



HOUSE
of
PLENTY

An intrepid Montreal couple scrubs up a classic Victorian to create a peaceful home for the holidays

BY ALISON GARWOOD-JONES PHOTOGRAPHY BY VIRGINIA MACDONALD PRODUCED BY NICOLA MARC



“Flow and continuity are really important, especially in small spaces”

Previous pages: The banquette was built for extra storage in the dining room.

FLOWERS, MARCEL PROULX HORTICULTEUR. LAMP, MAISON LA CORNUÉ; LINENS, CUSTOM CUSHIONS, QUI DORT DINE; PAINTING, CRESCENDO BY JANETH RODRIGUEZ. “After a snowstorm, we barely need to decorate,” says Gaëtan (above right, with Jean Stéphane, above left). “Mother Nature dusts the trees—she does the finishing touches for us.”



IT'S BEEN SEVEN years this Christmas since Jean Stéphane Beauchamp and his partner, Gaëtan Laroche, put money down on a creaky Victorian triplex in Montreal's trendy Plateau Mont-Royal district, and only now their friends are coming forward to say, “We thought you were crazy!”

Before changing hands, this grand old mansion (dating back to 1900) was a student crash pad that had been knocked around over the years by a succession of laundry-averse lagerheads. “We first passed it on one of our evening strolls and noticed the crooked iron gate,” says Jean Stéphane, an interior designer. “Yes, but looking up at the grey stone façade and carved balcony

we thought it had lovely bones,” adds Gaëtan, who is co-owner of Qui Dort Dine, an upscale fabric shop just a 10-minute walk away, still part of the neighbourhood they love for its cobbled streets and packed cafés.

When an agent finally took the couple on a tour inside the house, Jean Stéphane and Gaëtan's shared gift for visualization switched into overdrive. Looking past the scattered empties and jarring paint job—each room was a mix of orange, teal, yellow and olive, what Jean Stéphane sweetly

The old cabinet (left) is actually new. “It's an Indonesian import from Aux Mirabelles that we painted and distressed to look like old Quebec furniture,” says Jean Stéphane. A comfy linen armchair (opposite) is home to a crewel embroidery pillow, a favourite of the couple. CHAIR, CELADON; CARPET, H. LALONDE ET FRÈRE; CUSTOM BLINDS, CURTAINS, QUI DORT DINE; LAMP SHADE, YLVA DE LAURIER.





“Our home looks like a scene from a greeting card when it snows”

The built-in cabinets (right) sold the couple on the home. “They’re original, and were just the style we wanted,” says Jean Stéphane.

CURTAINS, TOWELS, JARS, ALL QUI DORT DINE. Bartlett pears and berries (above, right) next to a vintage mould and pottery bowls create a warm exchange between past and present. POTTERY, MARIE LETELLIER.



refers to as “mistints”—they pictured a homey, sophisticated set-up, and eventually took up residence on the bottom floor—an 800-square-foot, one-bedroom apartment—while converting the second floor into a studio and renting out the third.

“We bought when house prices were skyrocketing,” says Gaëtan, “so to save money we did most of the renovation work ourselves.” In addition to laying floors, they demolished walls, ripped out old appliances and installed gleaming replacements, puzzled their way through elementary wiring and plumbing and mastered the art of carpentry.

Next, the carnival of colours slapped on by the students was silenced by a layer of off-white

(Farrow & Ball’s Old White No. 4 in the living and dining rooms and String No. 8 in the bedroom). “Flow and continuity are really important, especially in small spaces,” says Jean Stéphane, “so we stuck to a similar colour scheme for each room.” Finally, the installation of crisp white classical mouldings from Rona and The Home Depot brought the colours and textures in the rooms into sharper focus, while adding to a sense of orderly calm.

When it came to decorating

The sink and black cupboards (opposite) are from Ikea, but Gaëtan and Jean Stéphane added Victorian pulls from Lee Valley for interest. The ceiling’s tin look is actually painted wallpaper (Anaglypta with Sico latex gloss in Canevas 4155-11). “Tin would have lowered the ceilings too much,” says Jean Stéphane. ACCESSORIES, LES TOUILLEURS, DOMUS, MA CUISINE.





A Stylish Little Christmas

TRY THESE DECORATING TIPS FROM GAËTAN AND JEAN STÉPHANE

Wrap your presents in tea towels or linen remnants you've been collecting all year, then tie them up with a variety of ribbons. • Make every festive hit of cranberry red or apple green pop—don't be afraid to use black, white or cream to full effect. • Decorate with food. Meringues, sugared almonds, tiny cookies and cupcakes make festive still life displays. Try red Bartlett pears or pomegranates

with green or white roses and boxwood. • String small shrubs or evergreen trees in urns with different-sized lights in one colour. Shrubbery adds a real country feel. • Slide reproduction Victorian holiday cards—purchased at specialty stores or online—onto fine ribbons for an easy tree garland. • Fill oversized glass jars or vases with large pine cones or Christmas ornaments.

the space, one piece of furniture spoke to the style they wanted. "We both fell for the built-in china cabinet in the kitchen," says Gaëtan. "It's original to the house and it represented where we wanted to take the rest of the place." Jean Stéphane describes that direction as Urban Country "—all the warmth and coziness of Quebec country living, with none of the fuss we associate with Victorian homes." The hits of black and platinum in the picture frames, doors and appliances make it feel more cosmopolitan.

Festive touches similarly fall in line with the couple's spare aesthetic. The Christmas tree has plenty of green space to show off homemade and vintage ornaments. Meanwhile, a modest sprinkling of glass stars (hanging

"Our house has all the coziness of Quebec country living"

from lamps or tucked on shelves) and several large natural wreaths hung in prominent locations (like the front and back doors) say 'Happy Holidays' without screaming out the season change.

Now that they've wrapped up their final major renovation (the bathroom was completed to their specifications this fall), Jean Stéphane and Gaëtan are ready to throw their annual holiday party for friends and family. "Christmas is our favourite time of year," says Gaëtan, adding, "our home looks like a greeting card every time it snows." ❖

"Linen covers don't need to be pressed to look fantastic," says Jean Stéphane. "They're more beautiful when textured." The pillows, linen sheets, duvet cover and custom curtains are all from Qui Dort Dine. CARPET, H. LALONDE ET FRÈRE; CLOSET ORGANIZERS, IKEA.



Living and Dining Room

FARROW & BALL
Hardwick White No. 5
Old White No. 4
Pointing No. 2003
Pale Powder No. 204
Off-Black No. 57



Kitchen

FARROW & BALL
Chemise No. 216
Off Black No. 57



Bedroom

FARROW & BALL
String No. 8
Borrowed Light No. 235
Pointing No. 2003
Off Black No. 57
Hardwick White No. 5

