



### home truths

**Who lives here:** Designer Myriam Balay Devidal with husband, Dominique and daughters Alix, 12, and Zoé, 10.

**Style of home:** This 1830s, 200sqm apartment features high ceilings and huge windows, so it is bathed in natural light. The four-bedroom apartment has been decorated by Myriam, who feels at ease mixing prints, patterns and palettes to create a spirited family home.

**LIVING ROOM** "For years, we collected drawings and pictures. The rough walls of the apartment allow modular attachment," says Myriam. Thanks to the removal of dated wallpaper, the walls have a rustic look. →

## provincial palais

It seems the sea-change concept is a global phenomenon. Meet the designer who needed a break from Paris's rat race and relocated to the quiet, idyllic town of Nîmes

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### postcard from Nîmes

**Nîmes is home because...** Our children are having a very happy childhood here.

**When we have visitors...** We always take our friends to enjoy the terrace cafes, before visiting the nearby countryside and swimming in the small rivers.

**A typical weekend in Nîmes involves...** Les Halles Market in the morning, a picnic at the Jardin de la Fontaine and a coffee next to the retired gentlemen playing *pétanque*.

**When visiting Nîmes...** You must go to Les Halles market to try whipped cream on a bed of freshly picked strawberries.



**KITCHEN (opposite page)** "I wanted to paint it in the tones of the *'jardin potager'*," says Myriam, whose hypercoloured vegetable garden inspired the Emery & Cie 'Absinthe' painted walls. **HALLWAY (above, left)** A beloved stripey wardrobe sits happily in a vibrant corner. **STUDIO (above, right)** "It's very bright with natural light. It's one of the reasons we chose it," says Myriam of her sunny home, the perfect environment for a range of artistic pursuits.

**A**s far as fertile creative cities go, it's hard to imagine one more so than Paris, but after years of living and working in the vibrant but hectic world of theatre, film, television and haute couture, Myriam Balaÿ Devidal needed a change. Trading in the hustle and bustle of the City of Light, this graduate in industrial product design sought refuge in Nîmes, an ancient, southern city that moves at a slower pace. This dramatic relocation has seen Myriam reclaim her inspired self and indulge her love for treasured antiques and vintage finds. She has created a family home with a generous dose of personality, which expresses the lives and loves of its inhabitants.

Now working mainly in textiles, fabrics, colours and scenography, Myriam's aesthetic sensibilities are illustrated in the 19th-century apartment (located in the centre of Nîmes) where she lives with her husband, Dominique; and their daughters Alix; 12, and Zoé, 10. "The layout of the place – with an entrance at each opposite side – allows us to circulate freely, play and entertain our friends," she says.

Built in 1835, the 200sqm apartment boasts spectacular high ceilings, and huge windows, and for the couple, it was love at first sight.

"It was the perfect place to combine a more relaxed family life and our freelance work," says Myriam, who in partnership with two friends, created a brand of paper objects and accessories called Les Copirates. "I also work as a stylist for both companies and the general public, while Dominique works in the communication business," she explains.

The couple's first priority for the new home was to immediately oust the dingy atmosphere. Previously neglected for years by the former owners, the building was the complete opposite of the new couple's taste: the walls sported dated vinyl wallpaper, the original floor tiles were covered in linoleum and false ceilings were added. At times the transformation seemed overwhelming, but the home's innate qualities reassured Myriam that the hard work would be worth it in the end.

Undertaking a rigorous renovation process, she had to form her plan of attack pragmatically. Myriam judiciously changed the basics, ensuring not to lose the home's essence. "We removed the wallpaper and left the walls raw. We stripped back to the floor tiles in the kitchen and built a whole new bathroom. Then we renovated and raised the ceilings and opened up the adjoining rooms," she says. →



**“I don’t think my taste and style has changed much over the years. There must be some of my childhood spirit in all of it, I suppose”**

**BEDROOMS (above, left)** Alix’s room views the darker north-side garden, so I chose Osborne & Little ‘Asuka’ wallpaper to stimulate the sunlight,” says Myriam who expertly mixes patterns to great effect. **(Opposite page)** In the master bedroom, Myriam displays her skill at tonal harmony, employing a soft blue palette. **BATHROOM (above, right)** Patterned tiles from a Villeneuve les Avignon factory combine with colourful textiles for a happy-mood space.

The home is now made up of six rooms (including four bedrooms, a spacious living room, a studio and an office), a mezzanine, kitchen, bathroom and a shared courtyard. The renovation process started with the colours that surrounded her. “My inspiration was the apartment: we used botanical colours for the kitchen (which overlooks the courtyard), for the rooms on the north side of the home we used warm hues and neutral tones for the ones on the south,” says Myriam.

“When we moved in, it was a relief for the upstairs neighbours,” says Dominique. “But the lady downstairs decided to leave. She preferred dogs to children and disapproved of the fact that we put our furniture and plants in the courtyard.” This was a blessing in disguise, however, as the family is now able to enjoy a child-friendly outdoor space filled with tomatoes and lemon, fig and orange trees.

A quick survey of the apartment reveals a wealth of details that tell the ongoing story of Myriam’s creative life. “My style comes from my professional experiences and travels,” she says. “Working in movie and theatre staging – where I had to invent a whole decor with a small budget within a very short time – was a great experience.”

This apartment has been an opportunity for Myriam to bring together years of ideas that she has collected along the way. “I don’t think my taste and style has changed much over the years,” she says. “There must be some of my childhood spirit in all of it, I suppose.”

When asked to describe her style, she ponders and then answers, “Essentially a jumble of objects and furniture collected from various places or created by me. A permanent disorder skilfully maintained, a constant experimentation of colours and fabrics, and a clever system of multiple benches and adaptable rooms to welcome our friends’ families.” The apartment is a true curiosity cabinet. Rough mingles with smooth, soft with hard and old with the not-so old. Glamour is mixed with informality and functionality: the faded and scratched objects only serve to highlight the memories they carry with them.

Myriam has artfully arranged her cherished knick-knacks to produce a sense of lived-in warmth. The overall effect is a strong imprint of personality within the home, creating a joyful antidote to a world of relentless *très chic*. ❖

To see more of Myriam’s work, visit [myriambalay.fr](http://myriambalay.fr) and [lescopirates.fr](http://lescopirates.fr).