

STAGE

VANCOUVER SET DECORATOR AND POTTER JANA KI LARSEN BRINGS HER UNIQUE, ETHEREAL STYLE FROM SHOP TO HOME.

PRESENCE

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An as-found mirror topped with a cluster of tumbleweed for a soft, organic effect is set aglow with a handful of pillar candles and tapers in mismatched gold candlesticks. Homeowners Janaki Larsen and Pascal Roy kept all of the century-old building's original mouldings.

OPPOSITE: "I think of a tree as sculpture rather than something to suffocate with ornaments," says Janaki of the family's sparsely decorated spruce. A painting by Janaki's mother, Patricia Larsen, makes a striking focal point behind a timeworn chair.



The above-the-store apartment's brick fireplace, which was painted red and white like Santa's suit when they bought the building, was coated in Benjamin Moore's Simply White (OC-117) to complement its classic lines and original moulding.



An ornately carved wooden table from Belgium provides old world contrast to the sleek, organic shapes of Janaki's pottery.



In the dining area, a landscape photograph by Janaki's sister, Klee Larsen, is hung unframed, in keeping with the raw, casually glamorous decor. Janaki (with Pascal and Lola) chose silk drapes and a vintage damask tablecloth to add luxe contrast.

THE BUILDING was bought on impulse, the transaction taking little more than an afternoon. In retrospect, Janaki Larsen calls it destiny, but it was more like real-estate romanticism.

For years, while visiting a friend nearby, Janaki had driven past a century-old building in a quiet, residential area of East Vancouver and fantasized about what it could be. She and her aunt, Marie Brennan, had always talked about buying a property together. Janaki imagined opening a cosy neighbourhood café, filled with delicious food and familiar faces. Janaki and her husband, Pascal Roy, would live above it and have chickens in the backyard; they would set up an egg stand and donate the proceeds to charity.

So back in 2009, when the old building came up for sale, Janaki, a set decorator and potter, and her mother, painter Patricia Larsen, couldn't resist going to the open house, just to take a look. "Next thing you know, we had made an offer and were having a celebratory glass of wine in the owner's backyard," says Janaki. "We didn't have a realtor; we didn't really have any money. I was seven months pregnant, and we had just bought a structure that our building inspector referred to as a teardown. But we weren't intimidated." You see, Janaki comes from a family blessed with the ability to see beauty where others might simply see rotten support beams, mouldy floors and a maze of miniscule rooms.

In a decidedly unromantic move, the ground floor had to be completely gutted and an apartment was added. Upstairs, walls were removed

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“We loved the idea that the building had a history, and we didn’t want to erase that”

An old metal lamp found at Janaki’s car mechanic’s shop lends industrial edge to the living room, while a Lucite side table provides a convenient storage space for books. Janaki stores her holiday ornaments in egg cartons for safekeeping.



Q&A: JANAKI'S ENTERTAINING ESSENTIALS

House & Home: Do you have a signature entertaining style?

Janaki Larsen: Simple. Spontaneous. I love eating outside, so dinner parties are usually in our backyard at a huge travertine-topped table that seats about a dozen. I like that really simple Mediterranean style of eating, lots of small dishes, food piled on the table. I cook; our neighbour makes the bread. It's handy that we live above the shop because usually every meal starts with a cheese and charcuterie plate.

H&H: What's your idea of the perfect dinner party?

JL: An Italian dinner outside just before dusk with friends and family. Sipping wine, eating fava beans with dandelion greens, fresh bread and huge chunks of Parmesan cheese. Or we might have fennel and squid salad, pizza made from scratch. There's always candlelight. Kids running around. I love that!



A faded sense of luxury is established with a table covered in a vintage gold damask tablecloth and the ceiling's layers of old paint and wallpaper. A coat of clear acrylic sealant prevents flaking.

H&H: What are your go-to table accessories?

JL: For dinner parties, I fill little Italian juice bottles with flowers foraged from the garden. We entertain so much that we go through a lot of linen. I buy packs of cotton painter's rags (\$13/24 at The Home Depot) to use as napkins. They look great loosely tied in a big fat knot at each place setting. A lot of the tablecloths we use are just painter's canvas dropcloths. The more you wash them, the softer and mellower they get! We string up market lights that cast a low-watt glow over everything and everyone.

H&H: How do you give your table a personal touch?

JL: Since I'm a potter, I use bowls and serving dishes that I've made. I also collect old silver and vintage china. Nothing matches — it's all a mishmash. Whatever is on the table, either I made, or it came from a thrift store. If we're having a big dinner party, I grab cutting boards from the shop — they just get better with use.





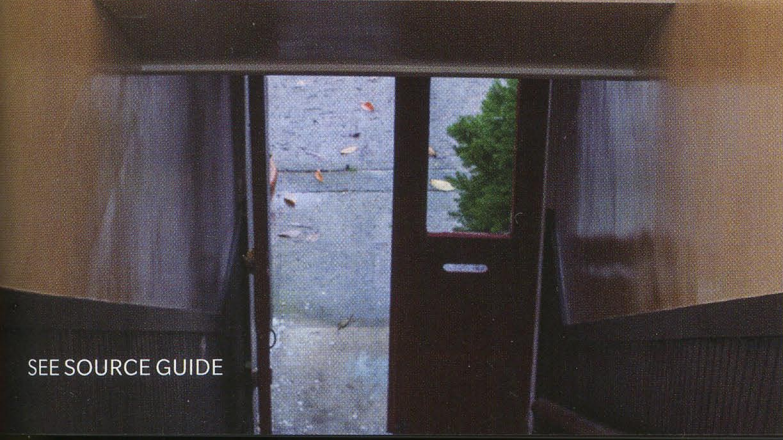
LEFT: Reupholstered in grey linen, the antique settee in the living room is a favourite perch for Lola to see out the apartment window.

