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#### LIVING AREA

**This page and right** Owner Melanie Sramek-Bennett's passion for sixties design can be seen throughout the house. She designed the typographic letters on the wall as well as the plywood sliding partition, which separates the front entrance from the living area. **Partition**, In-Build. **Letters**, Recreative Signs. *JFK's Nightmare – The First Lady in Blue* artwork by Pure Evil, Enter Gallery

## A cool conversion of a SIXTIES chalet

Quirky artworks, vintage furniture and vibrant colour pops have taken this extended home on the Sussex coast back to its mid-century roots

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I love everything about the Sixties,' declares Melanie Sramek Bennett. It's a passion that goes back to her teenage years when she'd scour charity shops for vintage clothes, inspired by her parents' glamorous lifestyle during this era. 'My mum and dad were figure skaters in the touring *Holiday on Ice* show, and I grew up surrounded by their colourful costumes, big hair and make-up,' she recalls. 'So when my husband Darren and I decided to move to get more space, we looked for a Sixties house where I'd be able to max out the interiors in a fusion of my favourite colours and a crisp Scandi style.'

However, houses of this age are few and far between in Hove. A chalet caught their eye but they didn't know the area and nearly disregarded it. But on first viewing, they loved the proportions, the large garden – and the potential to extend. It had been done up inexpensively to sell, so the family were able to move in while they made plans for its transformation.

'The goal was to create a contemporary extension, incorporating a large living space for hosting parties and hiring out for location shoots to help fund the project,' says Mel. 'And we wanted bigger bedrooms because the existing ones had low, pitched ceilings.' The couple worked on the layout themselves and then found an architect to draw up the final plans. Getting planning permission, though, became a three-year battle. 'The local authority were against the double storey, saying it →

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### LIVING AREA

The raised extension ceiling clad in plywood draws the eye and makes the open-plan space feel even bigger. Mel (pictured above left with Boston terrier Lulu) bought the sideboard from a friend and uses it to store her grandmother's 1960s dinner service. The two mid-century armchairs are by Czech Republic designer Jaroslav Smidek

### HOME PROFILE

#### WHO LIVES HERE

Melanie Sramek-Bennett, a freelance graphic designer and art director at [aspaceforsomething.com](https://aspaceforsomething.com), her husband Darren Bennett, also a graphic designer, and their two children

