



A husband-and-wife green design team performs a minimal home makeover—to maximum effect.

Reduce, Reuse, Remodel

Jessica Helgerson points to a two-foot-tall Han dynasty figurine on the fireplace mantel of her two-story Southeast Portland foursquare. "It was left over from a design project I did for Sue Grafton," explains the interior designer, a native of Santa Barbara who moved to Portland in 2004.

As with the antique Indian terra painting in the dining room—another hand-me-down from a client—one could

easily imagine the castoff occupying a lavish drawing room in one of Grafton's detective novels. Instead, the piece finds a fitting foil in Helgerson's living room. Its terra cotta complementing the humble brick hearth, slightly pitted and salmon pink from a recent sandblasting.

The pairing is a good illustration of the keen aesthetic and green ethic with which Helgerson and her husband, architect Gianni Doulis, have renovated

their modest, three-bedroom 1912 residence. Original fir floors, retouched plaster walls and a spare mix of objects, collected casually over time, create an environment that feels remarkably fresh.

With their make-do design philosophy, it's not surprising that both were once involved in Santa Barbara's tightly knit sustainable design community. Helgerson had launched a booming green interior design business: "We thought we'd fix

A resource-saving marriage of old and new

everything one hemp sofa at a time!" she recalls amusedly. Doulis had worked overseas for the environmentally conscious German architecture firm Behnisch & Partner and its Santa Barbara spin-off, Blackbird. Their paths ultimately crossed at—where else?—the local farmers market, and they married in 2001.

After a year spent restoring homes in a village in southern France—Helgerson's family hails from Lyon—the couple decided to move to Portland. Doulis had grown up here, and both he and his wife looked favorably on the city's natural beauty, thriving neighborhoods and sustainable design savvy.

But before settling down, they needed to find a house that would take well to a modern update. "We didn't want to feel bad demo-ing the kitchen and bathroom," Helgerson explains, and their Sunnyside foursquare fit the bill with its minimalistic architecture—Doulis surmises it was built from a set of catalog plans or a kit, its penny-pinching builders forging even such de rigueur frills as crown molding—and a "totally dysfunctional" kitchen. Now their challenge was to create a space that was user-friendly for two busy pro-



fessionals and two young children (Penelope arrived on New Year's Eve 2004, the day they moved in; Max is now 3), while retaining as much of the home's original character and materials as possible.

First, the kitchen needed some breathing room. Doulis knocked down a wall between it and a breakfast nook and removed two layers of ceiling, raising the room height from 7'6" to 9'. New ceiling-high period cabinets doubled the room's storage space, while understated finishes—pale gray paint, white Carrara marble counters, subway tiles (installed vertically for kicks)—melded modern with traditional. By donating their old cabinets to the Rebuilding Center, installing an antique range and keeping the original fir floors, the couple conserved resources.

After overhauling the home's one full bathroom and its powder room and rebuilding the front porch (Doulis re-milled the old planks to save lumber), the homeowners turned their attention to cosmetic upgrades—sanding and repainting the heavy Craftsman-style woodwork, overlaying sagging downstairs ceilings with drywall and replastering and painting interior walls, many of which had been coated with wallpaper.

The result is a model of budgetary and stylistic economy—and a lesson in how green remodeling needn't involve trendy



Top: Classic modern lines van der Bulte and Marcel Breuer tubular steel chairs (www.knoell.com) cabobattate with antiques and handmade treasures.

Above: Gianni Doulis and Jessica Helgerson with children Max (left) and Penelope (right)

bamboo flooring or upholstery made from recycled soda bottles. "The greenest thing we did was to be respectful of the history of the house and of what the people who move in after us will probably want," Doulis says.

With Helgerson's eye for décor, the effect, while respectful, is anything but staid. In every corner some clever juxtaposition of objects draws the eye. Embroidered pillows picked up at the William Temple House thrift shop adorn a window seat, while in the guest bedroom a Scandinavian Modern wooden table lamp takes well to a baroque

'Green' needn't mean trendy bamboo floors.

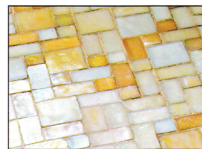
rossette-bedecked shade. A simple wooden bed, which Doulis made while a student at Harvard's Graduate School of Design, is made up with vintage flax linens that Helgerson collected overseas.

She explains that prior to the 20th century in France. "When a girl was born her father would plant flax to make the linens; she needed 12 sets by the time she was married and would start embroidering when she was still a girl."

Now that's sustainable design. Fortunately for Penelope, the yard is only big enough for a vegetable plot, which her parents plan to install this spring. ■



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Left: Gold accents lend drama to the bath, from recycled glass tiles (Pratt & Larson, 1201 SE Third Ave., 503-231-9464) to opalescent scones (Schoolhouse Electric, 330 SE MLK Jr Blvd., 503-230-7113).

Above: In the guest room, a Tord Boontje paper pendant by Artercica (www.missionline.com) playfully riffs on the Mehdi motifs that Helgerson painted on the walls. Esque glass teardrops add a cool spray of color (Intelligent Design, 537 SW 12th Ave., 503-228-8825).

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