

# HOUSE & GARDEN<sup>®</sup>

August  
2023

## Here comes the sun

Glorious houses in GREECE, PROVENCE and the ENGLISH COUNTRYSIDE



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The Wiltshire garden of **SOPHIE CONRAN** and the joys of **SLOW TRAVEL**



**WALLS** 'Chalk', £65.35 for 2.5 litres eco emulsion, from Francesca's Paints. Hand-carved hardwood geometric panels, £450 a square metre, from Retrouvius. Mid-20th-century carved and painted wood wall appliqués, £650 each, from Brownrigg. **Curtains** in 'Vale Embroidered Sheer' (ivory), linen/viscose, £297 a metre, from Schumacher; with aged bronze Tewkesbury square mortice knob set (used as curtain holdbacks), £138, from From the Anvil. **FLOOR** Plain encaustic tiles (azure, pearl white), from £115 a square metre, from London Encaustic. Scandinavian wall hanging (used as rug), £540, from Retrouvius. 'Benin' grass dog basket (black/natural), £130, from The Basket Company; with cushion in 'L'Ane' (red), cotton, £73 a metre, from Marvic Textiles. **FURNITURE** 19th-century French vitrine cabinet, £3,200, from Maison Artefact. 'Sable' metal and leather chair (quince), £1,878, from Ochre. 20th-century mosaic and iron chairs, £495 a pair; 19th-century French steel and glass dining table, £3,400; all from Lorforde. **ACCESSORIES** Great scale 19th-century alabaster ceiling light, £1,800, from Brownrigg; with 'Taper 25' wax candles (honey), £18 for 6, from Candle Flair. *On top of vitrine* 20th-century stoneware confit pots, £145 a pair, from Lorforde. *In vitrine* Tea caddies, French Chinoiserie style and Faience Chinoiserie style, £220 each; and Chinese square in white with dark blue, £250; all from Guinevere. Café curtain in 'Marana' (cream), by Larsen, silk/linen, £104 a metre, from Colefax and Fowler. *On table* Tablecloth in 'Vale Embroidered Sheer' (ivory), linen/viscose, £297 a metre, from Schumacher. 'Kasumi Fujimura Relief' porcelain plate, by Cerani Studio, £40, from Akojo Market. Giant ceramic clam shell (white), £225, from Matilda Goad & Co. 'Lapis' mouth-blown glasses, from £65 for 6 shot glasses, from Ishkar ▷









TEXT ELIZABETH METCALFE | PHOTOGRAPHS MARK ANTHONY FOX

# Second nature

Having lived in this Gloucestershire farmhouse for several years two decades ago, gallerist Thomas Dane found himself drawn back to it in 2015. Once again, it has become a treasured haven for him and his friends, who enjoy its wonderfully relaxed interiors set off by a beautiful garden





The limestone farmhouse, with its early 18th-century core and sympathetic Georgian extension, sits at the top of a valley with sweeping views over the countryside to Painswick and Stroud. A cottage across from the house offers accommodation for guests, while a small orchard beyond the lower garden wall provides blossom in spring and a plentiful harvest in autumn





DINING ROOM Lanterns sourced by Caroline Marcq hang over a Spanish 17th-century oak table from Sotheby's. The lithograph *Artichoke I* is by Thomas's friend Sarah Graham. Above the drinks table is an artwork from Howard Hodgkin's Indian collection







TOP FROM LEFT The rear terrace opens onto the walled garden. Pale valerian and rich red and purple opium poppies stand tall in a border below beautiful *Rosa* 'Rambling Rector'. ABOVE FROM LEFT Solid York stone steps at the back of the house lead to a meadow bank, created by Peter Beardsley, who also transformed the walled garden into a magical space filled with cottage-garden favourites





**SITTING ROOM** Vibrant cushions and curtains brighten furniture in muted hues arranged round an antique table from Gordon Watson on Suffolk rush matting. **DRAWING ROOM** A Ben Nicholson etching of the monastery in Patmos – a present from Hamish Bowles – hangs beside a sofa and chair from Caroline Marcq. **KITCHEN** A mix of antique and rustic furniture and china suits the farmhouse perfectly

Art dealer and gallerist Thomas Dane has an unusual relationship with this limestone farmhouse in one of Gloucestershire's golden valleys. For he has been its custodian not once, but twice. 'I first came to it in 2001, when Jasper Conran was renting it from Issie and Detmar Blow,' recalls Thomas. 'I fell completely in love with the house and, since Jasper was leaving, I decided to rent it with my late friend, the designer Peter Kent.'

