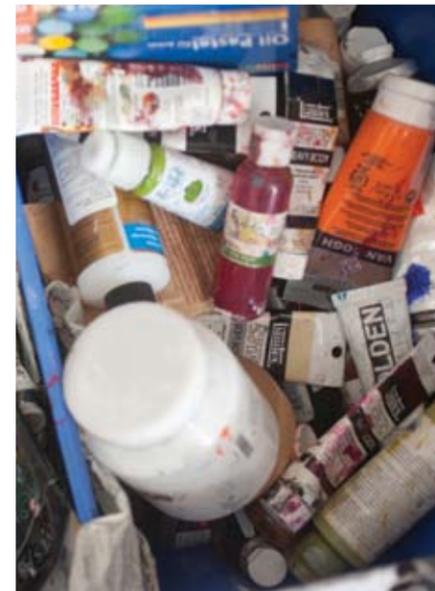
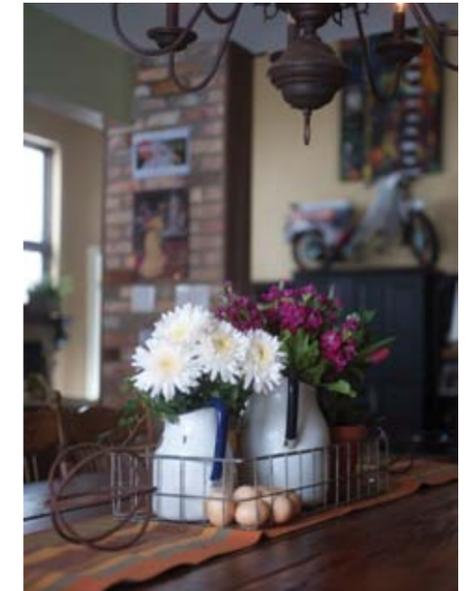




the
THOUGHTFUL
artful
HOUSE

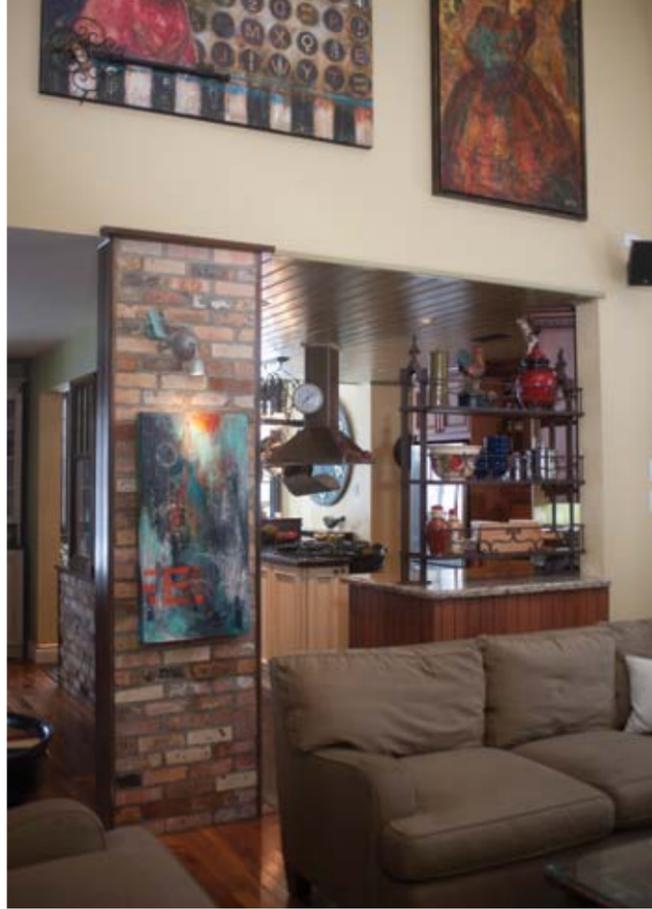
BY ANDREA TOMKINS
PHOTOGRAPHY BY SUZANNE BIRD

Christina Lovisa in her home studio.
OPPOSITE: The house is a grand showcase of Lovisa's own art and her lifelong collection of found treasures.



