

# At home with nature



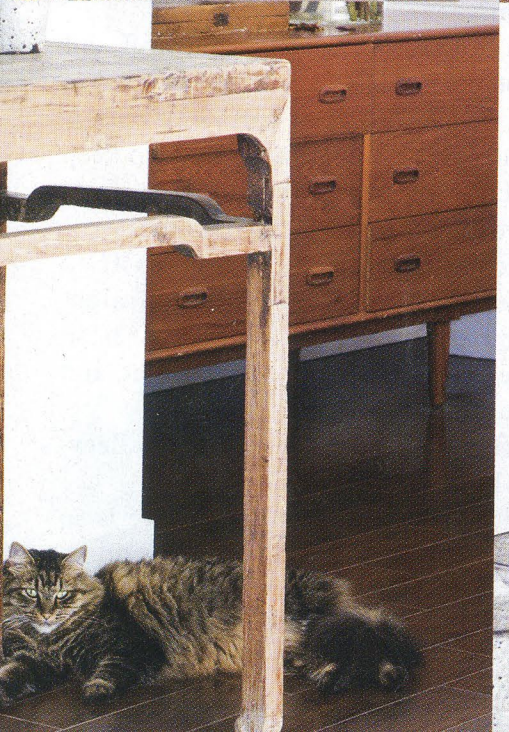
*Janaki Larsen's Vancouver loft is one part home and two parts art studio. Late at night, she spins elements such as coffee grounds into her pottery for added textural interest.*





*Filled with vintage treasures and natural found objects, the West Coast loft of Janaki Larsen breaks the mold. Here, the art director by day and potter by night has her way with natural beauty.*

text and photographs by Kim Christie







**ABOVE:** Together with her partner, Pascal Roy, Larsen built a table of poured concrete framed by fir.

**RIGHT:** Larsen's penchant for stacking in her art makes a pile of books feel more like sculpture.

**OPPOSITE PAGE:** In a monochromatic space, layers of texture give the eye something to focus on.



**I**'ve always envied someone who can turn an old leaf or a rock into a piece of art; to me it's always just debris. How do you turn junk into *junque*?

I think it's how you display it. If there is thought and care in how the objects are arranged, then they are no longer just a stick or a leaf; they become more like sculptures.

**And affordable sculpture at that. It's obvious from looking around your home and studio that you have a passion for imperfect things, a love of shape and form. What draws you in that direction?**

Both my parents are painters. I was taught that nature is always the best source of inspiration: It's free and it's always available. I used to spend hours looking at the shapes of seed pods or shells at the beach. All these things are beautiful, but also imperfect, in various states of decay or asymmetry. It always amazes me that these splendid things are not the result of a design team or factory. They just are.

**Well, there's certainly nothing textbook about your personal style. How would you describe it?**

I like to call it "organic eclectic" or maybe "found modern." I have a love for all things natural, and especially natural things with a sense of humour.

**With such a passion for collecting, how do you keep the knick-knacks and clutter to a minimum?**

I work in a business that's all about stuff, so I like my personal space to be as uncluttered as possible. It's hard, because I also love objects of all kinds, so I really have to work to keep my collecting under control. If I don't absolutely love it, then I don't bring it home.

**And the colour of your walls – what is it?**

It's Cloverdale Paint's house white, straight out of the bucket. Because our place is so small, we needed to maximize the light, and the white really does that.

**White often makes a space feel very gallery-like, but how do you make it livable?**

I think it helps that all our furniture is so eclectic. It makes it feel less like a showroom or gallery, because it's not all perfect. >>



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*Tactile collections of bedding in shades of cream and white are warmed by weathered woods for a serene bedroom hideaway.*



*TOP: Paintings by Janaki's mother, Patricia Larsen, fill the house and complement Larsen's layered aesthetic. ABOVE: An ornate vintage find is tempered by a casual stack of magazines and untailed drapery.*

**Every single thing in your home seems to be either a vintage find or stolen from the forest floor. Are you ever tempted to run out and buy something shiny and brand new?**

Sometimes I would love nothing more than to start over again. I get these desires to have all new, matching things, but then I find I am always drawn to objects that have had a previous life, a history of their own. I like to mix ultra-shiny and new with the old, but I couldn't have new exclusively.

**Do you ever shop at a normal store?**

I love design and architecture. If I shop at normal stores it's usually small design boutiques or HomeSense.

**Do you have any tricks of the trade for choosing great flea-market items?**

Patience! Flea markets and thrift stores can be overwhelming, but finding the diamond in the rough is the thrill of it. And don't buy it unless you really love it. Buying things just to fill space never really works.

**There's "vintage" and there's "old" – what's the difference?**

Usually when I think of vintage, I think quirky and fun. Old seems more serious and weighted by history. I like them both.

**Nothing in your house matches – not the colours, the shapes or the periods of furniture. That's usually a recipe for chaos. How do you make it work?**

I don't always know if it does!

**And if you're really going to treat yourself to something special?**

I'm such a tactile person. I love bedding and have caused my friends and family much embarrassment by my open fondling and enthusiasm for blankets and sheets. ■



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