

## STYLE | HOME

## Small is beautiful



## KOPELOUSOS RESIDENCE

Burns Court Historic District is a neighborhood that includes 15 Mediterranean Revival bungalows.

**BY MARTY FUGATE**  
**PHOTOGRAPHY BY GREG WILSON**

Some of the best “new” ideas have been around for years. The tiny house, for example. A simple concept: Provide everything a homeowner needs in a house that’s under 1,000 square feet. Back in the 1920s, Owen Burns, Sarasota’s pioneering developer, created a whole neighborhood of them, 15 Mediterranean Revival bungalows, all designed by architect Thomas Reed Martin. Burns

gave his own name to the development.

Burns Court is what he called it.

Today, it’s called the Burns Court Historic District. Although it’s only a few blocks from the heart of downtown Sarasota, it feels like another place entirely. Like a small town inside of a big city. The neighborhood checks all the boxes of Andres Duany’s New Urbanist principles. Walkable streets? Check. Traditional neighborhood? Absolutely. Mixed-use and diversity? The place is packed with restaurants, shops and an art

house cinema. People live and work here — and sometimes do both.

Georgia Kopelousos is one of Burns Court’s newest residents.

“I love it here,” she says. “For me, it’s always a beautiful day in the neighborhood.”

How she got there is an interesting story.

#### The call of history

Georgia is a high-energy sales executive, and part of the sales team who gave Sarasota a view

of The Vue. She's got an eye for style, a heart for history and a love of travel. She's especially drawn to places like Tuscany where the past hasn't been bulldozed out of existence.

When one of Burns Court's historic bungalows went on the market in 2015, Georgia's heart leapt. She bought it immediately.

Once she made the house her own, it was time to put the band together.

Georgia quickly assembled a creative dream team. She tapped the innovative Ryan Perrone, the young president and co-founder of Nautilus Homes, as her builder, general contractor and design consultant. For interior design, she looked to Ellen Hanson. Although she's based in New York City, Ellen's thriving Sarasota branch, Pansy Bayou, is just down the street from Georgia's residence.

Georgia shared her dreams with the dream team. She wanted a stylish, 21st-century home where she could entertain family and friends and unwind with Bianca, her basenji/pit bull mix. She also wanted to honor the architectural legacy of Thomas Reed Martin.

A house that was good as new and stayed true to its old-school roots.

Two tough assignments.

The history assignment was the toughest. Over the years, previous owners had layered Martin's original design with the fads of many decades.

"The kitchen and bathroom were all covered in pink tile," recalls Georgia. "It was very 1950s."

Ryan and Ellen saw for themselves after a quick guided tour.

After that, they all put their heads together. "Design was a collaborative process," says Ryan. "All three of us would get on the phone and talk. Or we'd go down the street to the bar at Owen's Fish Camp. We'd stay for a few beers and hash it out."

That happened over many nights. Brainstorming went on for months. Not a rush job. They wanted to get it right. Ryan adds that, "We made revision after revision to make sure we'd thought of every possibility. Hanson was ideally suited to this project. She understood how to maximize every aspect of a 1,000-square-foot home without making it feel cluttered."

The brainstorming ultimately yielded a design — and a plan to make it happen. But, first things first. Get rid of the accumulated bric-a-brac.

"We started peeling back the years," says Ellen. "Our aim was to get rid of the clutter and let the original structure speak for itself."

### Back to basics

Over several hot weeks, Ryan and his sub-contractors filled up a dumpster and got the house down to its bare bones. According to Ryan, the house that Burns built had very good bones indeed. Concrete block and masonry construction, finished in stucco, and built to last.



The new front door is solid mahogany which, is painted a deep marine blue.



Space is at a premium in this home that is under 1,000 square feet.

“I admire the craftsmanship and attention to detail,” he says.

Ryan’s job?

Repair, restore and redefine, with 21st-century craftsmanship and the same standard of quality. And to prove that they still build houses like they used to.

After stripping the house down, Ryan opened it up. On the exterior, he removed the porch screens at the entry. Inside, he tore down the wall dividing the kitchen and dining room. Throughout the house, he gave new life to a host of historical

elements. Doorknobs. Doors. Hinges. The original Georgia pine floors. You name it.

