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LIVING ROOM

Kitty found all the chairs from her grandmother's house, gave the rocking chair a fresh coat of paint and re-upholstered the kids' sofa. The sofa was scored from an SM Homeworld sale, where she was able to customize the color and the size of the pillows.



Finding a New Purpose

Old pieces are resurrected and find a new home in this townhouse for a family of five

WHEN KITTY RICAFORT and her husband Rico moved into their current home, she was seven months pregnant with their second child. The stress of having their previous home broken into was too much for her, and luckily, her mother had just finished building two townhouses on the unused space beside her own home, so Kitty and her family decided to move in.

With a growing family to consider, and not much time to decorate, she scoured her family's

houses for pieces she could use. "We were living in my grandmother's home during the break-in, but thankfully they weren't able to get some of the heavier pieces. I was able to get a couple of pieces from there. I also looked into my mom's home for pieces. They live next door, so whenever I needed, say, a coffee table or a chair, it was so easy to go there and I would always find what I needed. I worked from the bottom up, tackling one space at a time. I didn't want to stress over it too much."



HOMEOWNERS
Kitty and Rico Ricafort with their kids Alba, Maja, and Caty

Some pieces, like the coffee table that's found a place in the living room, have remained the way Kitty found them. But most were painted over, re-upholstered, or repurposed. She shares, "I had an upholsterer come in to finish all the pieces in a day—I just chose the fabrics beforehand and he did everything on the spot." The fabrics and paint hues chosen by Kitty were bright or modern, sometimes to the horror of her mother. She laughs, "My mother was horrified when I painted our dining table black. She said, '*Ang ganda ganda ng kulay ng narra, pipinturan mo pa!*' but it gave the room a modern feel." The same treatment was given to the sky blue table found in the family room, and the set of tables found on the landing area on the third floor.

It's evident that Kitty has a "waste not, want not" attitude, gleefully breathing new life into old things. She says, "Whenever I see something, I figure out how I can make it look new again, or if I can use it for another purpose." The antique pieces give her a feeling of close family ties. "I grew up using most of the pieces, like the chair that I used all the time before when I was a kid is now in my own kids' room. It's a good example to my kids that hand-me-downs aren't a bad thing—instead, you can treat them like heirlooms, and in my case, instead of heirlooms that you just look at, we get to use them every day!" **GH**

MIX IT UP
Don't be afraid to mix wood finishes. This gives off a contemporary vibe



Their small reading space is decorated with family snapshots



The heaviness of the dark narra console table is offset by daintier touches like floral vases and a white mirror with curlicues. A mounted print and a pop of color modernize the space

LANDING AREA

All the pieces found here are from Kitty's grandmother, from the capiz window, down to the rug. The chairs were painted and re-upholstered, and the bare lamp adds an urban chic feel to the Filipinina decor.

MAKE IT POP
Muted colors are given a shot of whimsy with hits of bold hues, like sky blue and red





PHOTO FINISH

Use fabric stapled on canvas for instant artwork



DINING ROOM

The pieces of furniture all came from Kitty's grandmother's home, and made of narra. Kitty purposefully left the chairs mismatched to give the room a more eclectic, casual feel.

MASTER BEDROOM

Kitty found the design of the headboard online and had it made in less than a day. The curtains are made out of canvas mixed with old curtains beneath them. An old sewing machine serves as Kitty's bedside table and accessories cabinet.

Kitty and Rico are currently enjoying the company of another member of the family, their baby girl, Caty.

FIT FOR A QUEEN

Put two single beds together and use a sturdy mattress and bedsheet to keep them from separating



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or white wine? See p. 11!

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OLD BECOMES NEW

Ancestral furniture get a new lease on life with FRESH PAINT, SPLASHY FABRICS, and a plethora of bright, BREEZY SPACES

WORDS CHINGGAY LABRADOR
STYLING RACHELLE F. MEDINA
PHOTOGRAPHY MIGUEL NACIANCENO



ENTRY FOYER. The Ricafort's four-storey townhouse begins with this small but cozy foyer that is made atmospheric as it is painted a moody, stormy gray. Hints of Kitty Espiritu Ricafort's revamped finds can be seen immediately, such as the old bureau used as a console, a curvy mirror washed in white, and a kitschy horse figure updated with a powder blue hue.

