

FROM THRIFTY FINDS TO LUXURY BUYS - THE ONLY GIFT GUIDE YOU NEED

HOMES Antiques

WIN!

A MINI-BREAK
IN A LUXURIOUS
WOODLAND
CABIN

INSPIRING, INFORMATIVE, ESSENTIAL

Christmas is served!

The best inspiration & advice for your home

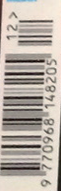
New ways to put
your **ANTIQUE
& VINTAGE
DECORATIONS**
centre stage

48 pages of
MAGICAL HOMES
full of festive ideas &
SEASONAL SPARKLE

Plus

AUDREY HEPBURN
HER TREASURED POSSESSIONS
FROM FASHION TO FILM
THE BEST CHRISTMAS MARKETS
TO VISIT IN EUROPE

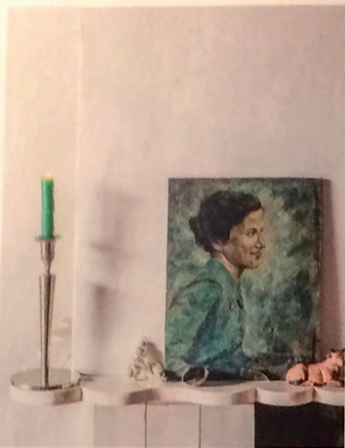
IMMEDIATE MEDIA



Hearth & soul

Each Christmas, Peet and Ruud's family and friends gather in their warm and welcoming Dutch farmhouse to toast the completion of a remarkable renovation

FEATURE **MIEKE VENDEL** PHOTOGRAPHS **IVAR JANSSEN** STYLING **WILMA CUSTERS**



Christmas is a particularly special time of year for Peet and Ruud Schreuder, who host a regular festive

gathering at their farmhouse in North Brabant in the Netherlands. 'We both come from large families, with nine siblings each,' Peet explains, 'and they all helped us through the renovation of our home.'

Every year she decorates the house with handmade garlands and wreaths, which she creates from natural materials gathered from their garden or in the local woods (learn how to make similar decorations on page 131). 'We don't do much during these festive days, just lots of eating, talking, laughing and enjoying each other's company. Our children and grandchildren join in too, so you can imagine the crowd.' Fortunately, there's plenty of room for all three generations in their rambling, 18th-century farmhouse.

Peet and her husband Ruud were young and unmarried when they first saw the property. 'Ruud and I grew up in nearby villages and often came this way. We thought it was a lovely old place and one day, 35 years ago, we simply knocked on the door to ask if we could rent the property.' The door was opened by a very old man who told them to consult his brother who, in turn, sent them on their way. 'It wasn't for sale or for rent,' says Peet, 'so we left it at that and got on with our lives. Then, over a year later, we got a phone call asking if we were still interested.'

They were, even though there was no running water, no electricity, no sanitation, 'not much of anything really,' recalls Peet. 'Ruud moved in on his own and started fixing the bare necessities and, after a year of hard work, with the help of many of our family members, the house was ready enough. So we got married and I moved in as well.' Despite



Profile

THE OWNERS Peet (60) and Ruud (65) Schreuder live here with their dog Mos. Their children Piet (33), Liesje (31) and Grietje (30) grew up here but left home some years ago. Peet used to work as a creative therapist but gave up her job almost 10 years ago. Ruud is self-employed and works as a technician. They both run a B&B from their farmhouse (grauwehof.nl).

THE PROPERTY A renovated farmhouse in the Dutch province of North Brabant, built in an L-shape with the main house at the short end and former stables on the long side. On the ground floor there is a large kitchen/dining area, large living room plus a smaller one at the front. The first floor has three bedrooms, a family bathroom and a sitting room in the former hayloft.

ABOVE The Christmas tree, with stylish white and silver baubles, stands next to an antique cupboard that Peet and Ruud bought before they were married. Peet painted it green-grey, a colour she mixed herself. She gathers greenery from the garden to arrange along the top

The living room was added to the farmhouse in the early 18th century. The fireplace was revealed when later wall panels were removed. The couple have recently installed a woodburner



to reuse old things and refurbish them to my own taste. It has become trendy, but it always came naturally



something old. 'I love to reuse old things and then refurbish them to my own style and taste,' she says. 'It has become trendy now, but for me it always came naturally. I guess you can call it a way of life.' But much as Peet likes hunting for vintage items and pieces to upcycle, she is not above the occasional visit to high-street stores. 'Sometimes you have to buy new things,' she says, 'and then I go to Ikea or Via Cannella, my favourite store in Cuijk.'

