



CREATIVE SPIRIT

AUTHOR, BLOGGER AND STYLIST PIA JANE BIJKERK BEGINS A NEW SERIES WITH A UNIQUE CHRISTMAS INSTALLATION.

FOR THE PAST decade or so I've been on a quest to enrich the ordinary, day-to-day moments in my life. I've experimented with ways to make these moments shine and stand out instead of letting them melt into the abyss of the mundane. I like the idea of being able to capture these moments in a glass jar, like tiny fireflies, so that I can gaze upon them at the end of the day and reflect upon their simple beauty. There need not be many of these moments — just one or two can make each day more enjoyable.

I've learnt many things during this quiet, gentle exploration. I've learnt there's a little bit of magic in everything, even the disarray and pandemonium that prospers on a daily basis no matter how composed we strive to be. I've also learnt that making things with my hands — from decorating to craft, gardening or cooking — is always at the core of these ordinary-turned-beautiful moments.

I've learnt to treasure the accidental beauty and the visual stories that thrive in miniscule details of nature. And I've learnt that wandering off the beaten path — strolling over to the other side of the road or turning down a different laneway on my regular walk — is one of the best ways to reignite parts of my mind that have become sluggish or stuck. It's a moment of boldness to stray from the mundane, just a little, to bring out the inner smile and gentle joy that linger just below the surface.

While our days are still filled with demands — the grind of taking out the rubbish, getting the kids to

school, making lunches and dinners, and doing the grocery shopping — there is still plenty of room for each one to contain those firefly moments that are all yours, caught in a little jar to gaze at by your bedside before you doze into slumber, energising the senses, ready to enrich the next day.

Having been invited to share these day-enhancing explorations with you in future issues of *Country Style*, I, in turn, invite you to join this journey to see what we may discover and create together.

The ideas and projects I share will be achievable, no matter where you live or what stage of life you're at. Nor will they be restricted by whether you live in a house, a farm or a caravan — and so I hope you'll find inspiration among them to enhance your own everyday in some way.

It's important to also let you know that nothing I make is complicated. (The installation on the facing page is so easy: all you need are flower stems and *washi*, the Japanese decorative masking tape.) In fact, everything you will find here will be for 'novices' as I have rarely found the time to become an expert in anything. And, well... I like everything to happen now — patience is not my forte.

As a blogger and internet addict (although being a brand new mum has certainly put a brake on *that* daily habit!), I'll also be taking this opportunity to showcase some of my favourite blogs. These journals are a wonderful creative resource and it will give me great pleasure to share them with you — so look over the page for an immediate dose of online inspiration. >

PHOTOGRAPHY CRAIG WALL STYLING PIA JANE BIJKERK STYLING ASSISTANT SAMANTHA VAN EGMOND PORTRAIT PHOTOGRAPHY OLGA BENNETT

To create this striking Christmas installation, Pia fastened flower stems in rows on the wall using washi tape. Turn to the following page to learn how the idea for the piece developed.

"THE IDEA FOR THIS CAME TO ME WHILE I WAS LIVING IN A HOUSEBOAT ON ONE OF THE CANALS OF OLD AMSTERDAM..."

CHRISTMAS PRESENCE

Bringing the outdoors inside is definitely a running theme at my home, as it allows me to study elements of nature at my leisure. During the first few months of moving into our rented 1900s weatherboard cottage, I dragged a palm tree bract in from the road, cut off the crown and hung it on a bare wall with thick rope. It's become quite the talking point and remains a much-loved impromptu piece of art.

Another serendipitous wall feature is my floral installation. This is an ever-evolving collection of stalks, branches and long departed blooms assembled in orderly rows and fastened with adhesive tape to another empty wall in the lounge room.

The idea for this came to me while I was living in a houseboat on one of the canals of old Amsterdam several years ago. In Holland, gorgeous flowers are abundant — particularly peonies and dahlias, which happen to be two of my favorite blooms. They were inexpensive at the markets, so I often came home with a bunch or two in the basket of my bicycle. For me, these flowers are as inspiring as they age as when they were cut, and I found I just couldn't part with them.

However, I didn't like the idea of bunches of faded, dusty blooms dotted around my home, so I began taping the prettiest and most interesting to a wall on the boat. Each flower inspired me, as did the whole creation when I stood back, observing the shadow play as dusk approached.

When I moved to Sydney just over a year ago, I began to recreate the installation, this time using found foliage from my wanderings, along with flowers that had been given to me after the birth of my daughter. It has become a wonderful way to get to know the local flora, as well as a simple technique of cataloguing beautiful memories of gifts from friends.

I've styled one in the shape of a tree for a unique, natural celebration of the festive season. There are all sorts of flowers and branches, including peonies, fern fronds, eucalypt leaves, pods and seed stalks, and each one is picked specifically for its beauty and taped in varying lengths along the wall with gold *washi* tape (thin masking tape will work just as well). You could label each flower with its botanical name, pile presents underneath and use it as your Christmas tree — it will be just as striking as the real thing. And then string fairy lights along the floor for a touch of added whimsy... *

PIA'S LINK LOVE

Be inspired by the musings and creativity of Pia's favourite country-themed blogs and Pinterest boards this month.

- 1 www.oneclaireday.com
- 2 www.cheandfidel.blogspot.com
- 3 www.kararosenlund.com/blog
- 4 www.pobkephotography.com/blog
- 5 www.pinterest.com/leahluna

