

the poetry of *her* place

With her dream home oceans away, this interior designer instilled her own European getaway inside a foursquare in St. Paul.

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PHOTOGRAPHS BY KIMBERLY GAVIN



A STORIED HOME

“Art should have personal meaning,” says designer Jacqueline Fortier. In her sitting room, previous pages, pieces include a buffalo watercolor by her friend and local artist Charles Lyon. (“He painted it inside the Theodore Roosevelt National Park in North Dakota, where I’m from,” she says.) Fortier designed the metal railing, above, to feature a door knocker. The bar, below, is a visual welcome. “Design in a home should never be above people, it should coexist alongside them,” she says.



CHARACTER OF PLACE

Unadorned walls covered in mineral paint and bronze-painted windows cast an understated elegance in the living room, where a bench Fortier designed in her 20s is upholstered in Fortuny fabric. A Vincent Van Duysen-inspired armchair imbues the Belgian sparseness Fortier admires.

Jacqueline Fortier calls it the “perfect calm.” The St. Paul-based interior designer recently turned 50, but didn’t want presents. “You know that song by Conway Twitty, ‘Happy Birthday Darlin,’ where he doesn’t give her anything, and instead he takes things away?” Fortier asks. “That’s how this remodel came about. I came to realize I had spent the first half of my life acquiring things, and now I wanted to spend the last half getting rid of them.” At their age and stage, Fortier and her

husband, Jack Boespflug, could afford to renovate and wanted to do it before retirement, with enough time for their two children and them to enjoy the rewards. “All of the pieces were aligned,” she says. “My ‘new look’ isn’t really a new look for me; it’s more that my life finally caught up to it—like the perfect storm, only it’s the perfect calm.”

Sixteen years ago, recently married and before kids, Fortier and her husband bought their first house together: a 1907 foursquare in the Lexington-Hamline neighborhood. Fortier described the 1,200-square-foot house as a “mini man-

sion,” with front and back stairways, and a butler’s pantry. She loved finally having a formal dining room, and furnished the rooms with traditional, classic pieces she collected while living in L.A. and New York, and during her travels. Traditional architectural details like crown moldings and single-function rooms housed her vintage bookcases, box-pleated chairs slipcovered in floral fabric, and sultry velvet shower curtain that puddled the floor around her bathtub. Not long after she finished, their home appeared in a *Better Homes and Gardens* cover story titled “Modern Romantic.”

“I truly believe that this house has made the first year of our marriage more romantic,” she told the magazine in 2003. “I believe what you put in your surroundings can affect how you act toward one another and how you live your life.”

Two kids and about eight years later, the couple was getting frustrated with the lack of space, but they never could find a house or neighborhood they liked better than the one they were in. So they decided to endure a nine-month renovation to create what Fortier describes as a relaxed European getaway. “We never have time to go to Europe and don’t want

A WORKING KITCHEN

"It's not for show," Fortier says of her French chef-inspired kitchen. "I'm an avid cook." Fortier designed one wall of black cabinetry (that includes refrigerator and freezer drawers) to feature the La Cornue range, opposite below. An iron rack made by local artist and metal fabricator Asa Hoyt (who also made the stair rail) holds her extensive copper collection. The sink wall, this page, features a counter cabinet that stores Fortier's treasured dishes, right, that she hand-washes since there is no dishwasher. "I enjoy washing them," she says. "It makes me appreciate them more."



the maintenance of a second home, so I wanted the house to feel like a summer rental in a seaside village in the south of France," she says. "If I can't go to that special place, then I'll bring that special place to me."

The couple had the furnishings they needed, so Fortier focused on refining the architecture. She stripped away much of the window trim and baseboards for plaster-white walls contrasted with bronze windows. The reworked main-level floor plan took down walls for the dining room and butler's pantry, and added a dreamy second bath, a gathering kitchen to house the La Cornue range and her copper collection, and a much-needed mudroom that spans half the length of the house.

Most of the designer's inspiration came from the past. She referred to folders fat with pages torn from 1980s issues of *The World of Interiors*. She

referenced her extensive design library, books tabbed with yellow Post-its, showcasing homes by architects and designers such as Bobby McAlpine, Axel Vervoordt, and Vincent Van Duysen. "I saved all of those pages and pictures of country houses lived in by eccentric artists and French chefs, Italian wine makers, elite bohemians, and photographers," she says.

"Quite frankly, I didn't want a house in the middle of Minnesota, in the middle of winter, in the middle of a mid-life crisis," she explains. "I wanted to escape, and I wanted someone else's house."

In many ways, she created just that by making over her house in a way that was more like a make *under*. Stripping away all those layers let it finally embody what Fortier calls "an old soul, like myself, with purpose and character, and a young-at-heart attitude." ■





CALM ESCAPE

The showstopper in the shower is a waterproof, exterior wallpaper from Italy. "Nature—the colors and the images—is a repeating and constant inspiration in all my work," Fortier says.



NATURE NOTES

Fortier painted her front and back doors, inspired by dense forest colors, in California Paints' Brattle Spruce. She designed the long mudroom to accommodate her 1800s Swedish bench. A few of the hooks above it came from her grandparents' farmhouse.



RESTFUL RETREATS

A Campaign bed, above, from Chelsea Textiles in England, is the focal point in Fortier's daughter's room. "I am very conscious of how my children will remember their childhood home," she says. "I don't 'decorate' their rooms per se, but I do try to create a sense of wonderment." Fortier stitched the framed quilt at the end of the bed when she was pregnant with her daughter. Simple, practical materials ensconce the bath, below, including ungrouted encaustic tile that's also in the kitchen. A Louis XVI-style bed brings a little romance to the master, below right.



TIMELESS ROMANCE

The fabric on the master bed and hanging in the closet is from Bennison Fabrics, known for its textiles based on 18th- and 19th-century English and French originals. "It's easy to create a romantic environment when you keep to Swedish and French antiques from the mid to late 1800s," Fortier says.



INTERIOR DESIGN: Jacqueline Fortier, Jacqueline Fortier Architectural Refinement + Interior Design, 1161 Selby Ave., St. Paul, 651-428-6508, jacquelinefortier.com // **BUILDER:** Flannery Construction, 1375 St. Anthony Ave., St. Paul, 651-225-1105, flanneryconstruction.com
♦ FOR BUYING INFORMATION: See the resource guide at mspmag.com/hdresources.