"THIS LOT USED TO BE THE POOL AND GARDEN AREA OF MY PARENTS' HOUSE, which incidentally, used to be one of Nora Aunor's old houses," laughs freelance writer and stylist Kitty Espiritu-Ricafort. "Through the window, you can see their balcony, which used to overlook Nora Aunor's heart-shaped pool—yes, it was heart-shaped!"

Kitty's return to her parents' home—at least to the townhouse her parents had built, is storied. Since getting married six years ago, she and husband Rico had had three moves. Their first home was in Makati and the second was her grandparents' old home in San Juan. "We were on vacation in Australia for three weeks and while we were away, our house was broken into. All our stuff was stolen—DVDs, laptops, my hard drive! I was pregnant and stressed out. Even if I was seven months pregnant with Alba then, I knew we had to move," she recounts. >>

LIVING AREA. The high ceilinged open space merges three distinct zones into a unified space. The seating area is black and white, framed by floor to ceiling drapes in geometric pattern, and is also flanked by an eclectic mix of Chinese chairs and ceramics, a zebra print rug, and a classic old coffee table that looks straight out of your grandmother's attic. "The canvas seat covers are there because the couch is right beside the kids' play area—upholstery is hardly ever washable and kids do have a tendency to use the couch as their own personal sketchbook," she explains. "You can wash canvas, bleach it, and you're done with your clean-up."



real home

DINING AREA. "My parents were horrified when I decided to paint my grandparents' table black," Kitty says, amused. She says that it might be against the rules of furniture, but the heavy, Filipino mid-century table might have otherwise been relegated to junk storage if it hadn't been repainted. "At least it gets used now!" Kitty says her aesthetic usually hinges on blacks and whites, and the table goes perfectly with the "portal to Times Square" fabric she framed and hung on the wall as a mural. The dining area provides a quiet and roomy spot for Rico Ricalfort to work in.



The family's third move was to a 72-sqm condo unit in Eastwood, where they stayed while Kitty's parents were constructing duplex townhouses on their former backyard. "They told us, 'why don't you just stay there so we can see your kids more often?' We realized that a townhouse was great for growing kids, so we decided to move."

Moving from a small space to a three-storey townhouse meant that Kitty had a lot of space but not a lot of furniture to work with. "I didn't want to spend money on new things," she explains. "It was a good thing that at this time, my grandparents' house, where we used to stay before, was being emptied out to be converted into a spa. They had everything, being collectors—tea sets, glassware, clocks, furniture... By the time we moved here, all their tambak was just stored in empty rooms." >>



(Above) Kitty's grandmother's narra dining chair—reupholstered in gold denim, no less—inhabits one of the stair landings, jazzed up with a graphic but inspirational poster.

