

A Curated Christmas

A creative director decks the halls of her cosy Arts and Crafts home in Victoria.

Text by SYDNEY LONEY
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LEFT: Homeowners Tara Hurst and Michael Zary in the inviting corner window seat, which is original to the home. **Sheepskin throws, throw pillow, Pigeonhole Home Store.**

BOTTOM: "I like to have an element of Christmas in every room, even if it's just a small arrangement on a table," says Tara. She designs her own Christmas cards and keeps them at the ready to present to friends and neighbours when they drop by. **Accent table, brass card holder, Pigeonhole Home Store; plant pot, florals (throughout), Rook & Rose.**

OPPOSITE: Once the tree is up, Tara sets to work wrapping gifts with natural paper and ribbon carefully preserved from Christmases past. "I wrap things early because, for me, wrapping is part of decorating," she says. "One year, I made my own gift wrap using stamps to create patterns on brown paper." Lush green laurels in the garden outside the dining room window provide the perfect backdrop. **Ornaments, baskets, Pigeonhole Home Store; felted garlands, West Elm; wall colour, Lamp Room Gray (88), trim colour (throughout), Wimborne White (239), Farrow & Ball.**

Tara Hurst starts her holiday decorating on December 1, regardless of what day of the week it happens to fall on. Her husband, Michael Zary, carries a fragrant, fresh-cut spruce home on his shoulder from the garden store just down the street and sets it up in a corner of the dining room. Then, the heavy lifting done, he relaxes with a rum and eggnog while Tara carefully extracts her treasured wooden ornaments from cloth pouches and judiciously hangs each one while classic choral Christmas music plays softly in the background. "This is *the* Christmas house; it just has that energy," says Tara, with a laugh. "I love a traditional approach and Michael is a good sport because I'm way more into it than he is."

Tara, a creative director, and Michael, a contract specialist, moved into their 1,500-square-foot Arts and Crafts bungalow in Victoria five years ago, following an extensive renovation. "It was completely run down," says Tara, "but we could see its potential."

Come Christmastime, the century home's understated elegance is reflected in both her tasteful long-term design decisions and her subtle holiday decorating, neither of which are to be rushed. "As a designer, the joy of decorating for me is in the process," says Tara. It's why the couple didn't have a coffee table until last year and why there's still no art on the walls — every piece is carefully considered and chosen after much deliberation. "I've taken my time," she says. "I'd rather wait for something I really love rather than rush to fill the space. At no point am I decorating a room just to get it done."

Her patient approach gives the house a rare and inviting depth of feeling. Tara and Michael preserved some of the home's unique



Produced by Emma Reddington

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historical features, from the stained glass windows to the built-in hutch in the dining room to the original fir floors, and paired them with elements that resonated personally, such as the woolly rugs they shipped home while on holiday in Morocco last year and the white plates and platters Tara discovered in Burgundy's Brocante markets. (The plates are perched on the plate rail in the dining room when not in use for parties.) "I'm a bit of a romantic and love that every object has a story," she says.

Tara also loves entertaining; their home has become something of a holiday hub within their friend group. She hosts a party early in the season for 40 or so girlfriends and is the one most likely to be pulling a turkey from the oven on Christmas Day. "I'm in my element when I have a handful of people in my home," she says.

Guests are greeted with a glass of bubbles and warm *gougères* fresh from the oven before they inevitably gravitate toward the cosy window seat nestled beside the fireplace in the living room. The fresh scent of cedar from the boughs draped over the mantel adds to the festive air. Says Tara: "I love making everyone feel welcome and watching them enjoy themselves in my home."



ABOVE: Floor-to-ceiling bookcases house Michael's eclectic library, while Tara's art books are displayed on the coffee table — you won't find a TV here.

An original stained glass window over a neutral modern sofa serves as an artistic focal point while overlapping woolen kilims from Morocco add a layer of texture and keep the West Coast winter chill at bay. **Sofa, chair, Gus* Modern; coffee table, Pigeonhole Home Store; table lamp, Schoolhouse Electric & Supply Co.; wall colour, Lamp Room Gray (88), Farrow & Ball.**

LEFT: Candles in vintage brass holders provide a warm glow atop the original wood-burning fireplace that anchors the living room. Tara recently painted it white, highlighting the graphic pattern of the bricks. Restored beams add depth and symmetry to the room's stately nine-foot-high ceilings.



"BRASS IS MY FAVOURITE ACCENT METAL — I LOVE THE HERITAGE FEELING IT ADDS AND HOW IT PATINATES OVER TIME"

Glass-fronted upper cabinets showcase Tara's collection of British mixing bowls and a soup tureen she brought home from France. She installed the biggest farmhouse sink she could find and paired it with a brass faucet ordered from deVOL Kitchens in England. At Christmas, she prepares a traditional English dinner. "The only nerve-racking part is cooking the turkey," she says. "But once the bird is out of the oven, I can relax." **Hardware**, Victoria Specialty Hardware & Plumbing; **refrigerator**, Fisher & Paykel; **pendant** by Thomas O'Brien, Bespoke Design; **wall colour**, Wimborne White (239), **cabinet colour**, Pavilion Gray (242), Farrow & Ball.



