

When they took over a Plateau triplex in 2002, the owners envisioned a Victorian haven in what had become a students' pad

BY DONNA NEBENZAHL
SPECIAL TO URBAN EXPRESSIONS

A tiny Victorian jewel in the Plateau, once a faded gem, is now at its glittering best, thanks to a skillful renovation – a mixture of perseverance and personal style that has resulted in an elegant and welcoming space.

When they took possession of a somewhat battered Plateau triplex in 2002, the owners faced a daunting task: The structure needed some straightening out and, thanks to the creative decorating exercises of the students who had lived there previously, the ground-floor flat was painted in purple, orange and green, while one room had dark blue walls festooned with clouds – and a red ceiling.

Luckily, Jean Stéphane Beauchamp is an interior designer and his partner Gaëtan Larochelle is co-owner of Qui Dort Dine, a decor shop specializing in linens. They had fallen in love with the bones of the building despite the rough shape in which they found it.

So, even though they planned to chip away at the plaster and move walls, they decided to start with a blank slate. After cleaning the place, they systematically painted everything with white primer. "Now we had a canvas," Beauchamp said.

With the third floor rented and the second in use as their business offices, they concentrated on the 850-square-foot main floor, starting by insulating the outer walls and adding supporting beams to level the floors and ceilings. Then they slowly



Jean Stéphane Beauchamp, left, and Gaëtan Larochelle with holiday greenery outside their Plateau triplex.

guttled the interior, taking off the plaster and revealing facing walls to the original brick.

While the house had lost most of its interior details before they came along, Beauchamp and Larochelle loved Montreal Victoriana and were determined to make their new home an oasis of muted tones with a cozy ambience, and a showcase for their many treasures.

They began in the kitchen, the only room with a piece of furniture original to the house – a pine sideboard with glass-fronted cupboards. "This piece had attracted us to buying the house," Beauchamp says. "It spoke of the past (and future) charm of the place."

And while their style tends to classic, they knew they didn't want to live in a cluttered, dark, Victorian-era interior. "We like things to last," Beauchamp says. "We wanted a pared-down version of something cozy and quiet and classic, and this house just spoke to us." ▶

Diamond in the rough

PHOTOS BY VIRGINIA MACDONALD STYLING BY NICOLA MARC



The dining room banquette is flanked by beadboard-backed bookcases. Vintage chairs, painted white, were inherited from Larochelle's grandmother.



The sideboard was the only original piece in the house. Creamy white woodwork glows against pale grey walls.

The kitchen, an extension of the house originally in use as a summer kitchen, is a low-ceilinged room that was made more expansive with painted wallpaper on the ceiling. Realizing that the windows and doors were not at the same height, they levelled them visually by installing shelving above the mouldings, at the same time providing display space for Beauchamp's many kitchen artifacts.

To their delight, they uncovered beadboard backing behind the sideboard and used that beadboard theme as a cohesive element in their design throughout the house. They painted the kitchen walls grey and all the woodwork in a creamy white, except for the interior and exterior doors and lower kitchen cupboards, which they painted in a high-gloss off-black and brightened with Victorian-style pewter pulls.

Wainscot panelling surrounds the tub and walls in the bathroom. Tiled floors resemble bleached wood.

PHOTO COURTESY OF JEAN STÉPHANE BEAUCHAMP

They built a dish rack above the reproduction Welsh sink and added glass-fronted cupboards on both sides for further storage, designing a beadboard ledge and backsplash along the countertop for added depth, since this is where the pipes run. "The kitchen is the heart of the house," says Beauchamp, who loves to cook and has an extensive collection of cookbooks and utensils. "It was a priority."

Next they began work on the bedroom, warmed with an exposed brick wall that they painted with a putty tone to bring in the light. "The creamy white mouldings and black doors we carried throughout the house," Laroche says, "as well as pale blue on the ceilings."

The pale tones were brought in to create a sense of tranquility in this room, Beauchamp says. "We work in so much colour, we wanted a quiet space to show our things."

A cut and finished broadloom rug warms the painted floor, and cool elegance is added with a painted bureau from the 1930s and an upholstered headboard in a linen herringbone. Linen is also used for the tailored bedskirt, again in soft earth tones, complemented by the textures in the duvet and cozy throw.

