

# HOMES & GARDENS®

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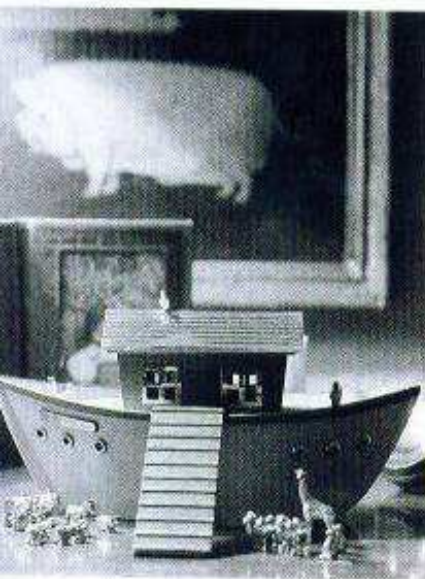
## OUTDOOR LIVING SPECIAL

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### SECRETS OF THE PERFECT KITCHEN

Gordon Ramsay, Carina Cooper  
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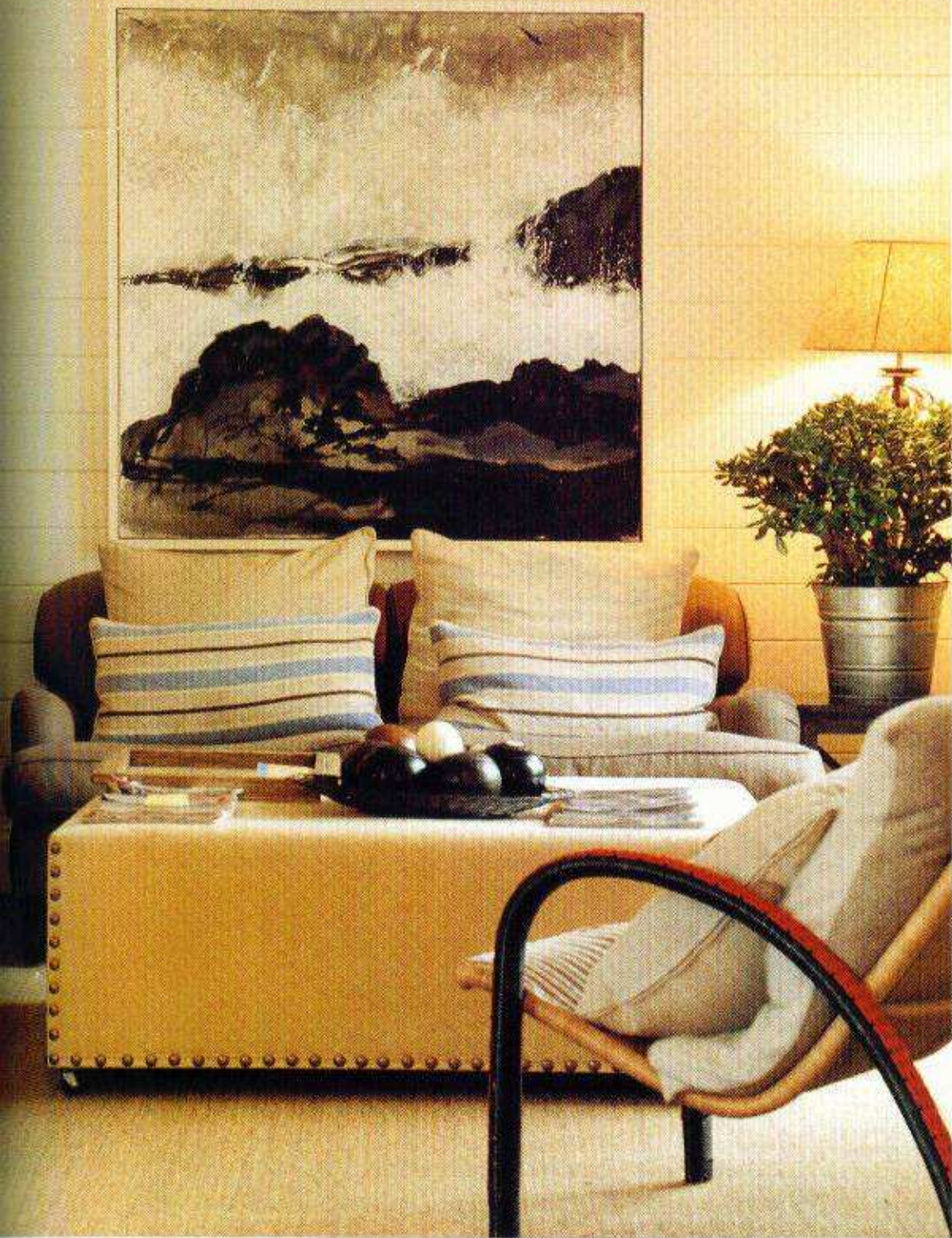
*Summer time*  
and the living is easy



# MAKING THE LINK

For Annoushka Ducas and John Ayton, combining a successful jewellery business with a country lifestyle has been the fulfilment of a shared dream





