



OUTSTANDING HOMES

By Ivan Meade

Photographed by Joshua Lawrence

High style meets vintage spirit in this come-hither 1920s Fairfield cottage where the past lives elegantly beside the present, creating a unique style story you won't find in any catalogue.

VINTAGE IN VOGUE

This window seating bench in crushed golden velvet is one of the owner's favourite relaxation spots. Bringing interesting juxtaposition to the room are two Jean Charles Moreaux-inspired leopard print chairs, an antler table discovered at an auction, and a "found" 1940s Hudson's Bay mink stole.



Gergel refinished the fir mantle herself and restored the fireplace using tiles that appear as if they might have been part of the original 1920s home. The 1932 Art Nouveau painting by Canadian artist Henry Fabian references the era in which the home was built, bringing a feminine softness to the rigid lines of the fireplace. The curvaceous chaise lounge complements the lines of the woman in the painting.

Barbara Gergel is one of those designers with a knack for finding charm in the most unprepossessing places. When she and her family decided to move to Victoria from Maple Bay in 2003, she found herself drawn to her upholsterer's Tudor-style cottage on a Fairfield corner property. In one of those moments of pure serendipity, the cottage turned out to be for sale.

Built circa 1925 for a Hudson's Bay buyer, the unpretentious cottage was full of soul. Despite small rooms and other eccentricities, Gergel instantly saw the potential and the quirky charm of an English cottage colliding with Victoria cool.

"This is the kind of house with a lot of original details ...," she says, "so you can

mend things rather than renovate, and remain true to its idiosyncrasies." She took her time understanding the house's needs, and always had two questions in mind: what do I gain and what do I lose?

The Italian word *sprezzatura* —to make whatever one does appear effortless, without too much fuss or thought — perfectly describes what Gergel has achieved. But behind the illusion of effortlessness was hard work. She wanted all the elements in her house to tell a story and have meaning. Her vintage treasures — including a 300-pound outdoor sink she got from a salvage yard and repainted in satin black — are a narrative of their previous owners' history, travels, talents, and tastes. They coexist

with works of Gergel's own design, such as the luxurious window treatments in thick botanical linen prints and silk check patterns, and the seamless improvements throughout the house.

The home reflects a journey of collecting, not an attempt at a particular style, says Gergel. To pull off this eclectic look, objects and furnishings set near each other should have a decade between them. So, don't put a 1970s sofa next to a 1980s chair. Achieve balance by skipping a decade either way.

"The house gave me a new appreciation of the things I owned," says Gergel, "and it's still evolving. In some ways it's like taking an old mink coat and making it work as a blanket — it just gets better."





◀ A KITCHEN TO REMEMBER

Gergel maintained the original kitchen cabinets and layout, but brought the room functionally and aesthetically up to date by raising the sink to standard height, adding a wood panel to a new Liebherr fridge, and installing a glossy glass backsplash to add a "spark." Ken Armstrong restored the 1958 General Electric stove which Gergel still uses. Two "found" vintage pendants from Waterglass Studio hang above the island. A 1950s English PicquotWare tea set and 1940s Fether pottery lamp purchased at an auction are displayed on the island and used proudly every day.

▲ PICTURE PERFECT

A collection of anonymous vintage oil portraits, chosen because Gergel wanted to tell the story of strong women, adds character to the dining room. Her latest furniture find is an exquisite set of 1920s William Haines (Hollywood designer to the stars) inspired Brentwood chairs with red crushed velvet seats, placed in the corners of the dining room.



TRADITION WITH A TWIST

The bathroom layout is original to the house, as is the little chandelier and vanity. New penny glass tile was installed by Gergel to mimic the privacy glass on the window panels, and to reflect light, giving the room an open, airy feeling. A collection of Redouté prints in mirror frames adds a touch of the exotic and brings instant interest to this elegant monochromatic bathroom.



◀ STILL LIFE

The green room, as Gergel likes to call her detached studio, is definitely a forest fable where the most unusual furnishings find a unique dialogue. A pheasant seems to fly from the window above a substantial 1930s Corazon oak dining table flanked by two exquisite French cane and pecan wood chairs. A green velvet and silk taffeta sofa by Harrods (of London) is juxtaposed against a teak-root coffee table.

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▲ LIVING OUT LOUD

This vibrant home exterior retreat reflects Gergel's aesthete mind. Black-stained concrete floors tie all of the elements of the sunken outdoor patio together. An "L" shape outdoor kitchen in fir with custom-made G-rock countertops by Szolyd Design gives structure to the space. Gergel, who is a master gardener, says, "Gardening is essential, a part of my everyday life — it has become an incredible escape."

◀ A SINK WITH STYLE

Gergel's friend and colleague Gary Collins discovered this fantastic vintage double sink in a salvage yard. Serving as both kitchen and garden sink, it stands proudly refinished in polished black with a functional pot-filler faucet.



▲ PATIO REVIVAL

This dream grilling space features an Alfresco LX2 barbecue and side burner, stainless steel cabinet door fronts and drawers by Jackson Grills, and beautiful custom fir cabinetry.

SOURCES

Interior/Exterior design: Barbara Gergel

Contractor/Builder: Bill Kennedy Construction Ltd.

Landscape design consultant: Dale Dziwenka of Waterform Design

Custom furnishings: Dining table by Evan Sadler; patio table by Horst Molleken; chaise lounge by Bonnie Schmaus

Patio suppliers: Alfresco LX2 barbecue and side burner from Capital Iron; stainless steel cabinet door fronts and drawers by Jackson Grills; patio containers from Demitasse Specialty Plants and Old Farm Garden Stone; patio cabinetry by Glasgow Precision Woodworks; G-rock countertops by Szolyd Design

Outdoor garden sink: Gary Collins of Waterhouse Contracting

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