

MY FAVORITE ROOM

Yves Saint Laurent's Cabin of Curiosities

Interior designer Dorothee Boissier details her admiration for Saint Laurent's fanciful dacha, which turns cottage décor on its antlers

By TIM GAVAN

WHEN A COUTURIER retreats to a cabin in the woods, he can't be expected to do it like Thoreau or the Unabomber or your intense, off-the-grid uncle. For a legendary designer like the late Yves Saint Laurent, a threadbare, survivalist aesthetic couldn't cut it. Unsurprisingly, Saint Laurent opted instead for a rustic structure with a glamorous, cultured interior.

His cabin of stained glass and cedar sits a woody ten-minute walk from Château Gabriel in Normandy, the neo-Gothic manor house where he lived and entertained with his partner, businessman and philanthropist Pierre Bergé.

At the behest of the couple and their interior-designer friend Jacques Grange, French cabinetmaker Pierre Poulain built the cottage in the late 1980s in the style of a Russian country house, or dacha. "From outside, the wood facade is pretty but a bit rough. Then you open the door and there's an incredible richness, an eccentric richness," said Parisian interior designer Dorothee Boissier, who has long admired the dacha. In this remarkable space, Mr. Grange combined three of Saint Laurent's aesthetic fascinations: his native France, Morocco, and the Ballet Russes, the avant-

garde dance company of the early 20th century. "There is no compromise, no code that needs to be explained," added Ms. Boissier. "It is a house from a dream."

A house, that is, with the reclusive spirit of the romanticized log cabin, but without the crude furnishings and dull brown-on-brown palette that make living the simple life less pleasurable than you might imagine.

Rough-hewn beams, unpainted walls and mounted hunting trophies nod to classic lodge décor, but unconventional elements make the scheme more interesting. Austrian horn seating is upholstered in opulent jewel-toned Ukrainian fabric. A colorfully starry tablecloth comes from Saint Laurent's 1976 Russian-costume-inspired collection. A pastel Orientalist mantelpiece and gilded mirror from France suggest a well-traveled tenant, not a lumberjack. The most transforming touch comes from antique stained-glass windows of a Moroccan design. They give the humble structure—which consists only of a main room (shown), a small kitchen and a bathroom—a cathedral-like grandeur. "It was, in a way," Ms. Boissier noted of Saint Laurent and Bergé's hideaway, "their secret room." Here, a guide to its most characteristic elements and how to replicate them in your own home.

RECLAIM SANCTUARY

Cabin interiors rarely inspire awe, but the dacha's 19th-century stained-glass windows and doors—French but of distinctly Moroccan design—are a revelation. An uplifting option: these Medina doors from Marrakesh. \$17,500. chairish.com



BUCK TRADITION

A set of antique Austrian horn chairs and chaise are upholstered in an indigo textile with flashes of crimson. "The fabric is very refined in contrast with the horns, which are quite brutal," said Ms. Boissier. "Throughout the room, the masculine and feminine are combined." Achieve a similar mix with this velvety 19th-century Horn Chair. \$12,000. ciscogallery.com

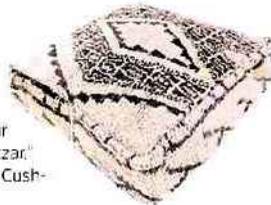


CHAT BY THE FIRE

Ms. Boissier noted that seemingly disparate pieces seem engaged in "dialogue." The palatial form of the 19th-century Orientalist mantelpiece from France, for example, speaks to the similarly grand, throne-like seats close by, and turquoise tiles relate chromatically to the hydrangeas. Start a conversation with these Art Nouveau Reproductions. \$15.40 each. zazzle.com

PLAY MUSICAL CHAIRS

Typically, cabin seating revolves around the fire. Here, a romantic variety of pieces is arranged more dynamically. On a pouf, said Ms. Boissier, "you can lay your head down and imagine you're a czar." Moroccan Pouf Beni Ourain Floor Cushion. \$587. 1stdibs.com



TAKE A JEWEL-TONED CARPET RIDE

The colors and pattern of the room's 19th-century Russian rug echo those in the stained glass windows, unifying the room. A sprawling carpet also provides a soft contrast to the crunchy ground outside and the unfinished hardwood floor beneath. Get swept off your feet by this Elora Antique Serapi Rug. 6 feet by 9 feet. \$2,099. neimanmarcus.com

PASS THE TORCH

Small lamps and candelabra scattered about create intimate areas for reading or quiet conversation, explained Ms. Boissier, and the room's mirror "does the same thing mirrors did long ago by multiplying points of light." The gilded, door-like frame provides its own impressive glow, as does the mother-of-pearl in this Syrian Inlaid Mirror. \$5,200. 1stdibs.com



SKIRT THE ISSUE

Swaying above a 19th-century Russian mahogany table with spiraled legs is another feminine spin. "The skirt of the chandelier looks quite like a woman dancing in the ballet," Ms. Boissier said. "It adds a note of humor and a lot of fantasy." You'll find a suitable partner in this light by Adolf Loos for Woka. About \$8,382. woka.com



Dorothee Boissier's Resumé

After working with design stars Christian Liaigre and Philippe Starck, Ms. Boissier co-founded Paris interior-design firm Gilles and Boissier in 2004 with her husband, Patrick Gilles. The duo has worked on residential and commercial projects from Milan to Shanghai. Their style—mostly white, black and every shade of brown, with a felicitous blending of the classical and contemporary—graces the interiors of the Four Seasons Hotel, Mexico, and New York's sparkly Baccarat Hotel. Their latest venture is the interiors for the east tower of The XI, two twisting skyscrapers currently under construction in New York's Chelsea neighborhood.



WARM THE BENCH

The room's wooden seat "seems like it might belong in a church, with no cushion so you have to sit straight and feel the pain while you pray," Ms. Boissier joked. The addition of an inviting fabric takes the carved 19th-century Russian bench from potentially pious to humbly comfortable. A pillow would similarly rescue this Canterbury Abbey Gothic Bench from the Dark Ages. \$797. houzz.com



CULTURED COTTAGE
The room combines
French, Russian and
Moroccan aesthetics.