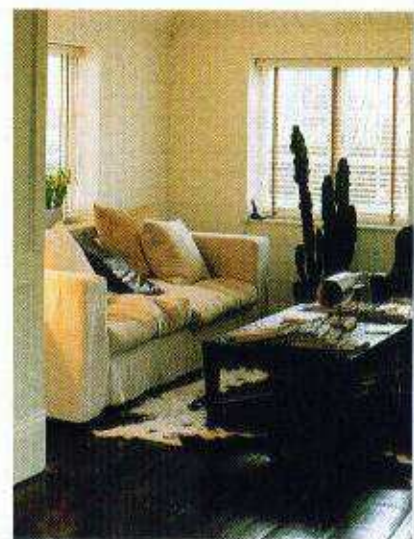
**CLOCKWISE, FROM LEFT**  
 A seascape of Salcombe in Devon by Alexandra Haynes creates a striking focal point in the day room, where a specially made leather ottoman makes an inspired coffee table; Buster, one of the family's Labradors; dark stained floorboards add a note of warmth to the pale decor; checks in alternating colours from Jane Churchill have been used on the dining chairs; buckets picked up in a junk shop line the top of an old upright piano in the boot room; a limited-edition Neer's ark produced by Links of London in support of the charity Ark, Annoushka and John with Marina, Oliver, Oscar and Chloe in the walled garden; a baby grand piano, much loved by the children, sits in the drawing room.

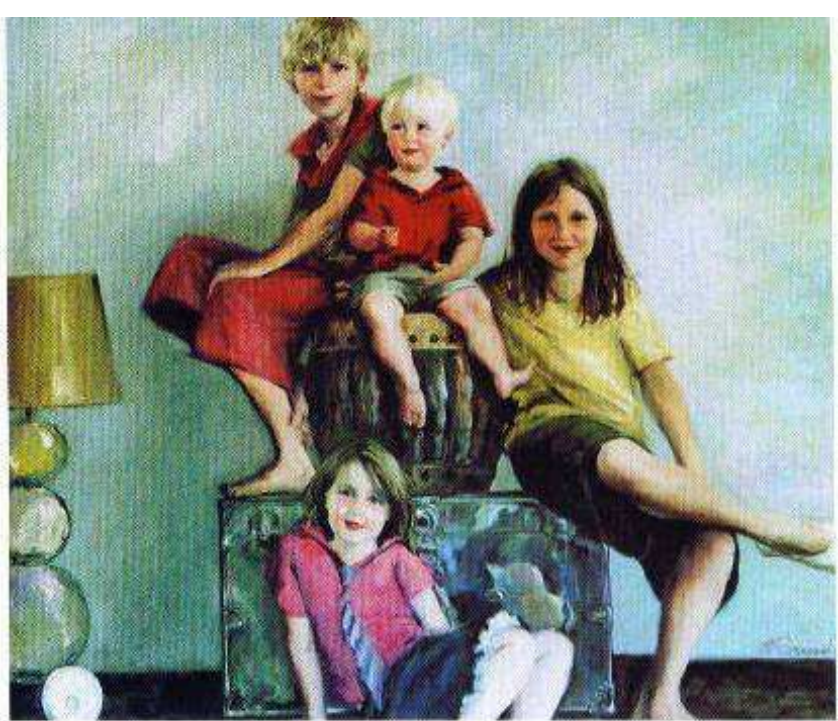


**A**nnoushka Ducas and John Ayton's Georgian house in West Sussex seems an improbable nerve centre for a thriving jewellery business favoured by city slickers. Yet, as they tell me in their rust-coloured drawing room, with Labradors slumbering by the glowing hearth, their rural existence is central to the success of their company, Links of London. "An office is a terrible place to try to have ideas," says Annoushka, the company's creative director and designer. "Inspiration is much more likely to strike when I'm walking or riding. I find the space and peace of this place very

inspiring." Indeed Annoushka's latest collection, Castaway, is based on items found while out on West Wittering Beach, just two miles from the couple's home outside Chichester.

Links has another seminal connection with the sea. Annoushka came up with the idea for the company when her mother, Patricia, who ran a successful fresh-fish business in Rye supplying London's top restaurants, wanted to show her appreciation to customers with a gift. Annoushka, who had had a necklace made to her own design by a jeweller, suggested silver cufflinks in the shape





of a fish." "At the time, it seemed better value to have 160 pairs made than just 80," she recalls, "so I went to Harvey Nichols with the remainder and asked if they would be interested. I was told to come back with a proper collection. So a fortnight later I duly returned and they took the whole lot."

Annoushka then set about creating new designs at her kitchen table, and the business was born. In 1990, John, now chairman, returned from Hong Kong, where he had been working as a lawyer, and

the two devoted themselves to building Links as a business. With 34 shops from New York to the Far East, it is now about to celebrate nearly 15 years with a new flagship store in London's Sloane Street.

Despite the demands of the company, the couple value their children – Marina, ten, Oliver, eight, Chloë, six, and Oscar, two – above all else, which is why they moved their head office to Guildford, to reduce the commute between home and London.

The house also bears out the couple's priorities:

**CLOCKWISE, FROM TOP LEFT** Manuel Canovas's large-scale Pail fabric has been used to striking effect on the walls of the main bedroom; the informal portrait of the children is by Russian artist Evgeny Gruzdev; teak was favoured by Annoushka for the kitchen, which was built to her design by a local carpenter and painted in colours from Marston & Langinger; a trio of Russian pictures, once belonging to Annoushka's grandfather, hang in the bedroom; Annoushka in her home studio.