ABOVE: In the dining room, a brass chandelier suspended over the traditional farmhouse-style harvest table and antique French bistro chairs add a moment of modernity. "I love hosting and plating food," says Tara. "I've always wanted a formal dining room, and the table can seat 10 comfortably." **Thonet dining chairs**, Pigeonhole Home Store; **chandelier**, Schoolhouse Electric & Supply Co.



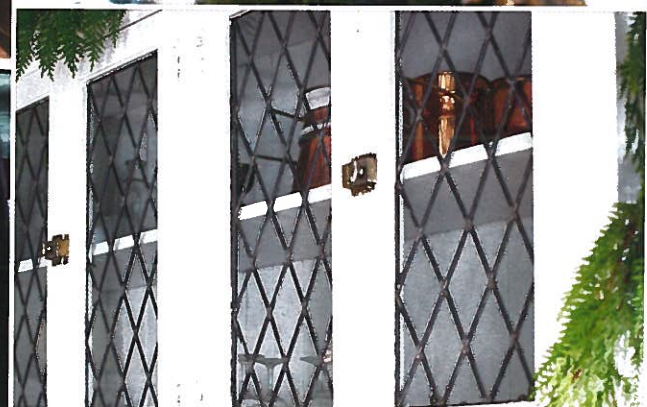
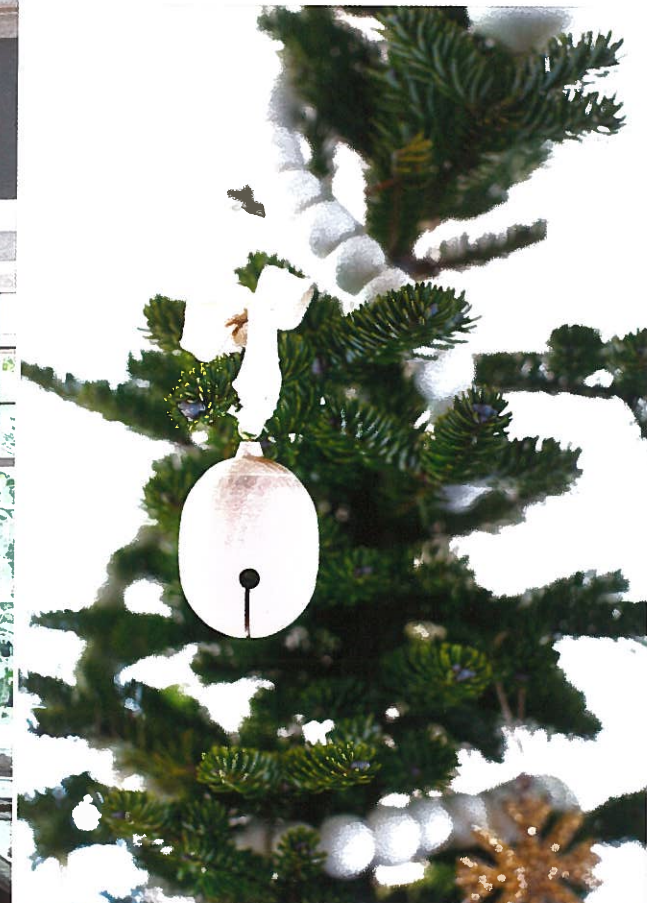
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ABOVE: Tara's favourite piece of furniture is the antique, Canadian-made bergère chair she had re-covered in grey linen to complement the deep, earthy tone of the walls. It's her ideal spot to sit with a cup of tea — unless the couple's chocolate lab, Zadie, gets there first. **Chair**, Pigeonhole Home Store.

TOP RIGHT: Natural elements are preferred for holiday decorating, like the simple wooden baubles hanging from the tree.

BOTTOM RIGHT: The dining room's built-in hutch, with its ornate leaded glass doors, was originally yellow but Tara had it painted white to match the trim throughout the house. "It's my martini corner, with gin from Victoria and my nana's glasses. I'm very close to my nana, who is the other artist in the family." **Tart**, Fol Epi Organic Bakery.



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LEFT AND BOTTOM LEFT: Tara ordered the principal bathroom's sink and tub from an artisan in Tennessee who restores old clawfoot tubs. White subway tile, a window ledge, Shaker-style hooks and warm brass accents reinforce the historical vibe. "I wanted the room to feel like it might have in the early 1900s," says Tara. **Drapery, medicine cabinet, RH;** **towels, Coyuchi;** **sheepskin rug, Pigeonhole Home Store;** **sconces, Schoolhouse Electric & Supply Co.**

BELOW: A classic sleigh bed in the principal bedroom makes a traditional yet minimalist statement when paired with neutral walls and natural linens. **Quilt, pillow sham, RH;** **bedside table, Bespoke Design;** **task lamp, Schoolhouse Electric & Supply Co.;** **wall colour, Cornforth White (228), Farrow & Ball.**

