

Rachel Ashwell on the Wow of White Décor

cottage white

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Shifting Sands

This historic beach cottage unites contemporary and traditional styles in an eclectic whole.

BY JOLENE NOLTE | PHOTOGRAPHY BY MANOLO LANGIS



What was originally a cooking fireplace got updated as a family room fireplace, which, together with the bright yellow painting, forms an eye-catching focal point.



The buffet is original and was painted white. The Lindsey Adelman chandelier is a modern addition. Erik explains this juxtaposition normally "wouldn't work in a period house, but in the context of the overall refresh, we were able to integrate eclectic touches like that to bring the architecture up to date."

"We decorated it like a **reinvention within the context** of the existing architecture."

HOUSES TELL STORIES, and this one in a historic district of Santa Monica, California, tells a story of the intersection of past and present.

Built in 1903, this Craftsman home was once a remote beach cottage, accessible by driving over the sand or walking on boardwalks laid across the dunes. Architect Erik Evens believes the home was likely a second residence for homeowners who would have had a larger residence in town. Bringing the home up to date while maintaining its historical architecture was a challenge for Erik and his team at Even Architects, but one that yielded an inviting result that reflects both the home's history and its present owners' needs and tastes.

Preserving the Past

The home's age meant several things: For one, the home was designed with a utilitarian approach to space because it was not a full-time residence. In addition, because the home is part of a historic district, the project team was not able to alter the appearance of the exterior or existing architectural structure. Erik explains that because of these restrictions, the challenge was "to integrate a pretty ambitious program" of changes into the existing structure.



To update the "small and dreary and dark" kitchen, Erik and his team brought the space up "to modern gourmet kitchen standards in a custom house, something that is more appropriate to a modern lifestyle." They added a walnut butcher-block island with room for seating, redid the cabinetry and added a walk-in pantry.

Other than refreshing the paint and replacing the windows, the exterior of the house was unchanged. The firm also maintained the interior's original woodwork and left much of the main lower level as it was.

Refreshing Reinvention

From subtle to dramatic, a variety of changes helped this home meet the needs and sensibilities of its 21st-century inhabitants. A simple but effective way of refreshing the home was to paint the walls and ceilings white. This allowed the Evens team to maintain the original wood, which was very dark, while making the home feel much "lighter and more beachy."

Other areas of the house required more substantive reworking. Erik explains the entire upstairs was "gutted and redone" to fit four bedrooms. This includes a master suite with all the modern accouterments, including a walk-in closet and spacious master bath.

"Older houses of this vintage typically had terrible, small closets and really tiny bathrooms," Erik says. "Bathrooms weren't considered a place to hang out in 1903 really, particularly in a house of this size."

Similarly, the turn-of-the-century design for a kitchen was not "terribly inviting by modern standards." Erik approached the kitchen knowing that kitchens today "are more of the hub of family life than they were in 1903, so it's important for modern lifestyle that you have a kitchen that's gracious, that's comfortable, that you can hang out in, that people can converse in, and so that's what we tried to do within the existing confines here." *GW*

See Sources, page 128.

"The bathroom here, although it feels at home in the architecture, it's really a modern bathroom with a spacious feel and modern amenities, and that's something you wouldn't have found in a house from the turn of the century," Erik says.



Old and new styles mingle with the clean and contemporary patio furniture and the traditional lighting fixture, mailbox and windowpane.



A claw-foot pedestal tub fits right in with the historical ambience of the home while the bright and open design fits with the sensibilities of contemporary spacious, retreat-like bathrooms.

CONTEMPORARY TOUCHES

Even if you can't update a home's architecture, don't underestimate what décor can do to add a contemporary feel to a space. For this home, the contemporary aspects are reinforced throughout by décor elements.

"The general interior decoration of the house was taken in a much more eclectic direction," architect Erik Evens says. "We didn't decorate it like a period house. We decorated it like a reinvention within the context of the existing architecture."

This direction allowed the clients, one of whom is a filmmaker and photographer, to integrate their original photography and modern art collection as well as touches like the playful and "decidedly modern" Lindsey Adelman chandelier in the dining room.