

THREE STUNNING SANTA FE HOMES • SITE SANTA FE RETURNS • ART, MUSIC, FESTIVAL

santa fean

October/November 2017

the
home issue

\$5.99



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a gift to the community

restoring a South Capitol
home to its former glory is
a true labor of love

Step on up and say hello! A graceful brick walkway leads to the framed entryway of Wendy Wilson and Douglas Turco's home, located in a friendly and walkable old Santa Fe neighborhood.



In a sea of Pueblo- and Territorial-style homes, a 1920s-era Craftsman, complete with eaves and dormers, really stands out. Deemed a contributing historic residence, the home was subject to certain restrictions; the original street-facing windows had to be rebuilt rather than replaced.

by Jessa Cast photographs by Kirk Gittings

ONCE IN A WHILE, someone is able to see beyond the tired façade of a languishing historic home and into its soul—someone with the means, patience, and dedication to restore an older house to its original vigor and vitality. Wendy Wilson and Douglas Turco looked into the soul of a local historic treasure, a Craftsman-style home south of the Capitol formerly owned by Santa Fe's prominent Ragle family, and realized that by sympathetically restoring it, they might return a gift to a notable local neighborhood.

Wilson and Turco met in Albuquerque while attending graduate school at the University of New Mexico. Their lives took a circuitous route around the country, where, drawing on the experience Wilson had gleaned from her architect father and interior designer mother, they restored and thoughtfully shaped other older homes. With their three children grown, Wilson and Turco's thoughts kept returning to their favorite vacation spot, Santa Fe. As art lovers, foodies, gardeners, accomplished chefs, and outdoor enthusiasts, it became clear they were experiencing the fantasy of living in the City Different, and that a part-time arrangement simply wouldn't be enough.

Right: Homeowner Wendy Wilson is a master gardener. She designed every inch of the property's lush, Santa Fe-appropriate landscaping.





Bringing in more light to the previously dark spaces was a major goal of the renovation, successfully managed here through the lovely, divided light windows of the dining room.

Finding the right home took some time. Turco desired something different from the typical Southwest adobe. It had to be a little unusual, a domicile that felt good and conveyed a sense of community. He and Wilson looked at beautiful homes all over town and discovered several good candidates in so-called “summer” neighborhoods, where most residents depart for the winter. But this social couple preferred permanently populated areas where one’s neighbors are part of daily life.

“We wanted to live in a community, where the kids walk by in the morning and say hello,” says Wilson. A master gardener, she’s all too happy to stop for a chat over the fence with passersby.

The Ragle house, located close to downtown and exuding lots of personality with its pitched roofs and decidedly non-adobe look, fit the bill perfectly. Records indicate the home was built around 1926. Eventually the Ragle family purchased it, along with several other homes in the area. In fact, Maggie Ragle, who grew up in the house, now resides just across the street, and happily supported the edifice’s new life.

“Luckily for us, Maggie was born and raised in this house, so she could tell us all these wonderful stories!” says Wilson.

Within a year of their October 2014 move-in, the new homeowners had identified inherent flaws in the house’s layout. The flow (or lack thereof) hindered the homeowners and stumped visitors. During a party, Wilson and

“Luckily for us, Maggie Ragle was born and raised in this house, so she could tell us all these wonderful stories!” says homeowner Wendy Wilson.



Left: Making excellent use of a small bit of space, the Tierra Concepts team created a desk nook in the entry hall with built-in bookshelves and a great view of activity happening on the street.



Right: O'Dell snoozes beside another clever space hack: a coat (and leash) rack and a small bench built into the entryway for tugging on boots and sneakers. The gleaming tin ceiling was Turco's idea; it's in the powder bath as well.



In the renovation, designer Stephen Beili swapped the master bedroom and the kitchen, which now has plenty of space for prep and cooking, more natural flow, and contemporary finishes and appliances.



Above: The view from the den to the eggplant-colored dining room, with its dramatic and reflective gold metallic fireplace surround. The gold is picked up in a striking painting (inset) by Taos artist Miguel Martinez.



The huge piece in the entryway came from an old haberdashery shop. "It's been moved six times and the glass didn't break!" say the owners. A sunny den beckons at the end of the hallway.

