

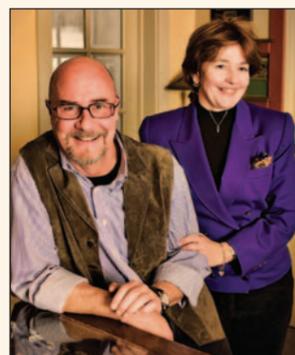


## IT'S ALWAYS THE LAST PLACE YOU LOOK: Modern Bungalow

CUSTOMERS WALK THROUGH the doors of Modern Bungalow, a shop tucked into Denver's University Village, looking for something very particular, something elusive. Often, it's something they've been pining after for a long time, whether it's a settle that won't overshadow the fireplace, or a rocking chair that won't hit the wall in their tiny bungalow. They've looked everywhere, and they're tired of looking. Kate and Ed Sultan, the proprietors of Modern Bungalow, know just how they feel.

"They wander in as a last resort," says Ed Sultan with a laugh. "They're usually looking for something very specific. If they still can't find it in our store or our vendors' catalogs, I'll say, 'You know, you can still have it. I'll just make it for you.' They're always very surprised to hear that they can get exactly what they want in the exact size, and that the price really isn't terrible."

For close to a decade, and with the help of some very talented artisans and vendors, Ed and Kate have been giving customers exactly what they want. The wide selection of handcrafted rugs, tile, lighting, pottery, art and—of course—furniture is all selected with the Arts and Crafts aesthetic foremost in mind. But it



### It Started with a Bungalow

In 2000, Kate, then a retail executive, and Ed, an advertising and marketing consultant, made a life-changing move from their big stucco house in San Francisco to a beautiful bungalow in Denver's historic Park Hill neighborhood. Their first tough lesson about bungalow proportions came when the movers' truck arrived: their furniture didn't fit. Literally.

"Bungalows are small," says Kate. "They were made for working-class families. When our oversized sofa and love seat came off the truck, they couldn't make the turns in the house. The only place they would fit was through the back door and into the basement. So now our cats have some very lovely pieces."

They quickly realized that even the pieces that *did* fit just didn't look right against the backdrop of original, never-painted woodwork and quartersawn honey-oak floors. Their search for bungalow-appropriate furniture proved fruitless and tiring, especially for Ed.

"One day Ed just threw up his hands and said, 'I'm not going to another furniture store. You're not going to find what you're looking for. Why don't I just make it?'"

### A Crafty Kind of Guy

"I thought, I'm a crafty kind of guy. If I can't find what I want, I'll just blow a bunch of money on power tools and make it myself," says Ed. "Every Saturday, I'd watch 'New Yankee Workshop' with Norm Abrams, and watch what he did. Then I'd go online, study plans, get a feel for the scale and the proportion, the hardware. At first I wasted a whole lot of expensive wood, but I got better at it, and I found I really enjoyed it."



was their own odyssey to appropriately dress their snug 1919 bungalow that led them to become the go-to source of Arts and Crafts home furnishings in the Denver area and to launch their own brand of hand-built furniture, MB Custom.

Ed's first project was a very small table that would hold the lamp Kate used for reading and needlework.

"So, he made it, and it was great. But it made the coffee table look bad. So then he had to make a coffee table."

Says Ed, "It kind of snowballed from there."

As he made piece after piece to complement their bungalow, they realized they had always been fond of the Arts and Crafts aesthetic, without knowing it. Kate had grown up in Cincinnati surrounded by Arts and Crafts pieces, some of which now reside in their snug bungalow. Ed began to show his work at Arts and Crafts fairs, and soon had plenty of commissions. But it wasn't until Kate was faced with another job transfer that they thought seriously about making a living at it.

"We loved our home," says Kate. "We didn't want to leave Denver."

They took a calculated risk and decided to stay. With Ed's woodworking prowess and marketing skills and Kate's considerable retail expertise, they thought they just might make a go of a retail store. Kate began calling similar shops they'd visited in California, asking about the nuts and bolts of how they started their shops.

"Most people were really giving," says Kate. Tom Gerardy, owner of Solana Beach's Craftsman Revival, was especially generous with his information; he offered to let the Sultans come out and work in his store for a weekend. The experience was invaluable. And Tom's generosity didn't end there.

"Tom pointed us toward many wonderful vendors. He even introduced us to several of them," says Kate. "He jump-started our business."

### A Dynamic Duo

The Sultans seem to have found the recipe for success. In a nutshell, Kate says, "Ed makes things pretty and I make things run."

"Kate and I are like two halves of the same person," says Ed. "Our skills complement each other. I'm terrible at math, and Kate is a natural. But she also does a lot



of the fireplace tile design that we do for our customers, because she loves puzzles and the challenge of fitting things together, which is something I don't enjoy. She'll look at this wall of tiles, and move them around and around until she gets a design she really likes."

One thing Ed doesn't like to do as a craftsman is repeat himself.

"Right now I'm working on several mantel projects, and those are kind of fun, because every one of them is different. I really don't want to make ten dining room chairs, all the same. But I do have a guy who can do that for our customers. I'm just not that guy."

"Ed just has always had a very creative mind," says Kate. "His sisters say they loved giving him presents because they never knew what the gifts would become when he took them apart. He has always loved a challenge."

It's been said that if you choose what you love, you'll never have to work a day in your life. The Sultans have taken this to heart. What started as a quest to make their own home a beautiful and welcoming place to be has turned into a passion for helping others find those unique pieces that make their homes their own. It's a vocation they both find enormously satisfying.

"I've always thought that when you walk into a home, you should be able to tell something about the owner by what you see," says Kate. "You ask about a vase or a painting, and they say, 'That's a funny story, we were on vacation...'—there's a resonance about each object that says something about the person. It's really a joy to work with people who love their homes."

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