

SIMPLE LIVING

Valerie and Antoine Rocco dreamed of living an urban-meets-country lifestyle. They struck lucky when they found an old dilapidated house near Lille – perfect for a stylish and contemporary overhaul



'I had to make our living area work really hard. We wanted several things in one space: a large kitchen, a small cosy living room to socialise with friends, a bigger living room to mess around with the kids, a TV room and a big table to host dinners. The "big" living room is located just in front of the huge wall-to-ceiling glass, windows where it almost looks like the garden is trying to get in!'



‘When we first stumbled across this house back in 2004, we knew it was special. It had the space and light that as an energetic, young family, we had all been craving. The building, in the French town of Roubaix, near to Lille, was falling apart and needed immediate rescuing, but with the indoor potential and the beautiful south-facing garden, it was too good an opportunity to pass by.

Dating back to 1900, the old house had been badly altered in the 1950s, losing all of its original features, so we had no scruples about taking it apart and starting from scratch. We were left with a huge bright empty space in which we were free to choose what went where, down to the last drawer. As architects that’s a real luxury!

The hardest part was deciding how to bring everything together under one roof to suit our changing lifestyle. Our family was growing and our children, Violette, now 10, Mila, 8, and Eve, 20 months (not forgetting Clebs the dog), needed a more flexible space, both inside and out. Antoine and I wanted to bring the best parts of urban life and mix it with the benefits of country living. Three years on? We think we’ve found the perfect balance.’

‘When I found the big round bed from IKEA I found my ideal solution: the bed became a “pouffe” where everyone can play together. Playing with the size and scale of different items of furniture is also a great way to adapt your interior décor and make it personal!’





'I run my own architectural practice from my office in the house. Working and living at home means striking the right balance, and not allowing deadlines to dominate family life. Luckily the kids oblige me to keep my work and family life separate. When they are home I'm 100% with them.'

'I don't really like doors. You always forget what's behind them. I kept the fireplace chimney in my office to slot shelves on either side and fill with IKEA's storage boxes, which are perfect. I like to have everything within easy reach and within my sight. What's more, I can even watch the kids through the glass panelling between my office and the living room.'



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‘Trying to understand a family’s lifestyle and reflecting it in a house’s blueprints is always a challenge. None more so than when working on my own! My aim was to combine several living spaces in one large area so I can always see what’s going on and where the kids are. And this space had to be both practical and beautiful. Have I achieved it? I think so.’



‘In the “small” living room I picked five lamps to hang down over the coffee table because I love objects placed together – it gives a room definite style. We wanted the TV in a different room so as not to be hypnotized by it. When you have to make an effort to go to a different room, you don’t watch just any program. The mezzanine “bowl” also allowed us to break up the volumes in the main room. Our table is 2.5m long with benches which means we squeeze together when there are guests. We set it by a smaller fireplace where we grill meat all year.’

'You'll laugh but we suffer from having ceilings that are too high! The IKEA units are really cleverly designed, with shelves, racks and drawers so we can put away all our stuff efficiently. For additional storage I added boxes on top of the units.'

'No two days are the same in our house, until the early evening – my favourite time. We all gather for dinner after I've bathed Eve, and homework has been done. Then, once the girls are in bed, Antoine and I get a chance to relax in the space we've created, maybe watch a movie together. Unless I have some work to do of course...'

DID YOU SPOT THE IKEA IDEAS IN THIS OPEN-PLAN HOUSE?

Living room: KARLSTAD cvr so3 Blekinge white [001-186-98] €xx KARLSTAD frm so3 lining cloth [101-181-36] €xx FLOKATI rug 140x200 white [100-939-42] €xx KLOCKSPEL pend lmp white [100-624-60] €xx **SULTAN SANDANE** wdn bse spr matt 105 white [100-754-86] €xx **SULTAN SANDANE** matt pad 210 white [400-755-74] €xx **EFFEKTIV** storage **FAKTUM/ABSTRAKT** kitchen units used as storage **Office:** **MOMENT** table, vintage in the office [100-770-46] €xx **MIKAEL** computer table w castors 77x50 white **Bedroom:** **PAX** wardrobe frames birch effect with **KOMPLEMENT** fittings [700-706-50] €xx **LAKENE** pend

