

colorful CHARACTER

In Ojai, California, a couple revives a century-old bungalow, filling it with unexpected color—and a lifetime of treasures.

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In the living room of Kim and Mike Robertson's home, a pair of James Perse sofas create the perfect canvas for the collected colors on throw pillows and vintage kantha quilts. Two green leather chairs mimic the lush landscape seen just beyond the windows. A collection of antique footstools—reupholstered in bold, colorful fabrics—delivers art and history.



It was a humble tree swing hanging from a mighty oak tree that first caught Kim Robertson's eye.

She and her husband, Mike, had just turned down a long gravel driveway to check out an old California Craftsman that had popped up in a real estate listing in Ojai, California. "I saw that tree and, honestly, I imagined my grandchildren swinging on it and felt like this house was going to be ours," Kim says. "I didn't even need to see the inside. I looked up at the wraparound porch and swooned. It really was a magical spot. And as it turned out, so was the house itself."

Set on 8½ acres of rolling fruit orchards, with rings of deep purple salvia encircling it, the home—built in 1906—needed no big renovation. It was simply begging for a revival of its spirit. "It had beautiful woodwork everywhere, with amazing old hardware and fixtures and so much character," Kim says. "I love old houses, and in California that's harder to find. This was like a dream for me. This property is said to have been a stop on the Pony Express, so it comes with a sense of history. I wanted to honor that and fill it with things that felt like they were always meant to be inside."

She called her dear friend and interior designer Stephanie Hunt to collaborate on the house and bring it back to life. Hunt had worked with Kim on other houses in Southern California, and the pair had always bonded over their affinity for color and antiques. "I wanted this house to feel like a surprise inside, to make it fresh

OPPOSITE LEFT In the dining room, a Shaker table and chairs that came with the house stayed put. The pale aqua metal light fixture echoes the blue walls and drapes. **OPPOSITE, TOP RIGHT** Fabrics with vivid hues and decorative patterns, such as this linen floral from Pindler, work as art in this home. **OPPOSITE, BOTTOM RIGHT** Interior designer Stephanie Hunt chose a peacock aqua for the front door to give a hint of the colorful interiors. "The front door is such a happy color, and it awakened the exterior of the house and showed the family's personality," she says. **THIS PHOTO** Rather than paint the original redwood wainscoting, Kim opted to leave it in its original glory. The rare 16-inch-wide panels were finished by hand, allowing the beautiful grain to show. A yarn-wrapped horseshoe nods to the family's love of horses.



BELOW The kitchen was in good shape, so Hunt left it mostly alone, save for the Heath tile backsplash in a blue tumbling block pattern. “The tile feels current and updated, but at the same time, it feels like it could’ve been there for a very long time,” Hunt says. She designed the built-in bookshelf to be an evolving art installation of Kim’s collections. **OPPOSITE, TOP LEFT** Kim collects Mexican bush sage (*Salvia leucantha*) on the property—which includes a fruit orchard. The barn, more than a century old, is a beloved part of the landscape and now houses a family of barn owls. **OPPOSITE, TOP RIGHT** Kim loves being on the land with her English golden retriever, Zoe. **OPPOSITE BOTTOM** Kim was drawn to the views of the Topatopa Mountains, which, for a brief period every evening at dusk, reflect the light of the setting sun and turn the sky pink. “We borrowed that beautiful color and used it throughout the house,” she says.

and fun while still feeling authentic,” Hunt says. “Kim has never been afraid of color and pattern, so we thought we would use those two things to enliven it. And then we’d fill it with her beautiful collections of antiques and treasures to give it those lovely layers a house needs to really tell a story.”

Because Kim and Mike wanted to preserve the original Craftsman-style millwork throughout the house and not paint any of it, Hunt decided to envelop the walls with cool blue paint—and treat them as a neutral backdrop for bolder colors. “Kim loves old books and vintage oil paintings, and we borrowed from the colors of all the spines and vintage artwork to develop our palette,” Hunt says. The pair played with pattern in fabrics, delivering instant personality to antique footstools, lampshades, and throw pillows. Low-contrast wallpapers deliver personality and patina. “I really wanted the wallpapers we chose to be ‘wow’ ones, but I wanted them to have a timeworn quality about them, too, as if they might have been there all along.”

Kim, who loves antiques and flea market shopping, filled the home with treasures like the antique glove molds she had collected over time. “I’ve always been drawn to old things. In high school, I used to cut class on Fridays to go to garage sales. To me, finding handwriting in an old book is such a sweet discovery. It’s the stories behind the books that I find so beautiful, like you’re carrying a bit of someone else’s history with you and keeping it alive.” So this house is filled with old books, and Kim sometimes tucks photos and notes inside them. “One day, if they wind up at an estate sale,” she says, “maybe someone will buy them and open one up and discover a little piece of the story we told here at the ranch.” □

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“I love things that aren’t a perfect match. To me, that’s when a house really begins to show personality.”

—INTERIOR DESIGNER STEPHANIE HUNT





OPPOSITE TOP Kim and Hunt found the rug for the master bedroom first and let its hues inform the palette in the light-filled space. Soft greens and blues nod to the landscape outside. "There was no other place for the bed, except to place it under the windows, which is unorthodox," Hunt says. "But we made it feel intentional with the addition of the drapes, which have a very subtle block print pattern." She added more pattern on the lampshades and lumbar pillow, which boast a playful nature-inspired print.

OPPOSITE BOTTOM The wraparound front porch was swoon-worthy, Kim says. But it's her husband who retreats to the porch swing nearly every night "to take in the view, read a book, and listen to his country music with the dogs," she says. **THIS PHOTO** The back entry hall leads to one of Kim's favorite spaces, the "landing." The vintage painting by Helen Mae Gleiforst is prized by the family—they own three of her works. The wood table and chair came with the house and seem to belong right here.



“I love layering old blankets because they give a sense of soul and history to a space.”

—STEPHANIE HUNT



OPPOSITE TOP The pink Harland Miller *Love Saves the Day* print inspired the color scheme in daughter Emma's bedroom, where low-contrast wallpaper delivers subtle pattern without overpowering the space. The vintage kantha throw on the bed adds a dose of handmade charm. **OPPOSITE, BOTTOM LEFT** Kim's antique glove molds from around the world become conversation pieces in Emma's room. **OPPOSITE, BOTTOM RIGHT** To soften the powder room, Hunt upholstered its walls in a favorite Peter Dunham fabric. An antique mirror lends character. **THIS PHOTO** A new chair is brightened with a vivid geometric fabric. Both the mirror and the lamp are vintage. Hunt loves using custom fabric shades for extra personality.