ISSUE NUMBER 55

THE MAGAZINE PUBLISHED IN THE INTEREST OF PRESERVING AND RESTORING THE MODEST AMERICAN 20TH CENTURY HOME, THE BUNGALOW, AND THE RICH LIFESTYLE THAT IT AFFORDS

AMERICAN BUNGALOW

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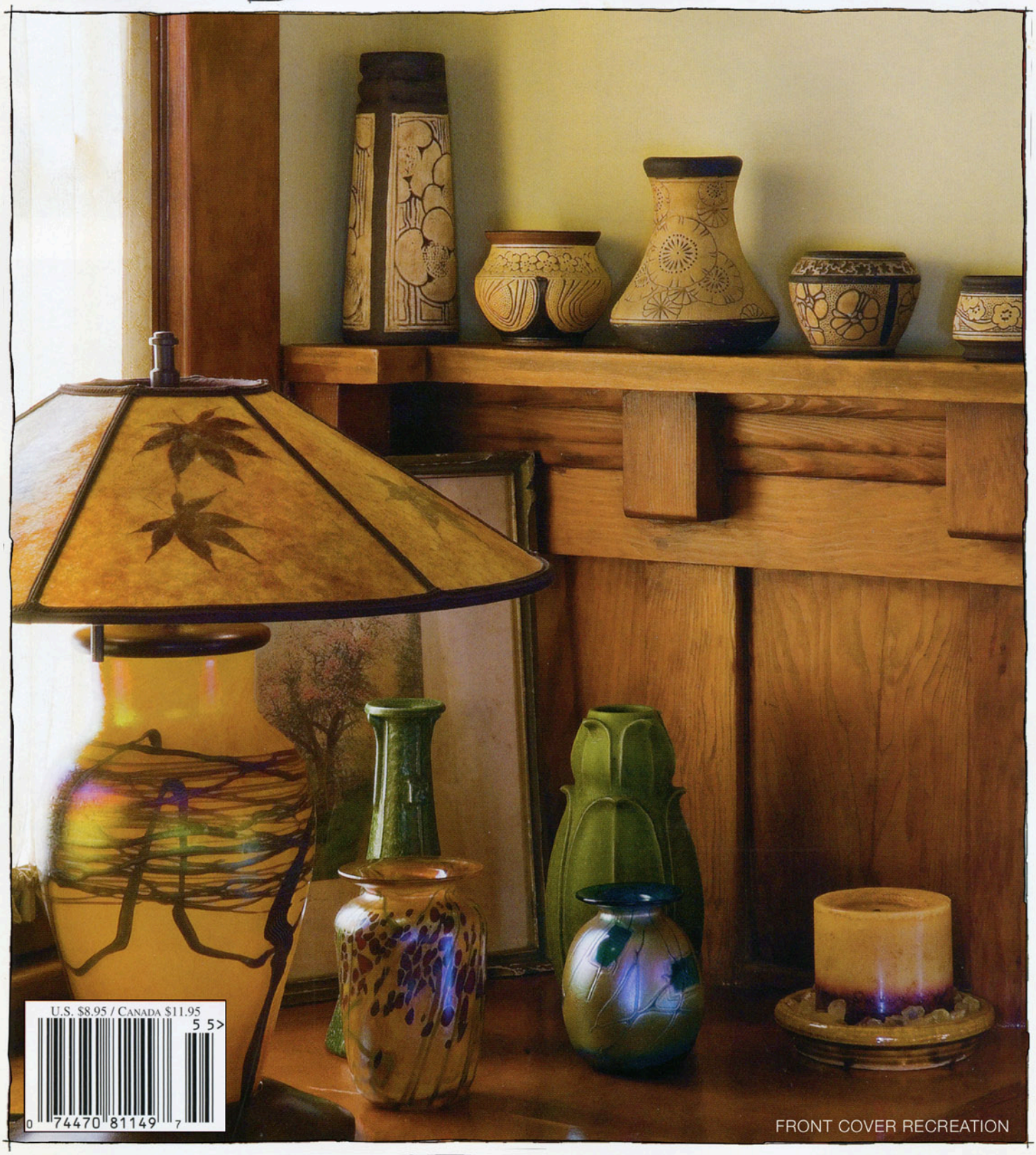

