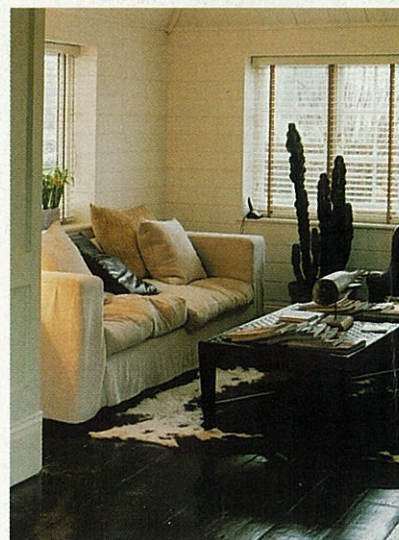
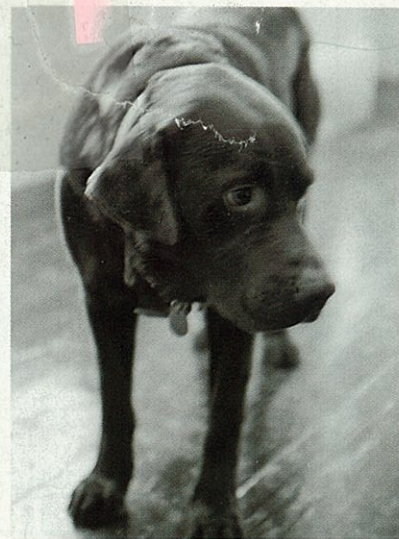




CLOCKWISE, FROM LEFT

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; reclaimed floorboards add a touch of warmth to the pale ceiling 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 Noah's ark produced by Links of London in support of the charity Ark; Annoushka and John with Marina, Oliver, Oscar and Chloë in the walled garden; a baby grand piano, much loved by the children, sits in the drawing room.



Annoushka 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



Annoushka's office adjoins the playroom, and the family sitting room has just been redecorated with the help of Annoushka's childhood friend Tino Zervudachi, who also designed the Sloane Street store. Their next project will be a rich-hued library they hope will become a snug retreat for winter dinner parties. The Russian art collection that covers many of the walls came from Annoushka's grandfather, and has recently been augmented with a portrait of the children by Evgeny Gruzdev.

"When we moved in we thought it would take ten years to complete and we were right," John says. "We have another three to go, but we're happy with that. We like things to evolve." This preference, it seems, has guided their business, too. ■ *For information on Links of London, including the new flagship store on Sloane Street, call (020) 7730 3133.*

WORDS AND STYLING LISA HELMANIS
PHOTOGRAPHS SIMON BROWN



CLOCKWISE, FROM TOP LEFT The twin beds in Oliver's room were made by a local carpenter; a headboard covered in Cresprières fabric by Pierre Frey with cushions to match brings a touch of opulence to the guest bedroom, as do the lamps from London antiques shop Facade; measuring up has become a household tradition; in a corner of the landing stands a gilded Regency-style chair from Russia; a selection from the Links of London jewellery range, designed by Annoushka.