And so followed a magical few years: the pair would decamp there with friends – including Peter's partner, and Thomas's great friend, and now editor of *The World of Interiors*, Hamish Bowles – from London, where Thomas is still mainly based. 'It became a shared place for friends – a place that we came to love and cherish,' he enthuses.

In 2011, Thomas embarked on a new adventure and bought Hanham Court, a grand house in the country between Bristol and Bath, with a wonderfully romantic garden designed by its previous owners, garden designers Isabel and Julian Bannerman. As extraordinary as it was, after three and a half years, he felt that it was just too demanding for a weekend home. 'It became a job and wasn't the retreat I craved,' says Thomas, who founded his contemporary art gallery in St James's, SW1, in 2004.

And so, in 2015, with little more than a second's thought, Thomas returned to the mellow farmhouse that had originally tempted him to Gloucestershire. 'Detmar, whose father, the architect Detmar Blow, had bought up most of the valley in the 20th century, agreed to me taking on a long lease, which included another small cottage and some land.' As well as the beautiful simplicity of the house – an early-18th-century core, with a sympathetic Georgian extension at one end – it is the setting that has captivated Thomas. 'How many houses do you see with grass going right up to the front door?' he asks. 'You just walk out into the fields. It's like something out of a Thomas Hardy novel.'

Inside, the house is low-key, with good bones thanks, in part, to Jasper's sensitive restoration in collaboration with the Blow family 10 years earlier. Downstairs, the rooms function as an enfilade: a boot room leads into the kitchen, which in turn leads to a welcoming dining room, with a blackened inglenook fireplace, and then on to a sitting room at the far end in the Georgian part of the house. Also off the boot room, at the other end of the house, is a double-height snug with exposed beams. Upstairs, there are two bedrooms, a bathroom and a library on the first floor, with a further top floor – a 20th-century attic conversion by Detmar Blow senior – accommodating Thomas's bedroom with an en-suite bathroom, and a spare room.

'Any changes I've made have been incremental over the years,' Thomas explains, pointing out a wall of charming housekeeper-style cupboards in the boot room, which he recently commissioned from local workshop Kelmscott Studio. 'I resisted a major overhaul, as it just didn't need it.'







**MAIN BEDROOM** A vintage Anglepoise lamp picks up on the floral motif of the antique suzani, used as a **bedcover**, which was bought by Thomas in Damascus. The oak **side table** is an antique piece from James Graham-Stewart. A door leads to the generous en-suite bathroom





Decoratively, the house is simple and relaxed. 'It would feel wrong to over-egg it on the inside, considering its relatively humble exterior,' says Thomas, who called on Gloucestershire-based interior decorator and antique dealer Caroline Marcq to help with textiles, furniture and lighting. 'Working with local people and businesses has been such an enjoyable part of living here,' he adds.