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FROM GETTING ACQUAINTED TO FALLING IN LOVE

BY REBECCA KUZINS

SINGLE FEMALES rejoice! *It is possible* to renovate a 1911 Craftsman bungalow virtually *by yourself.*

Karen TenEyck purchased her bungalow in the Washington Square Landmark District of Pasadena, Calif., in 2002. She did so with few practical advantages other than her experience as a set designer in the New York theater and opera world. Since then, she has learned to repair shingles, fix double-hung windows, strip and refinish old Douglas fir, rebuild kitchen-cabinet doors and paint the entire interior and exterior of her home.

Of course, as a *girl*, she also practices the "feminine arts" of sewing, embroidery and stenciling, which are evident in the textiles and wall friezes that adorn the beautifully restored home. A mix of period furniture, pottery and artwork, as well as pieces from contemporary craftspeople, fills out the home.

Back when she was a set designer, Karen designed home interiors for stage productions. But, as she readily acknowledges, "It's one thing to know how to design a window. It's another to actually take one apart and rebuild it."

She rebuilt a lot of windows during the four years she spent renovating her bungalow. She also landscaped her front and back yards; repaired and repainted shingles;

PHOTOGRAPHY BY ALEXANDER VERTIKOFF.

"EVERYTHING WAS WHITE," KAREN TENEYCK SAYS TO A VISTOR SHE SHOWS INTO HER NEWLY RENOVATED HOME. "THEY EVEN PAINTED THE FIREPLACE!" DURING HER FOUR-YEAR RESTORATION, UNDERTAKEN ALMOST ENTIRELY SINGLE-HANDEDLY, SHE RECREATED A WARM, INVITING HOME THAT BLENDS MUTED PASTEL AND EARTH TONES WITH THE EXTENSIVE ORIGINAL WOOD ELEMENTS.

installed floors, doors and bathroom fixtures and tackled a slew of other jobs she had never done before.

"I learned to do a lot," she says. "It's not as hard as you think. You just have to take something apart and put it back together the same way."

Builders' Bungalows

Her bungalow is a modest house located amid blocks of unassuming homes in the Washington Square neighborhood, which received historic-district designation in 2003. During the bungalow boom in the early years of the 20th century, thousands of these homes were built in many of Pasadena's middle-class neighborhoods, far outnumbering the upscale residences designed by well-known Craftsman architects like Charles and Henry Greene. Architects were rarely involved in the construction of these homes. Instead, they typically were built by contractors or developers who adapted designs and features from grander California Craftsman residences in other parts of the city.

ODDLY, THE GRAY-AND-WHITE EXTERIOR PAINT SCHEME SERVED TO EMPHASIZE RATHER THAN OBSCURE THE 1911 BUNGALOW'S STRONG, SIMPLE LINES WHEN KAREN FOUND IT IN 2002. HER DEVOTION TO ITS REVIVAL HAS HELPED SPARK RESTORATIVE EFFORTS THROUGHOUT THE NEIGHBORHOOD, WHICH HAS SINCE BEEN DESIGNATED A LANDMARK DISTRICT.

Karen's home was built in 1911 by contractor Charles Schoenleber, Jr. It is one of seven bungalows he built between 1911 and 1914, and one of four on her block. Schoenleber built other homes in the neighborhood in the 1920s.

She bought the 1,387-square-foot bungalow in 2002, two years after she moved to Southern California to begin a new career as a graphic designer for film and television productions. A friend had taken her to Pasadena's Bungalow Heaven neighborhood, where, she says, "I just fell in love with the houses. In an era when things are very cold, where life seems to be all computers and cell phones, there's a wonderful human feeling to the houses in Pasadena."