Turco noticed that their guests were not making use of the backyard, which was all set up for entertaining. Turns out, the guests couldn't figure out how to get to it—or were afraid to navigate the scary staircase. Clearly, changes needed to be made. Nobel Davis, their real estate agent, introduced the couple to Kurt Faust of Tierra Concepts, Inc., and architectural designer Stephen Beili of Studio Beili, two entities who've teamed up for comprehensive remodeling projects such as this for 23 years.

"It's an extension of who we are and how we like to live," says Douglas Turco of the reinterpreted, modernized floor plan.

After painstakingly measuring the home (there were no surviving blueprints), redesigning it, and clearing city and state preservation guidelines for a historic building, Wilson and Turco moved out, and a year of renovation began.

"It's a tricky little thing, designing for historic Santa Fe," says Turco wryly. Every step of the process uncovered something unexpected, from sewer line and

foundation problems to leaky radiators and hidden windows. There were a host of surprises (what the remodeling team affectionately calls “discoveries”), and of course this was not the sort of remodel where one could just run to the store for inexpensive, matching parts. Quirky dimensions require custom work, hard-to-source items, and creative solutions.

“The challenge was to add enough space to make it more gracious,” Beili explains. The original space of the two-story building was poorly distributed for today’s living. The team took that space back, cleaned it up, and intentionally redistributed it in a much more elegant way. Can you imagine *moving* the stairway in your home? This team did. Flipping the master bedroom with the kitchen provided better flow downstairs, while a small addition to the back (Turco’s favorite view, because of its angles and shadows) allowed for the creation of a family room and bathroom upstairs and a new first-floor master bath.

In bringing the house up to Santa Fe green building code, a lot of work, including taking all exterior-facing walls down to the studs for insulation, went into certifying it for LEED—a difficult task in a modern home, never mind one that’s almost a century old. Much of the trim, and all of the street-facing windows, were meticulously restored.

The 2,700-square-foot, four-bedroom residence now gorgeously celebrates its past in a more livable, modernized iteration. “It’s an extension of who we are and how we like to live,” says Turco. With a more logical flow, the house



Above: In addition to landscaping her own yard, Wilson has been beautifying the neighborhood sidewalks with attractive, aromatic, pollinator-friendly plants and flowers.



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just feels better overall, and now party guests can easily find their way to the lovely outdoor areas. Wilson not only landscaped her own property, but took her green thumb to the sidewalks, beautifying the neighborhood to the approval of its residents. For their meticulous restoration efforts, Tierra Concepts was rewarded with the Grand Award in the 2017 Remodelers Showcase this past spring.

Says Tierra's Kurt Faust, "It's a remarkable act of stewardship, to spend that much time, effort, money and resource to transform an historic home and bring it into this century for another 100 years."

Indeed, it's a gift to Santa Fe. **sf**



Above: Colorful lawn chairs ring a fire pit in the backyard, while a fountain burbles in the background. It's an ideal place for watching birds and enjoying the natural scenery.



Above: Galvanized metal tubs make artistic and functional vegetable gardening spots in the rear yard (and keep the plants at least a few inches away from nibbling rabbits).



"The more we live in this house, the more we love it," says Wilson. "It's become part of our hearts and to live here."

resources

Builder/Contractor/Remodeler

Tierra Concepts, Inc.
tierraconceptssantafe.com

Designer

Studio Beili

Appliances

Builders Source Appliance Gallery

Bathroom Countertops

Counter Intelligence
handcraftsmen.com

Brick and Brickwork

Kinney Brick

Cabinetry

Kitchen Dimensions

Custom Windows, Storm Windows & Screens

PK Works

Kitchen Countertops

Captain Marble
 Arizona Tile

Landscaping

Wendy Wilson, homeowner
 San Isidro Permaculture

Lighting

Allbright & Lockwood
allbrightlockwood.com

Solar Array

SunPower by Positive Energy Solar

Sinks, Fixtures & Tubs

Santa Fe By Design

Tile in Powder Room

Artesanos

Tile in Guest Bath

Statements In Tile/Lighting/Kitchens/Flooring
statementsinsantafe.com

Wood Flooring

Plaza Hardwood