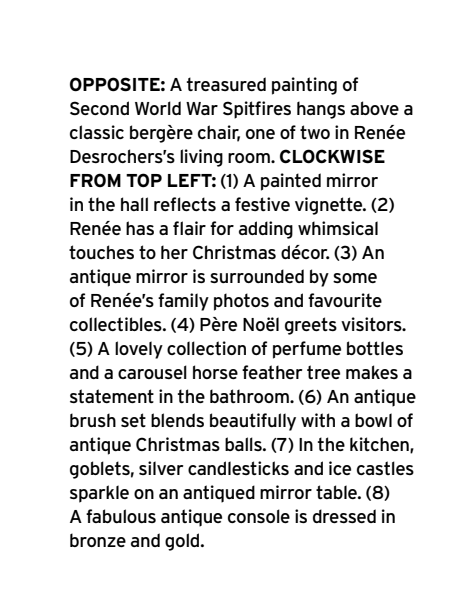




FROM PARIS *with Love*

BY JIM FOX // PHOTOGRAPHY BY SANDY MACKAY



OPPOSITE: A treasured painting of Second World War Spitfires hangs above a classic bergère chair, one of two in Renée Desrochers's living room. **CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT:** (1) A painted mirror in the hall reflects a festive vignette. (2) Renée has a flair for adding whimsical touches to her Christmas décor. (3) An antique mirror is surrounded by some of Renée's family photos and favourite collectibles. (4) Père Noël greets visitors. (5) A lovely collection of perfume bottles and a carousel horse feather tree makes a statement in the bathroom. (6) An antique brush set blends beautifully with a bowl of antique Christmas balls. (7) In the kitchen, goblets, silver candlesticks and ice castles sparkle on an antiqued mirror table. (8) A fabulous antique console is dressed in bronze and gold.



OPPOSITE: In the kitchen, a crystal chandelier hangs over a sparkling holiday vignette on an antiqued mirrored pedestal table. **LEFT:** Fabulous red serving pieces and accessories add to the festive feel in the kitchen. The settee is a perfect perch for Renée's beloved pets. **BELOW:** Renée downstairs in Pamper & Soothe.



The hypnotic monochromatic watercolour in the apartment living room depicts Second World War Spitfires arcing, dipping and falling like grey ghosts in an illusive dream. The painting captures the dual passions that ignite the imagination of the apartment's owner, Renée Desrochers – her love of history mingled with a modern sensibility that reveals the story behind everything she sees.

Renée, owner of **Pamper & Soothe** in Thornbury, lives in a small, elegant flat above her shop in a turn-of-the-century Victorian brick house. Pamper & Soothe, like her living quarters, reflects those things that excite and impassion Renée.

She explains the source of her inspiration for business and life. "I have a European background. I grew up in an original fieldstone house, around which my uncle built our renovated home. So I've always been surrounded by historic elements from barnboard walls to a stone fireplace. My mom decorated with eclectic pieces that were in keeping with the overall style of the house where we lived... I guess I've picked up on that."

Provenance clearly influences Renée's style. "I have a definite passion for older things," she says. "When my business partner and I travel to Paris

to attend the trade show Maison&Objet to buy for our two shops, I love spending hours perusing the antique markets."

She also reflects her love of the festive season ahead. "Christmas is a tradition in my family," she says. "In my shop I sell real advent calendars and behind each door is a historic holiday scene. I love that traditional sense of being with family and the feeling of 'Peace on Earth.' Because it's the high point of the year, I like to see it reflected in my home décor."

True to her word, Renée's entire apartment is punctuated with hand-made candles from Europe and accessories that suggest the tradition and class of European culture. Luminescent crystal palaces and a historic map of Paris enhance the kitchen. The living room contains Bergère chairs for comfort and their traditional quality.

Continued on page 84



LEFT: Renée's reading nook. **BELOW:** The living room is decorated with Renée's favourite finds and reminiscent of a Paris apartment. **BOTTOM:** Renée's black and white living room is a charming mix of eclectic old-world gems. Fashion inspires the décor.