AN INTERIOR AND GRAPHIC DESIGNER WHO HAS WORKED ON BROADWAY AND NOW DOES FILM AND TV PRODUCTIONS, KAREN HAS TAKEN PAINS TO RESTORE THE BUNGALOW'S AUTHENTICITY WHILE SUBTLY REFINING ITS FUNCTIONALITY, AS SHE DID BY REOPENING THE DOOR THAT ORIGINALLY CONNECTED THE KITCHEN AND DEN. NOW HER HOME OFFICE, THE DEN FEATURES A WORKTABLE AND STOOL SHE DESIGNED.

Puttin' on the Ritz

When she bought the house, all of the wood—from the exterior shingles to the Douglas fir built-in cabinets in the dining room—had been painted white, to match the white walls. White paint also covered the brick fireplace in the living room. The windows were painted shut, as were the French doors in the living room and den. Many of the pulley systems in the windows were broken, and the glass in some was missing. The floors in the rear of the house were covered with cheap oak parquet tiles that had been glued down. The roof leaked, the front and back yards were barren, and the bathroom and kitchen fixtures needed to be replaced.

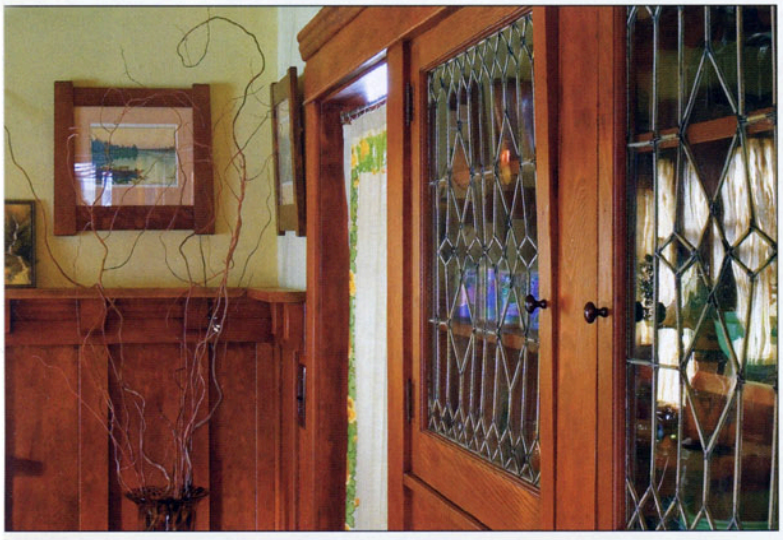
Undaunted, she moved in, became her own contractor and set about devoting every spare moment for the next four years to bringing the house back to life. She hired plumbers, electricians and other workers to install new service systems and a painter to help her strip the paint off the interior wood, but the rest of the work she did herself, wading in with the kind of enthusiasm and cheerfulness with which theater people routinely make the ordinary extraordinary.

In the living and dining rooms, she stripped all the white paint, refinished the woodwork, repaired cracks in the ceilings, installed restoration glass in the French doors, repaired the leaded glass in the built-in cabinets and added molding to match the original wood. She painted the fireplace a rich natural brown and restored the floors to their original condition.

