







Features

License to snoop: retro home edition 1920-1960

VERONICA GRACIA-WING | WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 28, 2012



TED O'DELL (LFT) AND JOHN GRANGER IN THEIR 20S HOME - PHOTO DAVE TRUMPIE

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We've established that there may be a few of us in the area who take a special interest in all things house-related, CapGains staff is no exception. There's just something about the way we choose to turn a house into a home; the personality behind it, the decoration choices, how the history of a house and neighborhood so often have a role in cultivating it. Some folks draw inspiration from the very decade their house debuted in the world. We talked to four Lansing area homeowners about their unique homes and methods behind making it such.

1920s – Talking the Talk and Walking the Walk

The Westside Neighborhood: an icon in Lansing neighborhoods; with the rich history, beautiful variety of houses, and network of neighbors who take very apparent pride in their homes. For John Granger and Ted O'Dell, the sense of pride is rooted in building a home that pays functional homage to the roaring 20s.

"It sounds corny," Granger says, "but we like to live the life. We like to keep the house true to history; we're old souls. We don't want to have a house full of things that don't work. We want to hear the noises of old clocks and phones, and feel the breeze of a vintage

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Are you one of those house-crazy people? You know, the kind who can't resist looking through local real estate listings or driving past an open house without going in. Are you the party guest who wants the tour before a drink hits your lips? Do you find yourself oohing and ahing over cool old architecture or keeping track of the renovation job down the street? No? Oh, well, then, definitely not us, either. We also aren't especially geeked to feature four Lansing area homes that pay homage to the decade in which they were built ... please note the tone of sarcasm, and click on!

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fan; it's part of the entire experience."

Granger purchased the 1920 craftsman style inspired colonial revival in 2007, soon after attending the estate sale of the second owner of the home, who had lived there since 1958. It's been a labor of love to restore the home to its original beauty.

"The connection back to the history of the home is just neat. Researching items that really go with the house and realizing that some of the things we've acquired might have actually lived here almost 100 years ago has been so rewarding," he says.

1930s – Everything Old is New Again

The 2003 winner of [The Lansing Historic District Commission New Construction Award](#) knows a thing or two about seeing the potential in things and historic integrity. This, in addition to a career as an architect, makes the 1929 Westside Neighborhood home of Troy Spitzley an immaculate representation of a 1930s English Tudor. The award recognized Spitzley's exceptional work in building a new garage, a garage one would have no idea wasn't part of the original layout, it's that seamless.

"It's always a goal to stay true to the English tudor style," Spitzley explains. "It's one of those things I just like and have always been attracted to."

The detailed craftsmanship found in the signature tudor dark wood, wrought iron, hammered metal, and stone and brick appeal to Spitzley as a craftsman. One of his passions and inspirations for his home décor style is to channel that craftsmanship through the repurposing of old, unwanted, or seemingly ugly items and materials. He encourages those who are similarly bitten by the repurposing bug to never pass up an estate sale, auction, or flea market.

"Repurposing is beautiful. I love to find things that I can remake and give new life to."

1950s – Curating Heirlooms

Never one to shy away from the kitschy or eclectic, [FBNT Antiques](#) owner Tony Sump actually gravitates toward shiny, shimmery, atomic 50s flair; descriptions that capture the essence of his very 50s kitchen.

"For some reason, it always lands there for me. Anywhere I've ever lived has had a 50s inspired kitchen," Sump says.

Perhaps that's one reason why the 1952 colonial revival in Country Club Manor (the name given the neighborhood surrounding the [Country Club of Lansing](#)) spoke to him in 2007. That the house was situated in a way that felt welcoming and reminded him of the home he grew up in spoke to him first.

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"People feel instantly at home here at The Abbey. It's a gathering place during times of loss or celebration."

That sense of connection is pervasive in Sump's various collections around his home. He seeks out items that have a story attached to them, carefully choosing pieces that will become an heirloom one day. Friends and family appreciate that about Sump, often asking him to curate particular valuables for them when they are unable to.

"It's so gratifying to know that I'm cultivating things that will have value after I'm gone," he says.

1960s – Wonderfully Hideous

Kirk Domer, [MSU Department of Theatre](#) Chairperson and Associate Professor of Scene Design, is not the type of person to leave his work at work. You know this the instant you step foot into his exquisitely eclectic 1965 home in East Lansing, which is to say you've stepped foot into a time machine, the dial set to land in the home of someone who has connected the dots between mod, high end Austin Powers to your average 60s household. The first dot? A clock.

"I did a show at [Williamston Theater](#)," he says, "with a mid-century clock and I said 'I will own a house that that clock will fit in.'"

Lo and behold, he did. Domer purchased the house in 2011 and has been busy connecting dots since, with some help.

"Board members think it's fun, so they are always dropping something by. Chafing dishes, gardening books, lamps. It's kind of cute that way, putting it all together."

As soon as he saw the house, he knew he had to stay true to the time period. He does so by visiting [Love, Betti](#), [April's Antiques](#), or [Dicker & Deal](#) locally, and by allowing himself an extra hour while out and about during his frequent travels. A love for knickknacks, bric-a-brac, and pieces that are wonderfully ridiculous and hideous often results in laughter as he shops.

One of the best things about the house? The stories and connections. Folks in the neighborhood love to stop by to share memories of their experiences in the house over years gone by. Party guests grab Domer excitedly, remembering a time when they owned a piece exactly like the one on the wall or in the kitchen. Domer has built a time machine that honors aesthetics and inspires grins rich with memory.

Veronica Gracia-Wing is the innovation editor for Capital Gains.

Photos © [Dave Trumpie](#)

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