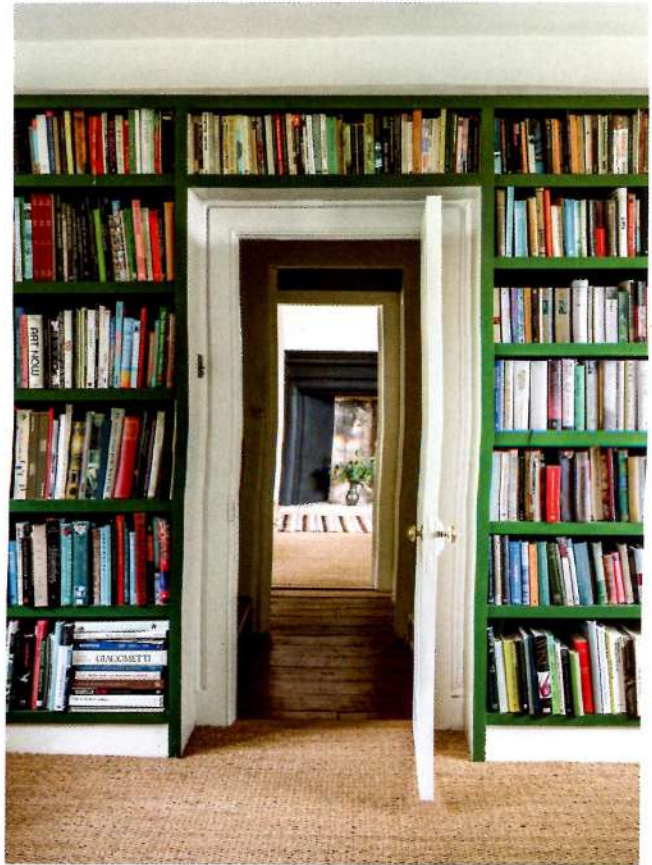
All the walls are in shades of white (a combination of Farrow & Ball and Francesca's Paints), with burnt oranges and olive greens woven throughout in the form of curtains, lampshades and upholstered pieces. A few items, including the 17th-century Spanish table that now plays host to many a happy gathering in the dining room, came from Hanham Court, while others were sourced from Caroline, at auction or via dealers including James Graham-Stewart.

Notably, there is less art on the walls than one might expect from a gallerist. 'I wanted it to be a retreat from what I do,' explains Thomas, who opened a second outpost in Naples in 2018 to showcase work by the gallery's roster of artists; these include painter Cecily Brown and the conceptualist Glenn Ligon. The few pieces that do line the walls, including a work on paper from Howard Hodgkin's Indian collection in the dining room, and a Ben Nicholson etching of Patmos in the sitting room, all have deep personal resonance. 'Howard was someone I knew very well and I bought this from a sale after his death. The Ben Nicholson was a present from Hamish,' Thomas recalls, also gesturing to one of the larger pieces in the dining room, a lithograph of artichokes by his friend, the artist Sarah Graham. 'Cardoons are one of my obsessions,' he declares.

It was the garden, in fact, that saw the most significant interventions. As Thomas points out, 'I wanted to enhance the relationship between the house and garden, without interfering with how it links to the agricultural land beyond.' With the help of landscape designer and plantsman Peter Beardsley – a former right-hand man to Dan Pearson – huge tracts of brambles were cleared to make space for wildflower meadows that now snake around the house. 'I learned a lot from the magical garden at Hanham Court and I wanted to bring some of that here,' says Thomas. At the rear, the walled garden – flanked by an impressive bank of trees that were planted in the 1990s – spills over with a riot of cottage-garden favourites, including hollyhocks, foxgloves and geraniums.

'In the summer, I throw all the doors open and everything just bleeds so beautifully into the garden,' explains Thomas enthusiastically. As much as it is a house that is bedded into the landscape within which it sits, it also exudes a certain welcoming warmth that only a house that has nurtured many a loving friendship can have. As Thomas says, 'I'm looking after it not just for myself, but also for a group of friends who love it here so much' □

Thomas Dane Gallery: [thomasdanegallery.com](http://thomasdanegallery.com)  
Peter Beardsley: [peterbeardsley.com](http://peterbeardsley.com)  
Caroline Marcq: [@marcq.caroline](https://www.instagram.com/marcq.caroline)



**UPSTAIRS LIBRARY** Floor-to-ceiling bookshelves, in a bespoke green, frame the doorway with a view across the hall to a bedroom beyond. **BATHROOM** A striped wool rug, picked up by Thomas in Transylvania, is set off by natural sisal flooring and introduces an element of colour and pattern to the mainly monochrome scheme. The photographic portrait of Samuel Beckett above the bath is by John Haynes