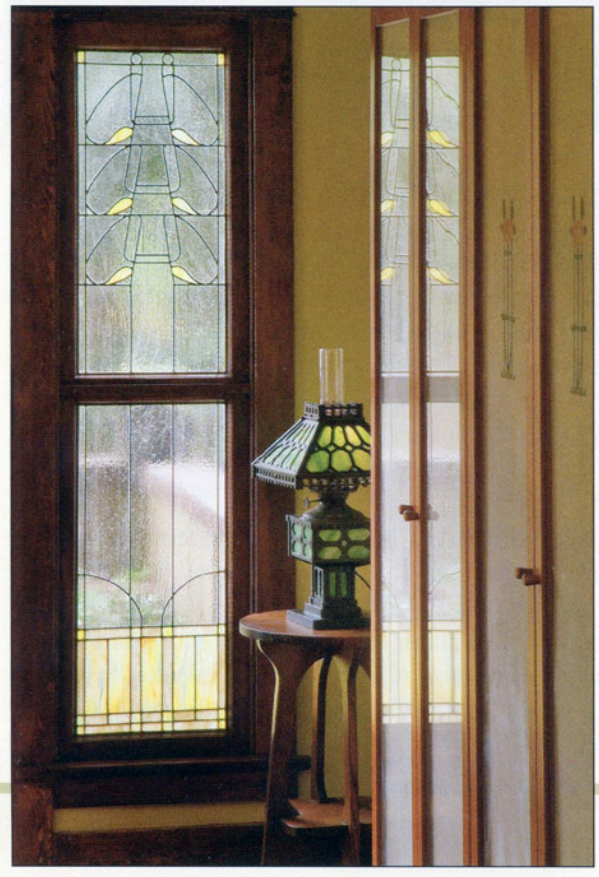
Restoring the floors under the parquet tiles in the rear of the house proved impossible: they were stained with glue and too badly damaged to save. She covered them with plywood, then with new white-oak flooring.

In the master bedroom, where the removal of five coats of paint and wallpaper had left the walls pocked with holes, she skim-coated them with plaster then hired a paper hanger to cover them with grass-cloth wallpaper.

She transformed the original den into a studio, removing two large doors that separated the den from an adjacent powder room and replacing them with a pocket door. (She also tore out a wall that an earlier owner had installed over a door between the studio and the kitchen.) She repaired and replaced all of the plumbing in the powder room, installed new sink legs and lighting fixtures, and skim-coated and painted the walls and the ceiling.



THE TENEYCK BUNGALOW TODAY IS A HARMONIOUS MIX OF ORIGINAL ELEMENTS, LIKE THE LEADED-GLASS DOORS OF THE DINING-ROOM CABINETS (LEFT) AND RECREATIONS, LIKE THE CURTAINS, PILLOWS, FRIEZES AND DECORATIVE WINDOWS (SUCH AS THE YELLOW-ACCENTED PANES IN THE DEN, RIGHT) THAT SHE HAS DESIGNED.



KAREN'S DESIGN SENSE AND HER COLLECTION OF VINTAGE AND REPRODUCTION FURNITURE MAKE EVERY ROOM BOTH COMFORTABLE AND DISTINCTIVE.

The studio had a large French door leading to the backyard, with sidelights on either side of it. She created a stained-glass design for the sidelights, adapting a Viennese Art Nouveau style floral pattern. After a local stained-glass artist made the windows, she installed them herself.

The large bathroom in the rear of the house required a major restoration. She gutted it, leaving only the original shower pan. "There was this weird wall paneling on one wall and a horrible, dirty fan in the ceiling," she says. "When I removed the fan, half the ceiling fell down on my head." Brushing her self off, she decided to cover the walls with white tile and installed a new toilet, sink, bathtub and medicine cabinet. She also restored the existing Douglas fir trim.

"I saved the kitchen for last," she says. "After removing the fake tile and wainscot molding, I stripped the white paint from the cabinets and rebuilt some of the cabinet doors before painting the cabinets brown."