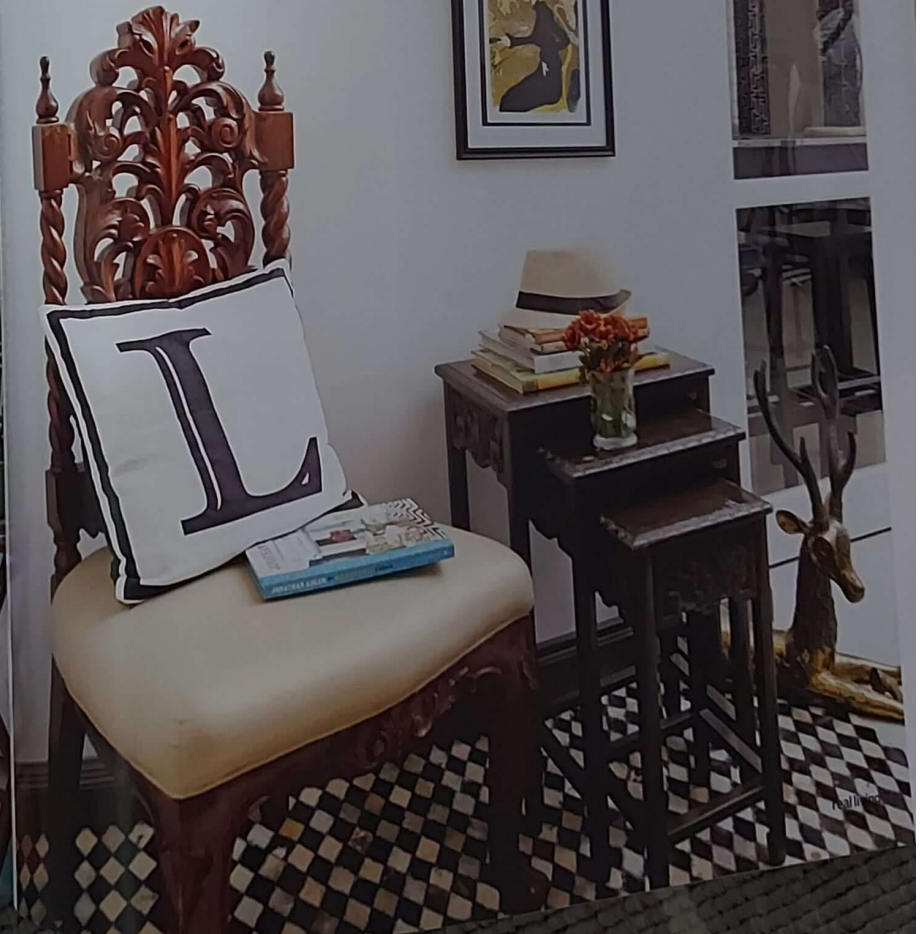
(Right) READING NOOK. The RL staff loved this old rattan swivel chair reupholstered in botanical print fabric from Market! Market! ("Again, bought on sale," Kitty admits). The graphic black and white curtains are actually department store-bought panels stitched together to accommodate the tall windows. Bookshelves are from IKEA.



An old capiz panel provides an extra "window" to the small landing.



HIGH-LOW. Other secondhand finds inhabit the vestibule linking the living/dining area and kitchen. This space is highlighted by a funky wire lamp from Crossings Home which Kitty got for 50% off—Paris prints in SM Homeworld frames, a fedora from Boracay, and a cowhide harlequin-pattern rug from Make Room, which she also got at a discount.

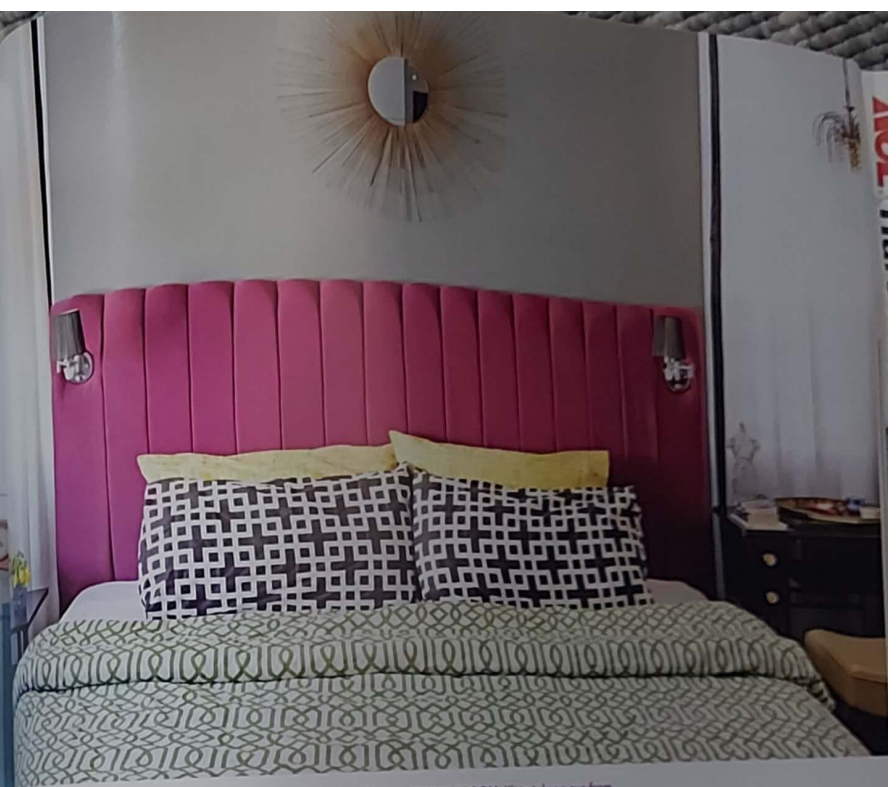




(Above left and right)
OFFICE. An extra room is used by Kitty and Rico as an office and den. Covered in classic carpets she had also picked up from her grandparents' collection, the bright room receives a contemporary feel from chairs reupholstered in fabric from IKEA and visually captivating throw pillows that Kitty herself makes.