“We even repurposed the original back door as the new bathroom door,” says Ellen. “The half-light door allows the newly enlarged bathroom window to flood light through the originally quite dark interior hall.”

They recycled the original doors and hardware whenever possible, but some pieces were beyond repair.

When he couldn’t save the past, Ryan painstakingly recreated historically consistent interior

trims and hardware. Burns and Martin couldn’t tell his new additions apart from their originals.

Ryan replaced the dilapidated historic windows with Loewen’s aluminum-clad, wooden push-out windows and wood-framed screens on hinges. Contemporary pieces — that look like they had been installed in 1925.

The original plasterwork was masterful — and beyond repair.

Drywall was the logical substitute, with a shiny-smooth Level-5 finish in every room. The unblemished perfection catches your eye.



The kitchen features bone-white shelves and glass-front cabinets, and an ultra-modern refrigerator with a cabinet door of the same material.



The design team built up with a custom kitchen cabinet design reaching all the way to the high ceiling.



The master bedroom is, again, space conscious, making use of an out-of-sight wardrobe which takes up an entire wall.



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Where the eye can't see, Ryan also replaced all the plumbing and wiring.

**Space, the final frontier**

The house was now a beautiful, empty shell. It was time to fill it with more beauty. Starting with the kitchen.

As you'll recall, it was now a single, welcoming space — a tall, narrow space with nine-foot ceilings. Making it work was a serious design challenge. The collaborative design team cooked up a creative solution that didn't cramp Georgia's culinary style.

They build up with a custom kitchen cabinet design. Bone-white shelves and glass-front cabinets reaching all the way up to the high ceiling. They hid the ultra-modern fridge with a cabinet door of the same material. And kept the classic look of the room consistent.

Ryan is quick to credit the talents of master cabinetmaker Anthony Aguilar. "I handed him a sketch of our concept. He made it a reality."

The kitchen is only one example of the masterful space planning they created for the tiny house.

"Early on, we decided to think of the house as a boat," says Ryan. "We had to get the most bang for our buck. Every element needed to be functional. If a feature could be multifunctional, that's even better."

That ship-shape approach informed the renovation.

Ellen equipped the master bedroom with an out-of-sight wardrobe. (More evidence of Aguilar's artistry.) The concealed storage takes up an entire wall. Open the doors, and you'll see a nest of cubbyholes, shelves and shirt hangers. Close the doors, and goodbye clutter.

She also redesigned the single bathroom with historically inspired colors and patterns that flow seamlessly with the rest of the space.

The entrance to the charming bungalow, with beautiful plantings leading to the dramatic marine-blue front door.

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### Finishing touches

Ellen created a counterpoint to the house's solid lines with splashes of playful color. She tapped Charlotte Osterman (one of Pansy Bayou's superstar talents) for a rainbow of eye-pleasing fabrics. (Orange is her favorite flavor of eye-candy.)

The most eye-catching detail?

The new front door was stout, solid mahogany. Against the protests of purists, Ellen painted it a shade of deep marine blue.

"I love it," says Ryan. "It's not a party color. But it definitely says we're having fun in here."

The entire makeover took six months. Ellen describes the process as a delicate balancing act. "We balanced smart design decisions with cost-conscious efficiency."

Georgia's dream team put the house to rights — without changing its character. When the dust finally settled, the makeover included a hard-working contemporary kitchen, a master bedroom with a built-in closet, a reinvented master bathroom, and courtyard walls in keeping with the house's historical vernacular.

Is that it?



Georgia Kopelousos with Bianca, Ryan Perrone and Ellen Hanson.



Muted, neutral colors and hidden storage create a spa-like environment in the master bath.

“For the moment,” Georgia says with a laugh. “But we’ll be working on the courtyard and outbuilding before long. It should be ready for occupancy this spring.”

Now that she’s given new life to her historic house, Georgia is busy making history of her own.

“I have started one instant holiday tradition,” she says. “For the last two years, I’ve had a pajamas-only breakfast party on Christmas mornings. Human guests are required to show up in their PJs. Only Bianca is exempt!”

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