

THE BIG PICTURE

Karen Fern-Smith and her husband Craig were considering moving from their Bramhall home, seeking somewhere that better suited their family's needs. Before making the big decision however, a friend recommended they call Caroline Firth, a Bramhall-based interior designer. Caroline reorganised the way they used their living space and went on to create a whole new look. 'It's a cross between the Bo-ho I wanted and the formal Craig wanted,' Karen laughs. 'We absolutely love it and now there's no need to move!'



Karen Fern-Smith



PHOTOGRAPHY BY KIRSTY THOMPSON

1 Dark grey walls: we wanted the dining room to feel 'grown-up' and the dark grey acts as a dramatic foil to the bright colours we have used.

2 Kantha quilt: we think this is so much nicer than a traditional tablecloth! It's a hand-stitched quilt from Bangladesh, from a Fairtrade collective that we found on Etsy.

3 Sunburst mirror: my perfect piece of retro-chic. It creates a lovely focal point and picks out the yellow in the quilt too.



4 Chandelier: our house was built in the 1930's and this John Lewis chandelier looks right at home here, plus it adds a touch of more formal glamour.

5 Bookcases: not only do these built-in bookcases provide a nice symmetry to the room, but they have provided a place for us to put our collection of novels, travel and food books, as well as university text books that we can't quite bear to part with.

These were previously cluttering up the study and their removal has made it possible to turn that room into a playroom space.

6 My cacti collection: it's hard to stop buying these, especially when you come across a really quirky one; they are spreading throughout the house. Caroline found the ceramic one at Habitat and it's a lovely quirky touch.

7 Dog picture: we're a family of dog lovers and have a new pup in the house, a Tibetan Terrier we all adore. This formal but barking mad dog portrait from Graham & Green really tickled us.

8 Sideboard: this vintage teak sideboard is an eBay find and has been really well cared-for. It reminds us both of the drinks cabinets our parents had.

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