In the dining room, a brick wall is the backdrop to a custom-made banquette that sits cozily bookended



by two tall beadboard-backed bookshelves. The banquette allows space for a fairly long table flanked by chairs that once belonged to Larochelle's grandmother, now painted white. Although the table is a contemporary style, they love to add layers and texture with tablecloths and other linens, all from Larochelle's shop.

The bathroom, which they completed after finishing other work for their upstairs tenants, was the recipient of many ideas and beautiful objects they had collected during the primary renovation. The painted vanity was a find from a collector friend as was the oversize mirror, which they painted a distressed off-white, and flanked with two pewter articulated reading lights. "We loved the pair instantly," Beauchamp says. "And it's quite handy for shaving."

The inspiration for the room, they say, is a creamy grey bowl by well-known Quebec potter Gilles Grand-Maitre, who owns a shop in the Gatineau hills. "I love that bowl," Beauchamp says, "because it actually resembles a thick mixing bowl." With so many collectibles in the room, they chose soothing colours in a high gloss to give the room some shine. The exposed brick and ceiling were painted in the same pale tone while the long porcelain tiles on the floor resemble grey hardwood. ▶



In the bedroom, the upholstered headboard, throws and pillow covers are all from Larochelle's shop.

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The beadboard wainscot and shelving stand out against the dark vanity base and white fixtures.

In the living room, a painted, distressed sideboard sits under a series of framed botanical prints that hang from ribbon-covered wire extending from the crown moulding. "We didn't want to put holes in the wall," Beauchamp says, "and I managed to match the ribbon to the wall colour. It's a Victorian effect."

They love to decorate for the holiday season, with a bright poinsettia wreath on the black front door and many holiday touches throughout the house. Their natural Christmas tree is decorated with ornaments they've collected from all over the world. "We like traditional ornaments, and a sparse tree that we can fill with decorations," Larochelle says. "There's no colour theme here."

Underneath it all, a softly muted Oriental rug brings the colours of the room together: sideboards, tables, the custom designed ottoman and duck-covered loveseat and, near the window, a tufted armchair upholstered in grey linen, one of the quality classic pieces they enjoy having. "Some things," Beauchamp says, "are worth splurging on." ■

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Dark-framed botanical prints and small side table contrast with tufted armchair in pale grey linen.



The kitchen backsplash in beadboard adds depth. Beauchamp's kitchenware collections sparkle on open shelving.

SOURCES

Interiors: Jean Stéphane Beauchamp, 514-759-8022 www.jsbeauchamp.com

Textiles: Gaëtan Larochelle at Qui Dort Dine, 4393 St. Denis St. 514-288-3836.

Sideboard photo of kitchen: Curtains, Qui Dort Dine.

Master bedroom: Bedding, Qui Dort Dine; flowers, Marcel Proulx 514-849-1344.

Living room: Sofa, Kravet (available by appointment through designers); carpet, H. Lalonde et Frère www.tapislalonde.ca 514-271-3555; cushions (made to order), throw, glass jars, Qui Dort Dine; armoire, Aux Mirabelles www.mirabelles.ca 450-584-3388.

Detail of armchair and side table: Armchair, Celadon 514-932-3306 www.celadoncollection.com; flowers, Marcel Proulx 514-849-1344; paint: walls Old White, trim Pointing, ceiling Pale Powder, floor Hardwich White, all Farrow and Ball www.farrow-ball.com

Dining room: Table linens, banquette cushions (made to order), Qui Dort Dine; ceiling light, Verte Campagne, 514-948-3131 www.vertecampagne.ca; painting (middle), Les Galeries d'art Beauchamp, www.galeriebeauchamp.com

Kitchen: Accessories, Les Touilleurs, 514-278-0008 www.lestouilleurs.com; paint, walls Chemise, lower cabinetry Off Black, pointing on upper cabinets all Farrow and Ball.

Plumbing, Georges Delcourt Plomberie 514-524-4541; Paint vanity Off Black, woodwork Pointing, walls Borrowed Light, ceiling Pale Powder all Farrow and Ball; tiles, Céragrès, 514-384-2225, www.ceragres.ca; towels, towel bar, accessories, curtains (made to order) Qui Dort Dine; orchids, Fauchois Fleurs 514-844-4417 www.fauchoisfleurs.com. Custom sink, Poterie Grand-Maitre 819-467-2182 (located in Kazabazua on Highway 105).



Multicoloured decorations on natural tree include Victorian cutouts. Distressed painted sideboard and slip-covered ottoman add quiet tones.