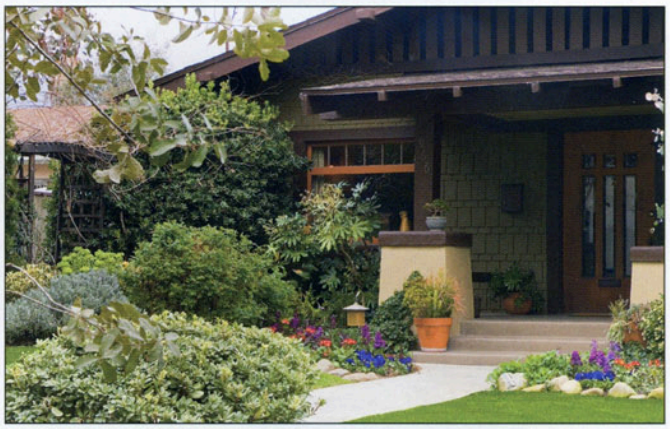
She also built new frames for the three kitchen windows from reclaimed lumber and replaced the casements with specially milled trim to match the original woodwork.

In the counter under the window, she installed a custom-built copper sink from Mexico. Then, in what she calls her "one concession to modern life," she installed granite counters. "I think I found a color that goes well with the house and doesn't look too hard and modern," she says.

Moving Outside

When she bought the bungalow, the deeply weathered exterior shingles had been painted gray and the trim white. She sanded all of the shingles by hand, then used brushes to repaint them and the trim in more Craftsman-like shades of brown. A new roof was installed over two existing sets of shingles, also painted in the new color scheme.

THE RELATIVELY SMALL (1,387-SQ. FT.) BUNGALOW SITS ON A DEEP LOT, WHERE STILL-EVOLVING LANDSCAPING—INCLUDING KAREN'S JAPANESE GARDEN (OPPOSITE), WHICH HAS SINCE GROWN INTO A PRIZEWINNING EXAMPLE OF THE FORM—INSULATES THE HOUSE FROM THE SOUNDS OF TRAFFIC ON NEARBY PASADENA THOROUGHFARES AND AFFORDS GRACEFUL OUTDOOR LIVING SPACE BOTH IN THE REAR PATIO AND ON THE FRONT PORCH.



She also landscaped the front and back yards. With the help of a contractor, the front yard was improved by the addition of St. Augustine grass, flower beds made of river rock, a small arbor covered with wisteria, and two new trees. She also removed several termite-diseased trees and about 40 tree stumps from the property.

In the backyard, she designed and built a Japanese garden, including a koi pond, stone walkway, kasuga lantern, berms, new plantings and lighting. She created a desert garden on the south side of the house, where she removed some trees and dying plants and planted cactus, lavender and succulents.

Karen eventually completed the renovation in January 2007 at a cost of around $130,000. To offset some of her renovation costs, she applied for a property-tax adjustment under California's Mills Act, which provides incentives for owners who restore and maintain historic properties. Her property taxes will be reduced by as much as 65 percent as long as she maintains the historic integrity of her home.

"There's something really satisfying about bringing back a house that had such great potential," she says. Although she has completed most of the renovation, she says there are a still few other things she'd like to do to the house. "I want to put pilasters between the living and dining rooms. I'd also like to redecorate the second bedroom and redo the back patio."

But for the time being, she wants to just kick back and relax in the home she has worked so hard to refurbish. "It's like the old Broadway story of moving from getting acquainted to falling in love," she says. "The same old magic still applies."

Community Preservation Means Survival

Some of Karen TenEyck's neighbors share her concern for the preservation of the area's character and architecture—enough that in 2003, in response to residents' requests, Pasadena declared the area the Washington Square Landmark District. The neighborhood contains numerous Craftsman bungalows, as well as Tudor, Mediterranean and Spanish Colonial Revival residences built in the 1920s.

Joe Feinblatt, a longtime resident of the area and a member of the Washington Square Neighborhood Association, said he and other residents sought to obtain landmark status because "it helps build the sense of community. People were concerned about insensitive changes to the buildings . . . and preserving the character of their housing."

Under the landmark designation, owners of historic houses cannot alter the facades of their properties. Members of the neighborhood association also hope the prohibition will, as it has in surrounding neighborhoods, discourage developers from attempting to demolish old homes.

TenEyck is currently president (and "new neighbor coordinator") of the association (washingtonsquarepasadena.org), which also works to reduce crime in the area.