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TOWN & COUNTRY

THE QUEEN AND I

Jenna Coleman on
the young Victoria

THE BEST OF BOTH WORLDS

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*Yes, you shall
go to the ball
in crimson lace,
velvet capes &
azure clouds of tulle*

*Tragedy & triumph
The diary of
VIVIEN
LEIGH*

Glories of the season



Apple orchards, harvest festivals, nights at the opera & days at the races



DESIGN

A GLOBAL TAPESTRY

The founder of Décors Barbares draws on her multicultural identity to create vividly eclectic colour schemes

BY CATRIONA GRAY

Fabrics adorn every available surface at Nathalie Farman-Farma's studio in Chelsea. The 19th-century artist's quarters still retains its original layout, with skylights set into a double-height ceiling and a curtained-off enclave in one corner that once served as a makeshift dressing-room for the muses of bohemian London. The airy white environs have been imbued with character and vivacity, thanks to their current owner, and her passion for popularising the patterns of a bygone era through her textiles company Décors Barbares.

Antique costumes from Persia and central Asia are piled into cupboards and heaped upon shelves; exquisite fragments of sumptuous silks, hand-stitched embroideries and woven wool are draped across tables and repurposed as cushions; and there's even the odd scrap of material framed and propped up against the wall, along with painted Russian panels and ancient tiles. This cultural *mélange* is a nod to Farman-Farma's own globetrotting heritage — she was

raised in France, and spent childhood summers in California, often staying with an old family friend who was a Russian émigré. Having married her Iranian husband Amir, the couple did a stint in New York before settling in London, where they've now made a home with their two children.

'I've always loved decorating, but there came a point when I wasn't able to source the fabrics that I wanted to use,' says Farman-Farma, seated at her long dining

ABOVE: THE TEXTILE DESIGNER NATHALIE FARMAN-FARMA IN HER STUDIO, SURROUNDED BY HER OWN FABRICS. BELOW: ONE OF THE ARTS AND CRAFTS PERIODICALS SHE COLLECTS FOR INSPIRATION



INTERIORS

table, which is swathed in one of her intricate cottons. 'So I set up a venture, initially with a Russian friend and then I branched out on my own.'

Unlike the bigger companies, Décors Barbares keeps its selection of patterns tightly curated with a permanent stock of designs to which Farman-Farma gradually adds, instead of producing seasonal collections. 'I'd rather get it done well and be really happy with the finished product, so I never try to rush it,' she says. 'It's a different pace from fashion – if people like the fabric, they'll happily buy it five years after it has come out.'

The process of creating one of her designs is a labour of love: Farman-Farma usually takes a historic piece as inspiration and carefully recreates the pattern. 'Getting the shade right is always the hardest part,' she says. 'You'd be surprised at how garish and horrible it can look if the colours are slightly wrong. But I'm very lucky in that I get all the materials made in France, and the technicians mix the dye themselves, so each hue is bespoke.'

The colourways all have a slightly antique quality, which is what allows them to work so well together. In Farman-Farma's studio, hardly any two pieces of material are the same and yet the overall atmosphere is harmonious. 'In the past, there was far more playfulness in combining pattern and shades. The more you use, the less you worry about it matching. All of this upholstered furniture would work in any room in my home.'

Farman-Farma's studio is right next-door to her house, which enables her to easily move pieces between the two spaces. Although this seemed like an ideal set-up when she purchased it a year and a half ago, she has since discovered that having her workplace at such close proximity comes with some unforeseen consequences. 'My husband is always bringing things over here,' she says, laughing. 'They're not what I'd have chosen myself, but I suppose that's what keeps a room feeling genuine. Decorating is like a symphony. It's a medley of different elements, but with a few strong themes that carry through.'

Gazing around Farman-Farma's vibrant environs, her love of history and eclecticism is easy to see; and in this old atelier in the midst of 21st-century Chelsea, the spirit of artistic bohemia is still very much alive. □

For more information and stockists, visit www.decorbarbares.com.



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