colorful CHARACTER

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

WRITTEN AND PRODUCED BY PAIGE PORTER FISCHER PHOTOGRAPHED BY KARYN MILLET











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 81/2 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



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 antiquing 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." \square





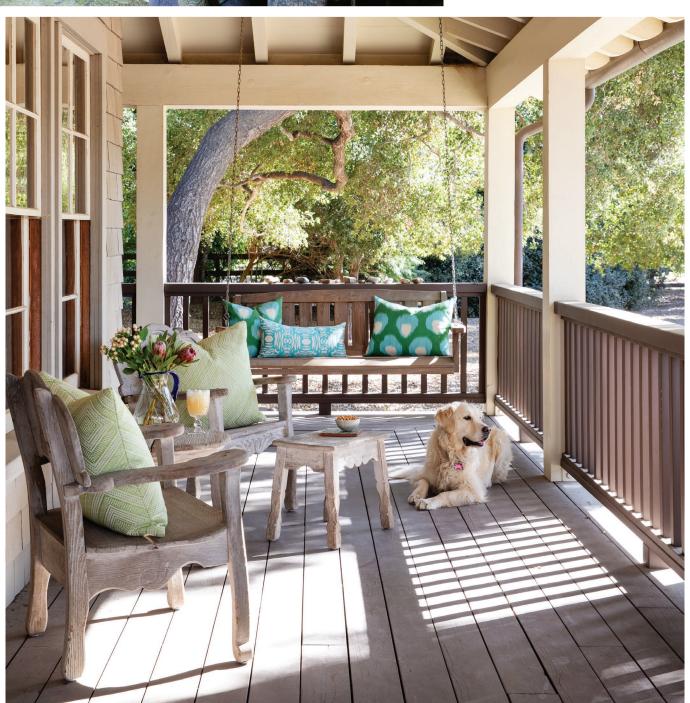






"I love things
that aren't a
perfect match.
To me, that's when
a house really
begins to show
personality."

-INTERIOR DESIGNER STEPHANIE HUNT











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

-STEPHANIE HUNT