RIGHT: A handpainted sideboard found in Vancouver's Chinatown adds colour and serves as storage space for countertop appliances in the kitchen.

BELOW LEFT: A photo by Janaki's sister, Klee, and a Craigslist-find chandelier add romance to the stairwell.

BELOW RIGHT: One of a pair of ripped, time-bruised French side chairs Janaki has had since she was 16 contributes to the mood of crumbling grandeur. The mottled walls were stripped of old wallpaper then lightly skim-coated with drywall paste, allowing the colours to seep through.

OPPOSITE, BOTTOM: To open up the kitchen, Janaki and Pascal removed a wall and placed the fridge in an antechamber (at right). Dated floor-to-ceiling pink tiles were replaced with crisp white-painted walls, and wood shelves — fashioned out of old wooden beams from a downtown warehouse — allow for open storage. Streamlined grey cabinets and stainless steel counters, which replaced pink Arborite ones, are sleek and practical.





“I like things that have the patina of age. I wanted our home to feel elegant, raw — rustic yet romantic”

TOP LEFT: For the holidays, Janaki fills her prized gold wall sconce with candles and creates a nest of dried foliage and vintage Christmas balls.

TOP RIGHT: Janaki made a DIY “snowglobe” inside an old mason jar, using the brass figure from on top of a gymnastics trophy.

BOTTOM LEFT: Preferring the patina of age to perfection, Janaki left the ceiling’s old layers of newspaper, wallpaper and plaster intact, simply coating them with sealant to prevent any peeling. **Artwork**, Patricia Larsen.

BOTTOM CENTRE: Tossed over an antique settee, a richly textured wool rug from Mexico and tapestry footstool encourage a comfortable, feet-up moment.





Rather than erase the signs of age and history on the turn-of-the-century building that now houses the café and apartments, the couple kept the patchwork of old paint and repainted the trim. The tree outside is wrapped in market lights that cast a warm glow on the store's exterior.

SHOP TALK

THE COUPLE'S STORE, LE MARCHÉ ST. GEORGE, IS A HAVEN FOR ARTISANAL FARE.

FOUR YEARS AGO, inspired by trips to Europe, owners Janaki Larsen and Pascal Roy set out to create an old world café and market where food looks like art and every detail delights the eye. The restored 1907 building in this quiet residential area is the perfect setting for Le Marché St. George, which has become a neighbourhood hub for friends and foodies looking for the perfect pain au chocolate, hunk of French cheese or humble, handmade home goods.

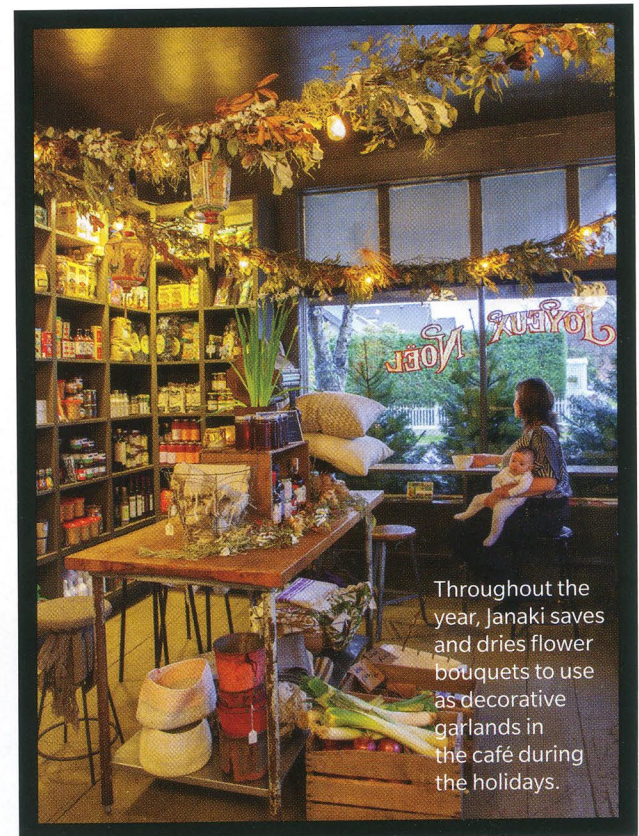
Cosy, dark and about as romantic as shopping or sipping an espresso gets, Le Marché St. George has an ambience that owes much to Janaki's background in set decorating for film. When the couple gutted and restored the space, they cleverly applied paint mixed with soy sauce, coffee and Ovaltine over a wall covered with layers of old wallpaper to heighten its velvety, timeworn look. Other walls and the ceiling are painted a muddy green mistint inspired by "that dark Dutch light in Vermeer paintings," Janaki says. Vegetables, local honey and fresh eggs are displayed like carefully composed still lifes.

It's a setting that's in sync with their efforts to revive the customer's connection to food, farmers and artisans. There is little here that hasn't been made or grown by small or local producers. Throughout the year, the shop hosts olive-oil tastings, beehive tours with a neighbourhood beekeeper, local wine tastings and spontaneous dinner parties in the backyard.

RIGHT: Janaki and Pascal open a seasonal pop-up store filled with holiday favourites, including charming stuffed "animalitos" from Mexico (from \$17 each), and an antique display case filled with jewelry, shoes and other gift items handmade by the café staff. **Artwork**, Patricia Larsen.



SEE SOURCE GUIDE



Throughout the year, Janaki saves and dries flower bouquets to use as decorative garlands in the café during the holidays.



TABLET EXCLUSIVE
See more of Janaki Larsen's homespun pop-up shop