Kitty knew the potential for reuse was great but had no idea where to begin. On a whim, she sent Gwyn Guanzon, *Real Living's* former creative director, an email. "I didn't know him personally but I liked his style and how eclectic he was," she said. "He answered and we met up. I showed him the house when it was just a shell and there were still no finishing touches." She brought Gwyn down to check out her grandmother's collection of furniture and he advised her not to buy anything new. "Puwede palang buhayin 'yung mga luma," Kitty says, recalling how happy she was to hear that painting an old narra table black could elevate it and keep it current, and how her grandparents' flower chairs which she loved as a kid ("They made me feel like I was Thumbelina!") could be reupholstered in new fabric. "I love how Gwyn just gave me this new perspective on decorating—he gave me a seed and from there, I knew what I could do."



MASTER BEDROOM. Kitty takes a cue from her favorite design icon, Jonathan Adler, when it comes to maximalist mixing of linens and colors. An eye-catching sunburst mirror hangs right above the eggplant-colored headboard—a steal she found hanging in the back corner of True Value. "Regularly priced, it was P3,500, but it went for sale at 70% off (P1,050) and I had to buy it!" All the other luxe-looking items in this room are also bargain finds: swivel night lamps at P700 each, and Daphne Ovalia sheets she bought on sale.



From "shopping" in her grandparents' stash and making the rounds, trolling sales everywhere from department stores to hardware shops using her "sourcing skills" as a former fashion editor, Kitty was able to find great "splurge" deals at steal prices. "I'm always in the habit of looking at different stores and places, not necessarily to buy anything or use at a particular time—I just look. Eventually, I find things at 50%, 70% off." "You know how they say necessity is the mother of all invention? It's true," says Kitty pensively. Her family's move into the new home may have been brought on by a traumatic experience, but her sunny outlook—evident in the splashes of color all over her family's space—allowed her to create a brand new home bathed in light, love, and happiness.

“We realized a townhouse was great for growing kids, so we had to move,” says Kitty.



KIDS' ROOM. Kitty's eldest daughter, Alba, chose pink as the color for her and her sister's pretty bedroom. The shared space is every bit as girly as any four-year-old would want it to be, and receives a dose of whimsy with fun décor from IKEA hung all over the walls.

The armchair, which is used often by Kitty as a spot to read bedtime stories to her girls, is one of her grandmother's former armchairs. She called them her "flower chairs" because she felt like Thumbelina sitting on them as a child. She updated this one with a funky deer print fabric with pink piping bought from Market! Market!

SWEET TOOTSIES. This brass pedestal, unearthed from Kitty's grandmother's "treasure trove", is now resurrected as a powder blue shoe stand for her daughters' slip-ons.



ABOUT THE HOMEOWNERS WHO LIVES HERE?

Kitty Espiritu-Ricafort, freelance writer and stylist, husband Rico Ricafort, pastor at the Victory Christian Fellowship, and their daughters Alba, 4, and Maja, 2.

DESIGN STYLE Modern Maximalist

COLOR PALETTE "I like black and white but those colors can get boring after a while, so I mix it up with yellows and purples. This is also exactly how I dress so my interiors are a reflection of that—it's not even intentional. I just naturally gravitate towards things that I like."

MURAL MAGIC "I wanted to hang something on my wall, but didn't want to trouble myself with arranging little frames so I thought of going for murals instead. I found rolls and rolls of fabric of scenes from New York on clearance at Market! Market! I lived in New York for a couple of years so I loved it. I had a carpenter build a frame and hung it on my living room—that way, I have a little portal to Times Square."

SHOW INSPIRATION "I love the reality show *American Pickers*. They go through special junk like mini-bikes and cute items and sell them off to designers." ❖



(Opposite)

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