Most of the time when you walk into someone's home you can predict what you'll find behind the front door. Other times, as you step over the threshold, a home will not only take you by complete surprise but shake up your idea of interior design. *Continued on page 23*





LEFT: The living room is an eclectic mix of treasures. Perched above the entertainment unit, a salvaged motorbike has found new life as a decorative piece. Even the furniture is transformed by Christina's hand. **TOP:** A plate rack bolted to the granite counter in the kitchen is made from 140-year-old Victorian gateposts. **ABOVE:** A closer look at the etching on the coffee table. **OPPOSITE TOP:** This foyer sees plenty of use beyond the ordinary. The Lovisas have incorporated a pinball machine and popcorn maker to make it a hangout for their family. **OPPOSITE BOTTOM LEFT:** Christina demonstrates her pinball wizardry. **OPPOSITE BOTTOM RIGHT:** The powder room off the foyer displays Christina's creative, decorative touch.

Just west of Dick Bell Park, tucked away in a little inlet along the Ottawa River, is a custom-designed home that belongs to artist/scavenger Christina Lovisa, her husband Paul and their two school-age sons. "My house is an evolution," says Lovisa. "It's like a piece of art to me."

Lovisa is the owner of **St. Elmos Fire** in Stittsville where her artwork is also showcased. There she creates and teaches others to trust their own artistic voice.

Upcycling, deconstructing, reconstructing, recycling – these are all trendy buzzwords right now – but for people like Lovisa, they have been a way of life for a long time. This is evident in her artwork and home.

The creation of the Lovisa home has been a decade-long project. Christina and Paul designed the house themselves and had a draftsman draw up the building plans. Paul's father was a custom homebuilder who came out of retirement to help build one last house. Theirs.

"It's his legacy," Lovisa says fondly. "My husband and I did the work with him. We were labourers. People would not believe it but I built the staircase with my father-in-law."