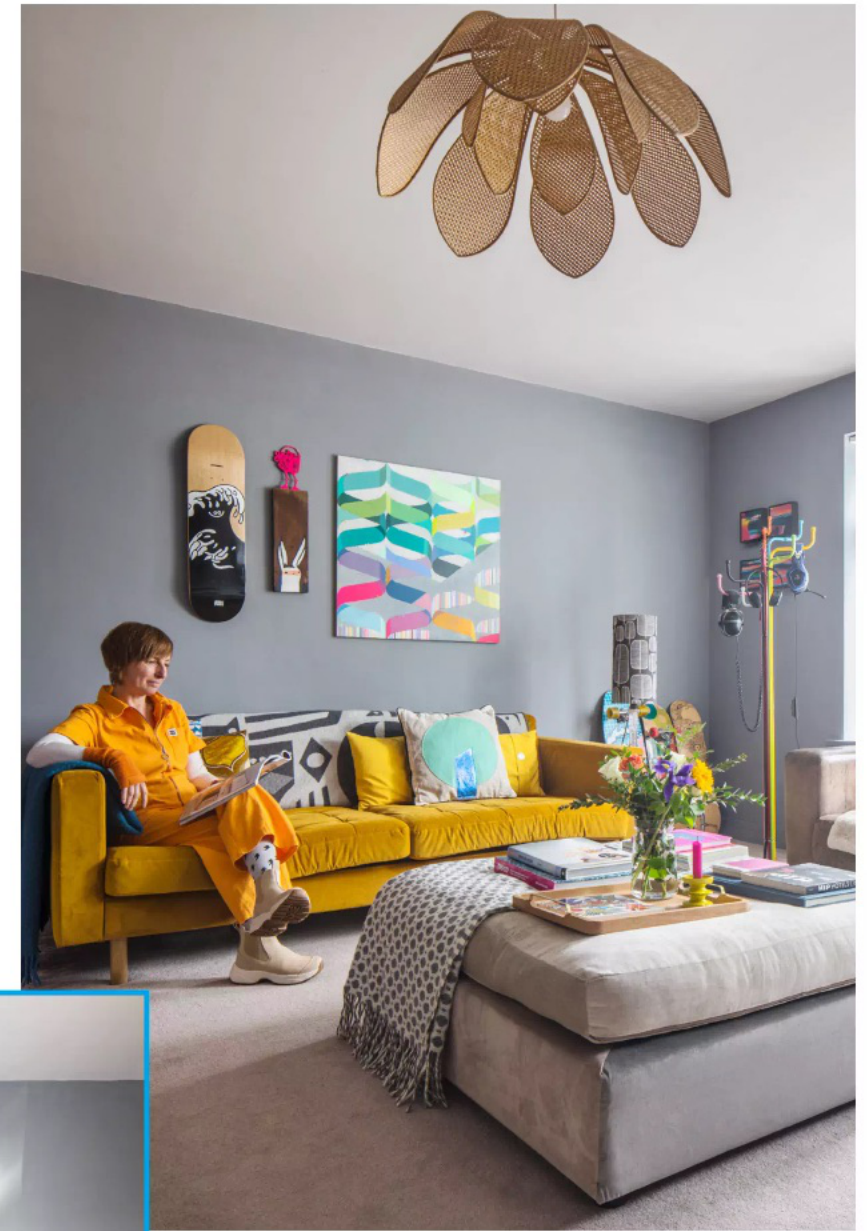
#### THE PROPERTY

A four-bedroom detached 1960s house in Hove, East Sussex, which they bought in November 2015



## LIVING ROOM

**Opposite and this page** This space is more of a cosy, relaxing retreat for the family in contrast to the sunny extension. The grey walls are a neutral backdrop for an evolving display of colourful artwork. The Scandi-inspired table lamp (left) consists of a glass base that Mel's grandfather made from a candelabra and the shade is made from Little Trees wallpaper in Charcoal, Miss Print. Ikea secondhand sofa, Ebay. Bespoke graphic artwork by Nick Grindrod



clashed with the low chalet roof line and wasn't in keeping with houses in the area. We went back to them three times and in the end agreed to a single storey extension and extending the existing rear dormer to make the bedrooms more habitable,' Mel recalls. 'Now, it doesn't feel like a compromise because we're very happy here.'

Elsewhere, the garage had already been converted, with an office space and a bedroom above that the couple decided to turn into a larger family bathroom. A downstairs shower absorbed space from the old dining room, while the original kitchen became the utility room off the new extension.

While the renovations got underway, the family rented elsewhere and Mel got to planning the interiors. 'I gravitate towards mid-century and Sixties designs mixed with minimal contemporary Scandi and solid, strong colours,' she says. 'I like colourful art and accessories that aren't afraid to stand out and say something.' One of Mel's prized pieces is the Italian Sixties sofa with a modular frame that she found on a German →



## KITCHEN AREA

In this smart space, neutral units are teamed with cork flooring with a cool grey wash. Colour is introduced via a trio of vintage yellow lecture chairs and vibrant artwork and accessories. Bacana Grey Corka Plank flooring, The Colourful Flooring Company. Orange artwork, from the Get Fruity collection by Rose Stallard, Print Club London



vintage site and had shipped over. On the other side of the extension, the pale grey kitchen and white composite worktop – along with the white plywood dining table – have a much simpler look. 'At first, I wanted a yellow kitchen,' admits Mel, 'but Darren talked me round and he was right. I needed the neutral base so I could layer in the mash up of colour in pieces of art and furniture.'

Subtle grey walls and cork flooring play an important supporting role too, drawing the eye up to the plywood-clad ceiling and keeping the focus on the artworks. Upstairs, colour blocking defines the rooms. 'I'm always looking for ways to use leftover paint, as it completely changes how a room feels,' explains Mel. 'I like asymmetrical design, things that are slightly off, which is why I went for angles on the bedroom walls and sometimes hang art off centre.'

Mel spotted a trio of yellow vintage lecture chairs in a local shop and, in Slovakia, sourced two mid-century armchairs by Czech Republic designer Jaroslav Smidek. 'My dad's from the Czech Republic and has

a base there,' Mel explains. 'It was cheaper to buy the chairs and ship them to him and have his friend with a van bring them over.'

Keeping costs down was a priority for Mel. A Tom Raffield light is an imperfect model bought from Ebay and her mum upholstered some of the chairs. The pendants above the dining table – £20 each in a sale – have been sprayed grey and finished with painted rims to match the colourful flexes above. And she was delighted to find a selection of graphic prints for £5 each at Brighton & I Love's Phoenix Gallery.

