



# DISCOVERIES

AD VISITS

## Russian Dressing

At her family home on Lake Tahoe, *Nathalie Farman-Farma* celebrates the style of the steppes

TURKEY RED, ONE OF DESIGNER NATHALIE FARMAN-FARMA'S FAVORITE COLORS, ACCENTS THE BEAMED LIBRARY AT HER FAMILY'S CAMP OVERLOOKING LAKE TAHOE IN NORTHERN CALIFORNIA.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY MIGUEL FLORES-VIANNA

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1. FARMAN-FARMA'S ÉTÉ MOSCOVITE FABRIC FRAMES FRENCH DOORS. 2. TEATIME OUTSIDE. 3. ZÉNAÏDE (LEFT) AND VÉRA FABRICS BY DÉCORS BARBARES. 4. THE DESIGNER IN HER LONDON STUDIO.

"I was really interested in having East-meets-West spaces" — *Nathalie Farman-Farma*



Ask Nathalie Farman-Farma to identify a few of her favorite things, and the founder of Décors Barbares, the little fabric studio with an AD100 cult following, responds with an idiosyncratic short list. Japanese baskets. Russian Arts and Crafts furniture. Oxford frames. Swedish flat-weave carpets. Eastern Orthodox icons. Add to that Lake Tahoe and its sweeping landscape of towering evergreens, spiky mountains, and shimmering water, a combination of elements that helped to foster her Russophile aesthetic.

"The power of nature plus my reading of classic Russian novels—I just put two and two together in my head," says Farman-Farma, who has spent many summers enjoying a California compound of wood cabins that has belonged since the 1960s to her American mother's family. (Her banker father was French, and she lived in Europe until she was 16 and moved to Connecticut.) "I don't want to be foolishly romantic about Russia or patronizingly romantic about it," continues Farman-Farma, who has a master's degree in classics, "but the American West and Siberia make up one continuous ecosystem. Native Americans

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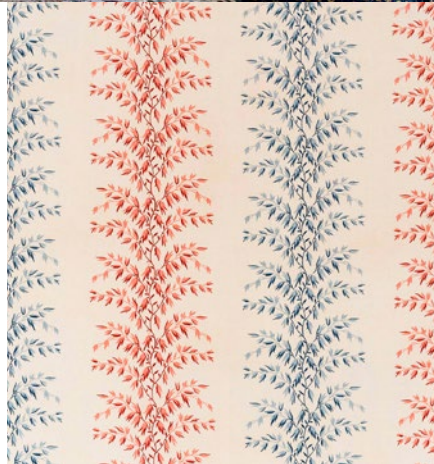


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came from Siberia as well, so there's something fundamental in that connection. Russia was a bit of a frontier for our generation, because of the Iron Curtain, so it was sort of mysterious."

The ancestral getaway is unpretentious, as much American cabins in appearance as they could be modest dachas out of tales by Ivan Turgenev or Leo Tolstoy—the same stories that influenced one of Farman-Farma's idols, French tastemaker Madeleine Castaing. She's outfitted its wood-paneled rooms with her own sprigged cottons, Turkey-red painted furniture, and framed studies of Russian traditional clothing. See them in *Décor Barbares: The Enchanting Interiors of Nathalie Farman-Farma* (Vendome Press), a new book that costars her personal spaces, from the atelier at her London residence to an 1890s house in Greenwich, Connecticut. The addresses may be far-flung, but each celebrates her Silk Road chic with a spirited marriage of the vibrant palettes of Central Asia to the plump silhouettes of 19th-century Europe, a wildly pretty horror vacui that is leavened with doses of airy wicker.

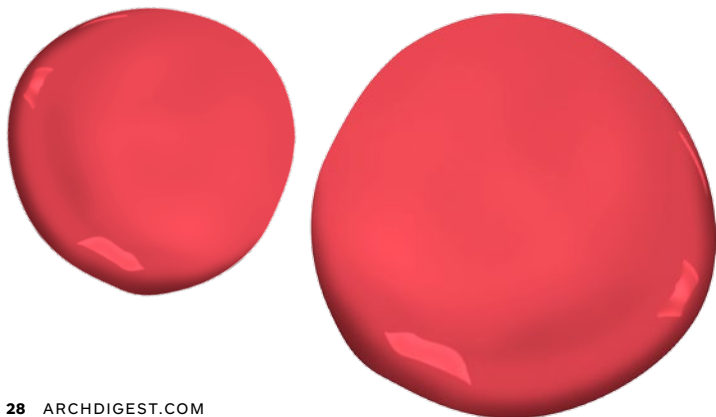
"When I married Amir, I was really interested in having East-meets-West spaces, and I felt that this was a way that wasn't clichéd and which had a lot of nobility to it," the designer explains, referring to her husband and father of their two children, Amir Ali Farman-Farma, an investment adviser with royal Persian roots. "Go to Central Asia and you'll see that it all works together; I don't know how they do it," she adds, noting that what appeals to her, and to her smitten followers, is the region's aesthetic spirit. "It's exuberant, it's happy, and it doesn't have many rules." [decorsbarbares.com](http://decorsbarbares.com) —MITCHELL OWENS



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1. CURTAINS OF FARMAN-FARMA'S POLONAISE LINEN COMPLEMENT A BEDSPREAD OF HER CASSE-NOISETTE. 2. RAYURES DATCHA (TOP) AND BILIBINE FABRICS BY DÉCORS BARBARES.



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