

MANSION

Turning on the White

1. Mary Ann Schicketanz bought this “teardown hippie shack” for \$650,000 in 2012. 2. The living room after the initial \$50,000 redo to make it move-in ready. 3. The same room after the final overhaul. 4. An architect, Ms. Schicketanz is Austrian by birth. She moved to Carmel because she wanted neighbors—but also some privacy. 5. The red kitchen cabinets are from IKEA; she also saved money by using metal counters and by buying her Viking stove on eBay.



BALANCE SHEET

Back to Basics in a Millionaire’s Town

Using simple materials, an architect updates a rundown cottage in the pricey, touristy community of Carmel-by-the-Sea

BY NANCY KEATES

CARMEL-BY-THE-SEA used to be a quiet coastal village known for its bohemian artist’s colony and its simple, craftsman style cottages. Nowadays the town is swarming with tourists, and its narrow, wooded roads are jammed with upscale houses in a mishmash of styles with a median sales price of \$1.7 million.

That’s why when Mary Ann Schicketanz found what she describes as a “teardown hippie shack” for \$650,000 in 2012, she jumped at the chance to buy it—especially since it was on a fairly private lot on a quiet street up a hill from downtown. The 1,800-square-foot house, built in 1972, was deteriorating, and had been divided into two rental units. “It was so humble. It was like living in a tent,” says Ms. Schicketanz.

An architect, Ms. Schicketanz is Austrian by birth; she moved to the U.S. in 1987 with her American husband and settled for over two decades in a large, isolated house in Big Sur. After her two children grew up and moved out, Ms. Schicketanz, 58 and no longer married, was looking for a place for herself with neighbors—but also some privacy and a feeling of independence.

The first thing Ms. Schicketanz did was to rip out carpets, interior walls and fixtures, and live there on bare plywood floors while she took her time figuring out what changes to make. She spent about \$50,000 on this first step, which included removing the 1970s-era kitchen, with its old white refrigerator and plywood cabinets, and installing red kitchen cabi-

nets from IKEA for \$4,900.

Living in a stripped down space with all-white walls reminded her of the first home she’d ever designed for herself—the top floor of an old building in Tübingen, Germany, where she worked just after architecture school. “That was the hardest place to leave,” she says. “After 27 years, I kind of got back to where I’d begun.”

She then embarked on a seven month, \$400,000 remodel, turning the house into a 2,000-square-foot, two-level, two-bedroom, 2½-bathroom contemporary. The exterior is geometric, with gray concrete siding in rectangular panels and a front walkway made from teak. Inside the walls are painted a glossy white but retain a roughness from the grain of the wood underneath.

The furnishings are simple and sparse, with a beige B&B Italia sectional sofa, a black lacquered steel-and-glass book table and a side table by the German sculptor Lars Zech in the living room. She designed a long wood bench in the dining room using wood from the original house.

She saved money by using metal counters (\$950) instead of Caesars-stone (\$1,743) and by buying her Viking stove on eBay for \$3,600 instead of new (about \$1,000 more). She stripped bathrooms down to their base materials and put in IKEA vanities and cabinets.

She expanded the space of the house by connecting outdoor areas to the interior. Structurally, the biggest change involved moving the entryway from the middle of a courtyard into the kitchen and separating it from a front courtyard with a wall. She then created one large indoor/outdoor

room that stretches from the front courtyard, through the kitchen to the living room and then out a sliding-glass door to a porch in back that overlooks a wooded area.

Downstairs she made a former guest bedroom into a master bedroom and bathroom. She added light by getting rid of large fireplaces and replacing them with windows both upstairs and downstairs.

Ms. Schicketanz chose “green” materials, even if they were more expensive, to achieve a LEED gold certification. She picked a closed cell foam insulation, which can insulate as much as 50% better than traditional fiberglass insulation but also costs \$1.75 to \$3 a square foot compared with less than \$1 a square foot for fiberglass Batts. Downstairs she used

\$8 per-square-foot white concrete for the floors—although she says next time she’ll use resin because it is less expensive and retains its whiteness better than concrete, which has turned more into a vanilla color.

The most expensive mistake she made was to go all out on the sun deck, which is plumbed for an outdoor kitchen and has a sliver of a Pacific Ocean view. The cost was \$80,000 because she had to reframe the ceilings of the house to support the weight of the decking. She also had to expand the staircase, the amount of roof material and the siding used for the house. “If I’d done a better job of estimating the cost I probably would have decided against it,” she says.

A former dancer, Ms. Schicketanz switched to architecture after she fell

from a horse and broke her back when she was 18. She discovered that using space for buildings isn’t that different from using space in dance. She likens her Carmel renovation to a puzzle. “The idea that you could take this all apart and make something out of it. The idea that you could disassemble it and make something new. That’s what I loved,” she says.

BOTTOM LINE

Getting house into move-in condition
\$50,000

\$400,000 then spent on the remodel of which:

Roof deck
\$80,000

Plumbing and electrical
\$40,000

Hydronic heating system
\$16,000

Concrete board siding
\$22,000

Foundation improvements
\$26,000

Doors and windows
\$48,000

Reclaimed teak flooring
\$15,000

Concrete floor
\$8,000

Other
\$145,000

TOTAL
\$450,000