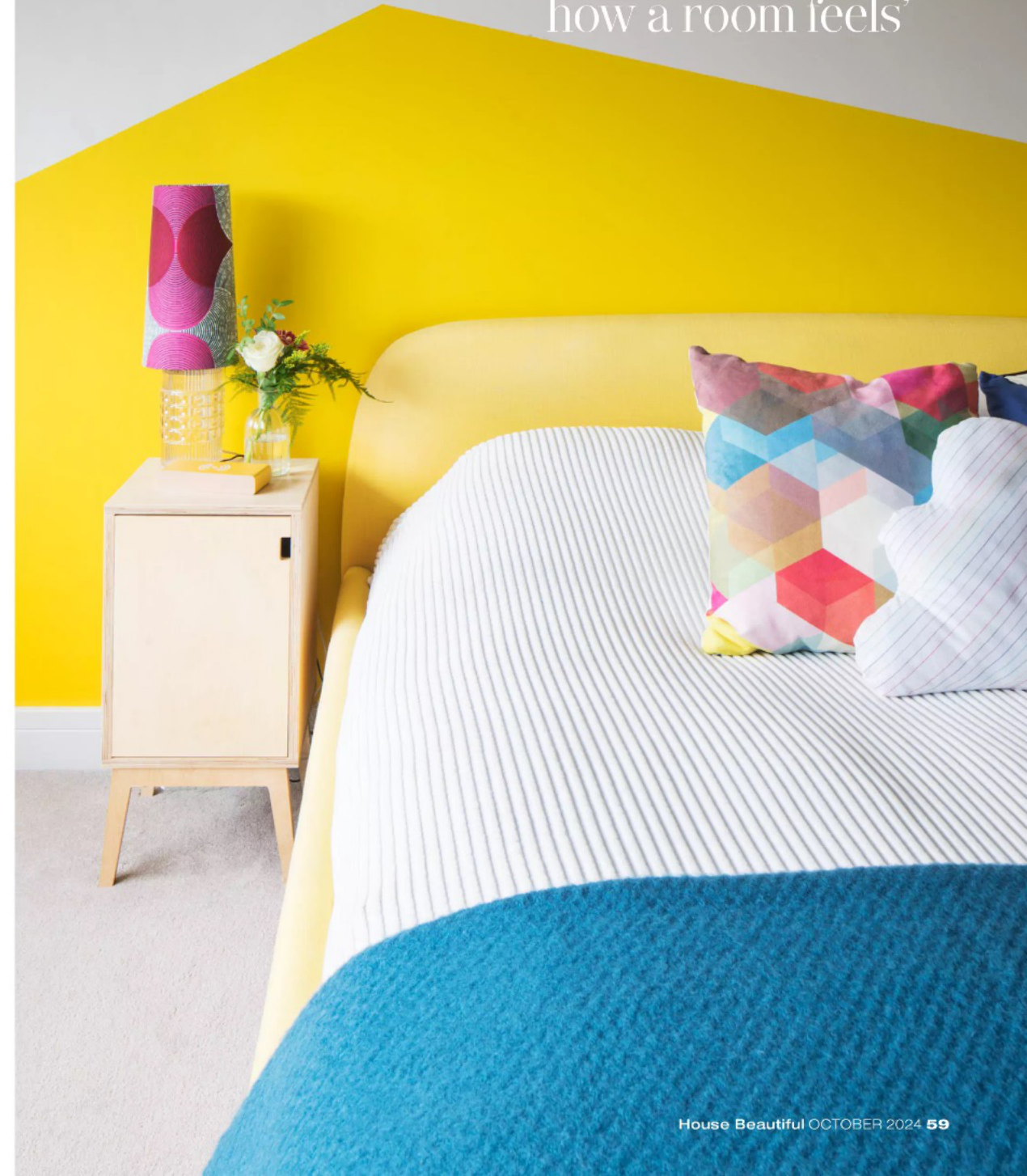
'This project has taught me that you don't need to spend a lot of money to make your home look good, and creative solutions make the outcome even more satisfying,' concludes Mel. 'We're all really happy here and what's great about this house is that it has no limitations, and I can move pieces of furniture and artworks around really easily. It's worked brilliantly for location shoots but, best of all, being able to refresh the look satisfies my itch to move and start again.'

Hire Mel and Darren's house through [simplyshootlocations.co.uk](https://www.simplyshootlocations.co.uk)

## MAIN BEDROOM

A pink lampshade – made by Mel – pops against the bright asymmetrical shape painted on the wall behind the bed. Wall in Fiesta, Albany at Brewers →

'I'm always looking for ways to use leftover paint as it completely changes how a room feels'

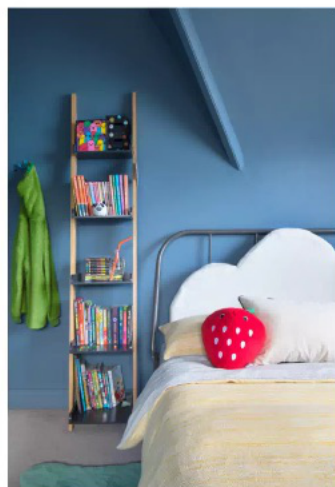




# HOMES

## CHILD'S BEDROOM

**Below** A blue-grey paint shade on the walls creates a soothing, cocooning effect. **Walls** in Galaxy, Albany at Brewers. Yellow **duvet cover**, Sainsbury's



## STAIRWELL

**Far left and above** Mel fell in love with the rich blue specialist paint – used in film and TV – on a photoshoot. **Walls** painted in FTT-018 Ultramarine Blue, Mylands. **Peace Hand print**, Ampersand Design Studio

## BATHROOM

**Left** Grey plaster was used on the walls for a bare, organic finish, with a strip of uplifting pink that complements the pale shade and the colour of the floor. Polyflor's SaarFloor Noppe rubber **floor tiles** in Limestone Green, Floormart. **Pink stripe** in In A Puff, Albany at Brewers