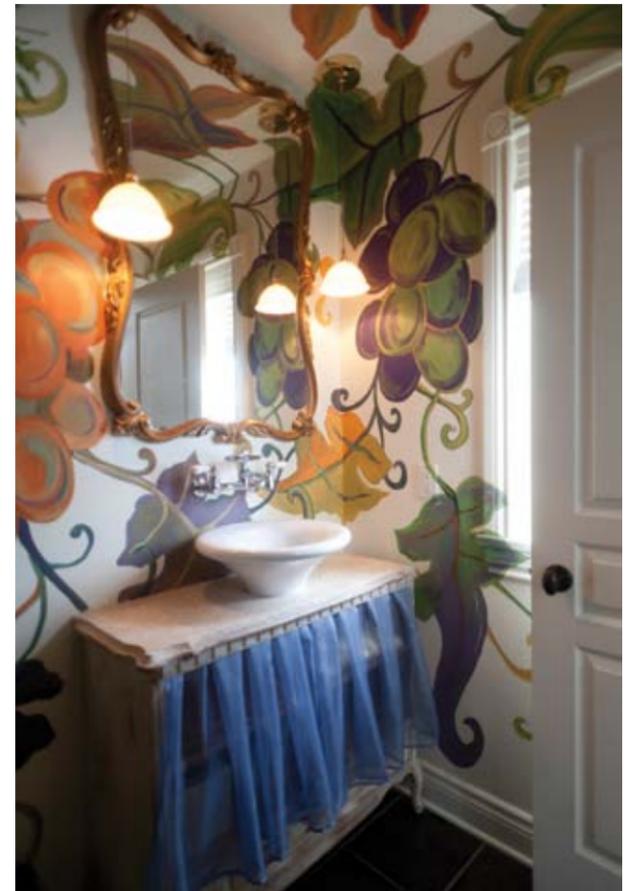
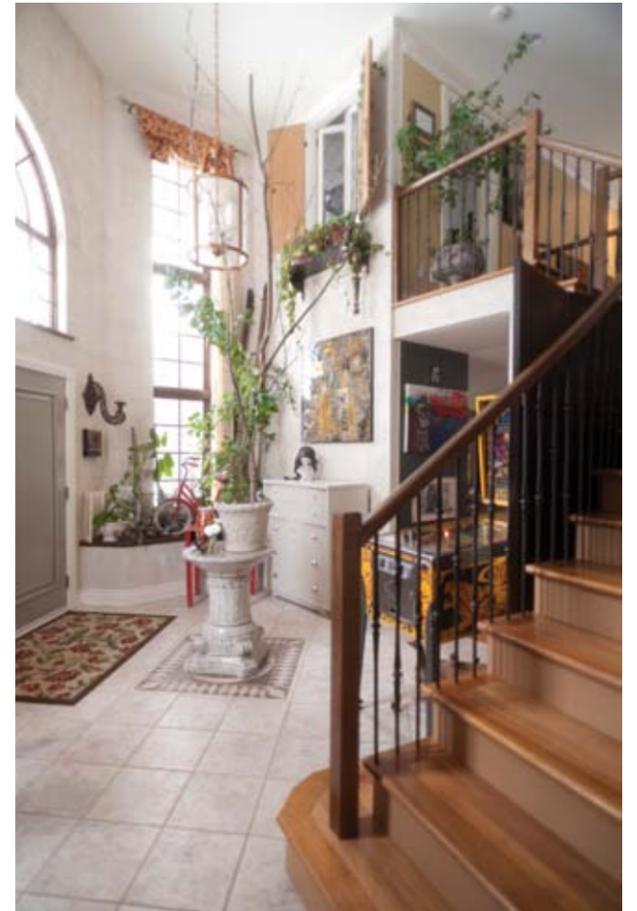
They did almost everything themselves, save the drywall and the framing, which they contracted out to save time.

"When we talk about our renovation and people ask us if we'd do it again, the answer is no. It was the biggest renovation of my life," says Lovisa.

She wanted a house that looked lived-in and a style that would stand the test of time. It will never be the kind of home that is filled with trendy furnishings. Instead, Lovisa prefers personality pieces that don't age, mostly furniture and "objets d'art" that she personalizes herself.

"When we first built our home, we were house poor; all of our furnishings had to be found," she says. "I think that was the birth of my business."

The found things stayed and Lovisa says she hasn't felt a need to buy many new items. "Everything speaks to me and I love it." *Continued on page 24*



feature

The whole house is a grand showcase of Lovisa's own art and her lifelong collection of found treasures. Almost every item has a story. It's like a well-organized magpie's nest; a coat rack is made from the front of a piano (and a nearby plant stand is made from the other half), a repainted motorcycle is perched on the top of a cabinet. "My attention to detail is who I am and it really comes out in this house," she says.

The dining room table was custom made out of thick fir planks her father-in-law brought from Italy to use for his work as a stonemason. They're well over 100 years old. "We had the table made in his honour," says Lovisa.

It was decided that no matter what legs they chose, they just weren't substantial enough for the girth of the table, so they used salvaged beams from a 200-year-old house in Carp. The table was put together using traditional means, without screws.