When questioned about what she likes to give or receive at Christmas, Renée embraces originality. "I don't follow trends. My focus for others is on the traditional and personal – European and classical pieces that feed one's soul. As for myself, I always appreciate beautiful body products. Pampering products and little luxuries."

Although Renée lives in a small space she is surrounded by beauty. She explains what prompts her choices of home décor. "I love classical, traditional pieces; furnishings with good bones," she explains. "My great aunt's silver collection is a pleasure to clean and when I do polish it I have fond memories of her and my great uncle. I love that nostalgia."

Patience is a virtue Renée embraces. "I don't decorate all at once," she admits. "I live with the space for a while. In a way it's organic. Whatever it is – a claw foot bathtub, a winter goose down duvet, a Vermeer print or an ornate mirror – requires thought beforehand."

As the charming proprietor of Pamper & Soothe, Renée finds it difficult to make a distinction between her work and her personal space. "I don't separate my work and my personal space," she explains. "Growing up I always had a dollhouse that I decorated. As a child, old leather-bound books that smelled of history surrounded me. I loved to leaf through those books. They had inscriptions from people from generations long passed."

Continued on page 86

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feature

RIGHT AND BELOW: In the bedroom, a painted canopy bed is the focal point of a room filled with treasures, each infused with wonderful memories. **BOTTOM:** Shelves in the bathroom are filled with the best soaps and lotions, all available in Renée's Thornbury store, Pamper & Soothe.



The past clearly plays a big role in Renée's life. "I carry my memories with me. They are with me in everything I do. People should pamper their body and soothe their soul. Decorate your place with what feeds your soul. Home should be filled with the heart and soul of what is important to you. That lets you step out into the world with confidence from the place you've come from."

Her philosophy also carries into Renée's business life. "My shop has an appreciation for antiques, whether real or reproductions," she says. "We intermingle the two. I like to fill the shop with eye-pleasing pieces that have heart and soul. When decorating, it doesn't hurt for people to throw in modern pieces with the more traditional. It just takes a little creativity to mix the two styles."

Renée achieves this creative integration in the choice of a Victorian home, the perfect setting for her shop and her home. As her cat, Charity, and dog, L.B. (Little Buddy) run downstairs at the sound of a customer's arrival, the homey atmosphere Renée fosters becomes real. **OH**

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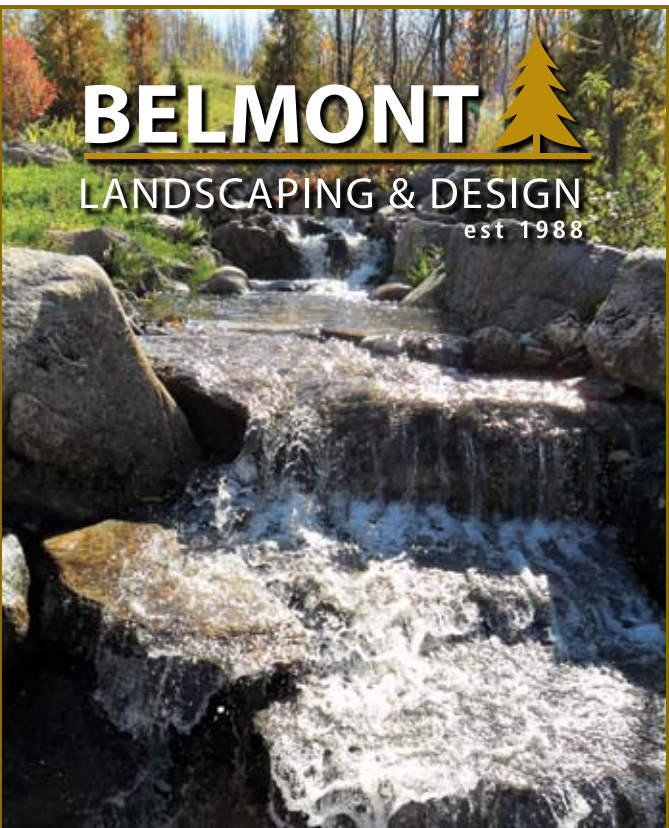
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