During the winter months, the couple spend a lot of time in the living room with its original fireplace, which they found while

removing wall panels. 'In earlier days, the fire was lit directly on the hearthstone, and at first we did the same, but it never felt safe with all the woodwork around us,' says Peet. They've since installed a woodburning stove.

Now that the renovation is complete and their children have left home, Peet and Ruud have started running the house as a bed and breakfast. 'We wanted to share the beauty of the house and its surroundings,' she says and, rather like the lengthy renovation that preceded it, their new venture ensures the house is always filled with people. ■



ABOVE LEFT The staircase came from a nearby farmhouse and was adjusted by Ruud. Peet made the garland while the pots came from a flea market

ABOVE RIGHT The large painting after Vermeer's *Girl with a Pearl Earring* is by Julio Ghorzi. Peet had a loan agreement with a local art library, but loved the work so much that she bought it

... help, both sides of the family often
 ... couple they were crazy to have taken
 ... a project. Peet admits that she
 ... times wonders whether or not they would
 ... one ahead if they had realised how
 ... work it would actually entail. 'But we
 ... she laughs. 'We just started improving
 ... ce that was to be our family home.'
 ... edibly, they managed this on a tiny
 ... alongside their day jobs and caring for
 ... children. 'Renovating our home became
 ... of living,' she says simply, and it's clear
 ... Peet cherishes the memories of those days.
 ... Particularly remember my mother making a
 ... large pan of fried rice or noodles every
 ... Saturday for all the hard workers. My father
 ... always delivered the food my mother made,
 ... with a big smile on his face.' They still have
 ... the pan and use it frequently.

'Because we did everything ourselves, it
 ... really has taken us a lifetime to get where we
 ... are today.' But while others might have been
 ... driven mad by the slow pace of progress, Ruud
 ... and Peet were happy to work 'slowly and
 ... steadily', not least because they were
 ... determined to remain true to the history and
 ... traditions of the house and its surroundings.
 ... 'We only used old building materials that were
 ... given to us by family and friends, or offered to
 ... us by friendly neighbours or that we bought
 ... from other farms nearby.' When they had to
 ... rebuild something, they always tried to use
 ... traditional techniques.

The house as it is today is ample reward for
 ... all their hard work and patience. 'We achieved
 ... all this with limited resources,' says Peet, 'but
 ... we really put our souls into it, so when you
 ... are looking at the farmhouse, you are actually
 ... looking at us.'

Just as with the fabric of the building, the
 ... interior decoration is also the result of many
 ... years spent gathering items and furniture from
 ... family and friends, or trawling flea markets
 ... and charity shops. Peet is never happier than
 ... when she is making something new out of >



The interior decoration is the result of years spent gathering items and furniture from flea markets and charity shops

ABOVE Despite their charity-shop origins, the glasses, crockery and cutlery complement each other and look festive and inviting. FACING PAGE The rough beams and old ladders are all that remain of the dining room's previous incarnation as a stable with a hayloft above. Although the floor tiles look original, they came from a relative in exchange for a bottle of whisky and a bunch of flowers. The dining table is the centre of festivities each Christmas and Peet decorates it with simple glass baubles, candles, sprigs of spruce and pine cones





kitchen is the oldest part of the house
the black hardstone floor tiles are
original. The table base was given to them
by a neighbour and Ruud made the top from
old wooden shelves. They found the
cups on eBay. The splendid off-white display
cabinet is one of the few pieces of new
furniture in the house - it contains crockery
found at various flea markets



Araucario Hof



...her names homemade garlands with
...garden
...PAGE, CLOCKWISE FROM
...LEFT Peet bought this oil painting
...a junk shop because it reminded
...of her mother; guests are treated to
...homemade Christmas cake; the piano
...the front room came from Peet's
...childhood home and the gift chair is one

LIFESTYLE

a farmhouse that has been the work of three decades, to a new build in Alabama, this
's homes are full of character and charm. Plus, festive tips for the antiques collector...



HOME OF THE MONTH

IT MAY HAVE taken the best part of 35 years to complete the renovation of their farmhouse in the Netherlands, but Peet and Roud aren't complaining. Looking at the house today, with its original box beds and characterful stone floors, it's hard to believe the project was completed on a tiny budget with only the help of family and friends • PAGE 84

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Use your treasured antiques in new and unexpected ways for a very personal and unique festive celebration

56 Style counsel

Sarah Davenport's background as an interiors stylist is evident in the way she mixes old and new to create a look that feels fresh and contemporary

66 Divine design

Ecclesiastical architectural salvage and antique furniture ensures this new build in Alabama feels firmly rooted in the past

76 Naturally festive

Josephine Ryan fills her elegant London home with candlelight and seasonal greenery at Christmas

94 Glorious grandeur

Castle Howard is one of the nation's most exuberant stately homes, never more so than at Christmastime