



*Barley Splatt (east facade), near Bodmin, Cornwall, begun 1973*

For me the essential Graham Ovenden exists more than anywhere in Barley Splatt, the house that he has been building since he moved to Cornwall in 1973. It is not only that architecture was regarded as the Mistress Art by Ovenden's 19th-century heroes, but also that in the house, the many enthusiasms of his life, all the different directions of his work, all the engaging facets of his thought, come together and form a pattern – the pattern of Ovenden's total artistic personality. The house, in this case, is the man.

Barley Splatt is like no other house. It is rich in its textures, almost barbaric in its glowing colours, fantastic in its weird, evolving forms.

In its very bones Barley Splatt is a collector's house, for some of the fragments that Ovenden has snapped up over the years have been built into and used to ornament that structure. Just as no true collection ever reaches a fixed and final point, so the house seems to be locked, almost one might think forever, into a state of evolution.

*Clive Aslet*