Three old windows from **Cohen & Cohen** separate the dining and kitchen areas, framing each side like a painting. "I like using the

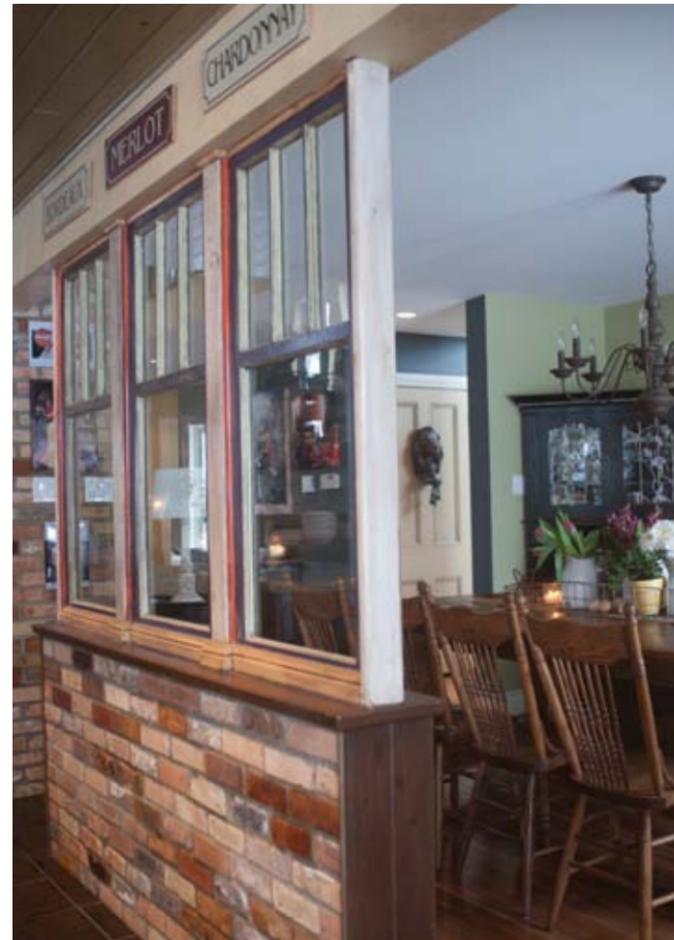
windows because it gives you a nice open feel. We didn't want to block it with a solid wall."

There are fantastic scavenged finds everywhere. A plate rack bolted to the granite counter in the kitchen is made from 140-year-old Victorian gateposts, found at a salvage yard in Virginia on the way to a wedding.

