

Finishing Touches



METAL LOVSEATS PROVIDE A BRAZEN
COUNTERPOINT TO ANTIQUES AND
COMFORTABLE UPHOLSTERED PIECES
IN AYAKO AND NEAL GORDON'S
CAPITOL HILL LIVING ROOM.

VINTAGE FLOURISHES PRESERVE THE CHARM IN A CAPITOL HILL REMODEL

AYAKO GORDON WAS POKING AROUND SEATTLE BUILDING SALVAGE, looking for nothing in particular, when she noticed some old bank doors. Brawny and imposing, with brass frames and glass insets, the doors were not standard issue for a 90-year-old Tudor like the one Ayako and her husband, Neal, were renovating. But that's just what drew her to them.

"When I saw those doors, I had to have them," she says.

The Gordons' Capitol Hill home is a treasure trove of discoveries like this, from mementos Neal and Ayako have collected on their travels (light fixtures from Belgium, paintings from France) to quirky artifacts Ayako has picked up at secondhand stores in Seattle.

Throughout the remodel, architect David Rutherford and contractor Joseph McKinstry would turn to Ayako to hunt down finishing touches for each room. "I'd ask how many days I had and then run all over town to all the stores I know," Ayako recalls.

"I think it was clear to David that Ayako has a special eye for collecting," adds Neal, the owner of a shipping

By Jessica Campbell
Photographs by J.F. Housel



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company. “He said, ‘I’d like to create the spaces for you and let you fill them.’”

The Gordons hired Rutherford to make the old house work for a modern family with three children on the cusp of adolescence. They wanted more recreational space for daughters Alessandra and Kassiah and son Stephan, and a less formal floor plan that would encourage lingering conversations and spontaneous get-togethers. “We wanted to create

a place where kids and adults can hang around and enjoy music, food and conversation,” Ayako says.

The architect carved a gathering space from the kitchen, laundry room and study, created another bedroom and bathroom on the second floor, revamped the master suite and turned the unfinished basement into a new family room. Despite the changes, Rutherford tried to preserve the home’s vintage character. “The house has incredible integrity,” he says. “It was important to respect that.”

Respect came in the form of recycling. French doors were transplanted from the old family room to a bedroom closet. A fireplace mantel became part of a bookshelf. Etched glass windows now frame a corner of the study, giving visitors in the entryway an intriguing glimpse of what lies within without exposing the family’s inner lair.

The furnishings Ayako and Neal chose, while not exclusively antiques, also lend the home a sense of history. An oversize metal armoire keeps company with a rustic wooden table in the tomato soup–red dining room. In the living room, unusual artifacts—an antique washing machine, a stately bird cage—mingle with a pair of steel love seats created by artisan Brian Swanson. An old French bread-making table helps bridge the gap between the sinewy metal furniture and the downy upholstered pieces, giving the eclectic mix a common tactile appeal.

An antique column Ayako unearthed suggests a division between the kitchen and study, where a leather sofa holds court and a battered wooden hutch does double duty as a desk and a display space for Ayako’s treasures.



A HARVEST TABLE AND METAL ARMOIRE ADORN THE DINING ROOM (*this page*) OF THE 1910 TUDOR (*opposite, above*). A GRAND PIANO DOMINATES THE FOYER (*opposite, below*).



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Commercial appliances, stainless-steel counters and a large island improved the functionality of the expanded kitchen. But the charm of the old kitchen was carried over into the new with hand-forged cabinet hardware, fir floors and an old iron gate that Ayako put to work as a pot rack.

Eggplant and celery cabinets enliven the room and its adjacent eating area. The dappled bronze wash on the walls

echoes the weathered brass of the old bank doors. Inspiration for other colors came from children's book author Cooper Edens, a friend of the Gordons, who stopped by one day to show Neal and Ayako some leaves he had found. The Gordons agreed that the soft gray-green of the lamb's ear would be a good color for the ceiling and chose the nutmeg color of another leaf for their third-floor master suite.

In addition to using color to bring nature into the house, the Gordons enlisted garden designers Jeff Sawastuk and Steven Gorecki to help them bring family life into the garden. A trough fountain now separates two outdoor dining areas: a patio built on the roof of an alley garage and a massive, rough-hewn stone table that will one day be sheltered by an ivy awning.

A cottagelike shed built from salvaged materials perches in one corner of the garden, evoking the inviting ambience of the home.

"Everyone remembers their childhood when they come into this house because it's so old and comfy and cozy," Ayako says. "Everything was hand-picked by us. I think that matters. It takes time and energy, but it's worth it." ■



ORIGINAL ETCHED-GLASS WINDOWS WERE SAVED TO FORM A CORNER OF THE STUDY (*this page*). STAINLESS-STEEL COUNTERS AND COMMERCIAL APPLIANCES BLEND WITH BUTCHER BLOCK AND HAND-FORGED CABINET HARDWARE IN THE NOW FAMILY-FRIENDLY KITCHEN (*opposite*).