Justine's ceramics are created in the barn studio; a panel of copper and silver leaf hangs above Jean's homemade desk

a velvet bedcover and the deeper blue of ceramics on a shelf. In the bathroom, glowing turquoise paintwork and mosaic tiles echo the colour of the sky outside. Both rooms feature a mixture of old and new wood in the form of simple furnishings – a hand-built desk and an old family chair in the bedroom and homemade shelves in the bathroom, with rustic crates and baskets slotted into them for storage. But there are dramatic flourishes, too: a panel of copper and silver leaf on the bedroom wall, made by a friend as a present for Justine, and, in the bathroom, an original church confessional box has been installed at one side to house the washbasin.

With its ancient surfaces and classic lines, it's a house that could have been tailor-made for this creative couple. Justine and Jean have turned the barn into a studio for their own work and here they design and produce their elegant ceramics beneath the high vaulted ceiling. Massive arched doors open onto the rough grass outside, and a covered cobbled courtyard with relaxed seating provides a year-round view across the garden to the fields and sky – all the inspiration they could ever want. 🇫🇷

🔗 To find out about Jean and Justine's ceramics, see epure-ceramique.com. For more on Matilda Labrousche antique dealer, visit antiquaire-de-materiaux.com.

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