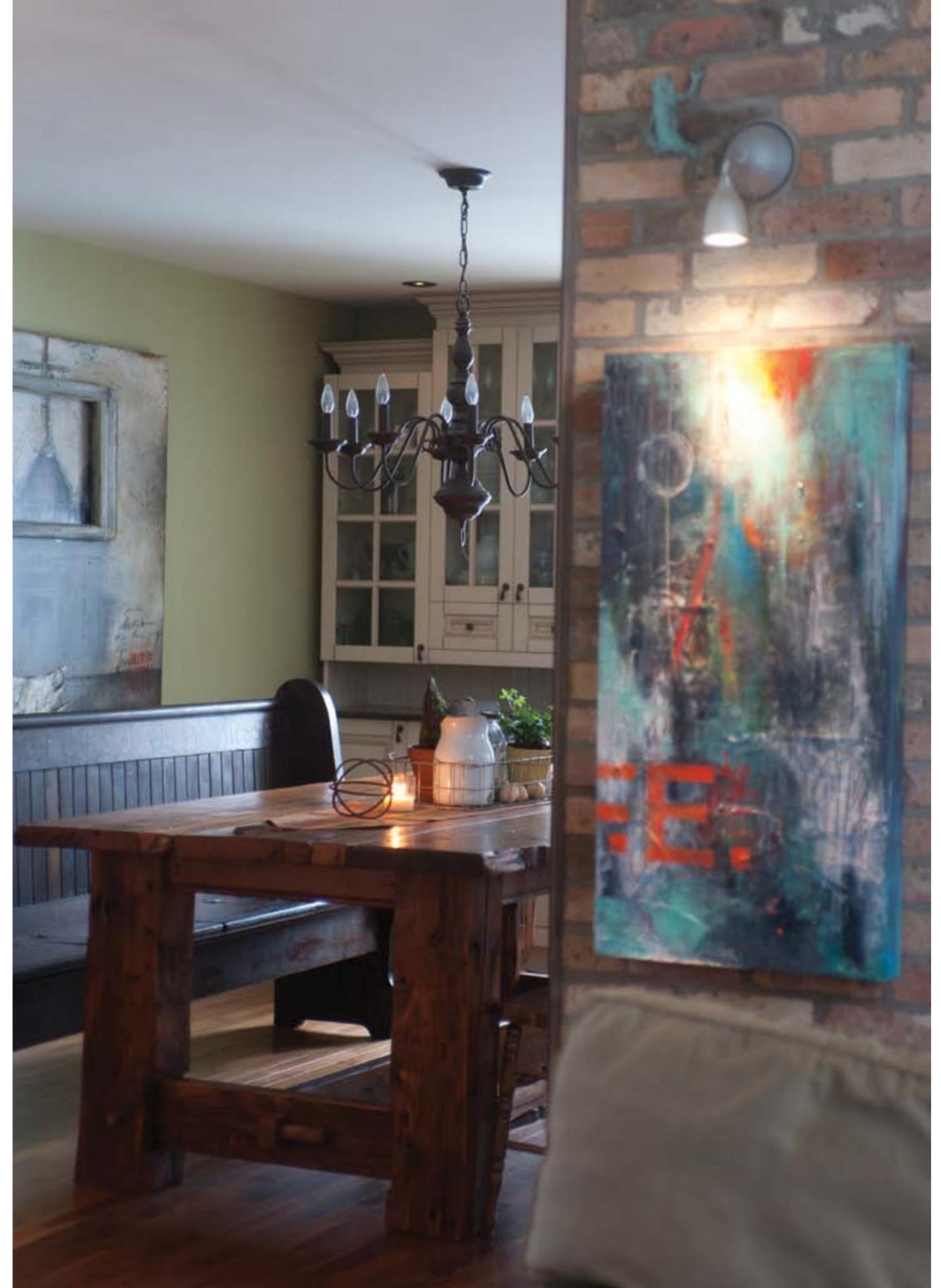
Lovisa designed her kitchen with help from **Astro Design Centre**. She wanted "chunky" cabinetry that had a furniture-like quality to it.

"I loved their maple cupboards because they looked old and they'd stand the test of time," recalls Lovisa. Not only did she want a wood that was timeless, but she chose a creamy finish for the island in case she ever wanted to paint it.

One of Lovisa's favourite things about the kitchen is the choice of windows from **Théo Mineault Inc.** that open inwards. There is no centre bar, which results in a totally unobstructed view; and the views, especially out to the river, are gorgeous. *Continued on page 26*



TOP LEFT: Made of thick fir planks, the custom dining room table has a personal inscription; a nod to Adriano Lovisa, Paul's father. **LEFT:** A blend of creamy white and rich maple cabinetry give the kitchen a timeless feel. **ABOVE:** Three reclaimed windows separate the dining and kitchen areas, framing each side like a painting. **OPPOSITE:** The home's dining room is filled with personal touches, from the massive handmade table to the impressive original art pieces that grace the walls.





Two old doors were refinished to create a unique headboard for the master bedroom. Beautiful floral accents add warmth to the room.



Paul and Christina are in it for the long haul and are planning on growing old together here. “We have our master bedroom and master bathroom on the main floor. We’ve designed everything with wide doors and it’s very open,” says Lovisa.

Although the house was designed with the future in mind, it’s certainly warm and welcoming right now.

“I want to use my house,” says Lovisa. The front foyer is a testament to this. Decorated with stunning mixed media canvasses it also has a vintage

pinball machine and carnival-style popcorn popper.

“We’ll often sit and have coffee in the foyer in the morning,” says Lovisa. “Kids come and play pinball, make popcorn, and everyone’s on the same floor instead of heading down into the basement right away. I don’t always want them disappearing.”

By surrounding herself with the things that speak to her, she has created a living space that is perfect for entertaining and comfortable for her family. Now that’s a nice nest. **OH**

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