

HOME GUIDE

Scandinavian *at heart*



♥
An award-winning Kenwood remodel with a Swedish accent

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◀ A modest back porch includes a dining table but doesn't dominate the backyard. Photos courtesy TreHus

Swedish minimalism meets functionality in Kenwood

TREHUS TURNS A 'COMPLETE MESS' INTO AN AWARD-WINNING REMODEL

by Jahna Peloquin

The week of their wedding in 2012, Bjorn and Hanae Stansvik were hosting 11 friends and family members from their native countries of Sweden and Japan when the couple discovered a water leak on the third floor of their 1905 Kenwood home.

The Stansviks soon found that the leak was just the tip of the iceberg — there was water damage and mold on all four levels of the home, which they had purchased at the end of 2011. When they went in to repair the damage, they discovered the house's load-bearing joists were missing. Sometime during the 110-year-old history of the house, someone apparently cut through the joists to put in new plumbing.

"There was a big, gaping hole inside the house four-stories high," recalled Bjorn. "I don't know how the house was still standing by the time we bought it."

Initially, Bjorn hired five independent contractors to remodel the home — a decision he quickly came to regret.



▲ The compass rose tile in the new entryway is an element found in Swedish homes.

"It was a complete mess," he said. "They were fighting with each other and driving me nuts in the process."

That's when he reached out to Minneapolis-based architecture and

building firm TreHus. Founded by David Amundson in 1982, TreHus is known for its commitment to traditional craftsmanship and detail-oriented approach.



Swedish minimalism meets functionality in Kenwood

Blending in

The result was a more welcoming and functional home designed and constructed in a way that honors its historic character and blends the house into its surroundings. In 2016, TreHus won a number of awards for the project, including an award for best residential exterior remodel from BLEND, a Minneapolis group that promotes home remodeling and new construction projects that blend into the surrounding neighborhoods.

“When we came in, the house was torn apart and they were under a lot of stress — they had just had a baby,” recalled Amundson. (The couple now has three young children.) “I told them, ‘You don’t want to hear this, but we’re going to have to stop for a little bit and develop a plan.’ Everything had to be redone.”

Before any work could be done, the shag carpets (relics of a 1970s-era remodel), drywall and other debris had to be removed. Then the team moved onto its first challenge: fixing the convoluted floor plan of the main level.



▲ A Scandinavian heart motif appears throughout the remodeled house.



▲ Hanae Stansvik collaborated with Martha O'Hara Interiors on the remodeled home's interior design. Photos courtesy TreHus

“You had to climb up and down the stairs to get to the kitchen,” explained Hanae.

TreHus knocked out a section of the wall to create a doorway, and removed a half-bathroom to make room for a sunny breakfast nook with a built-in bench.

“There was not a square inch of the kitchen that was left the way it was,” said Bjorn.

The door of the old half-bathroom, which features a Scandinavian heart motif, was repurposed for the front baluster and used in several other places in the home. Original oak floors on the main level were refinished to help the space blend in with the rest of the remodel and the home's original elements, such as the fireplace and a curved-corner built-in cabinet.

A Minneapolis ‘stuga’

Hanae is credited with driving the aesthetic of the remodel, and worked with Martha O'Hara Interiors to select light and plumbing fixtures and wall colors for the home.

The second level contains the couple's master bedroom and bathroom, an office and a second bedroom with a half-bath. A pair of French doors opens to a room that is believed to have originally been a telephone room, which they divided into two rooms, turning one into a walk-in closet.

“We wanted it to reflect the period in which it was built. Simple, elegant and timeless.”

— Bjorn Stansvik

A closet that was too deep to be usable was outfitted with a washing machine and dryer, and the third-floor attic was renovated into two small bedrooms.

The home's basement, which was separated into a series of small rooms, was completely rebuilt. (“It looked like a dungeon when we first moved in,” said Bjorn.) They opened it up, adding a load-bearing wall in the middle with an entertainment area, bar and dining table on one side and a cedar closet and workshop on the other.

For the design of the basement, Hanae was inspired by a trip the couple made to Mount Hood, where they stayed in a “stuga,” or Swedish cottage. They incorporated hardwood, quarter-sawn white oak in larger planks for the floor and white-washed wood on the ceiling to give the space a similar look.



▲ The new front porch includes retractable screens.

New porch

One of the biggest undertakings of the remodel was the building of a new porch to give it a more attractive front façade and a stronger connection to the outdoors. A modern addition includes retractable screens that move up and down with the push of a button. The porch design incorporated space for a new, slightly larger entryway, where the Stansviks embedded an engraved compass rose tile — an element popular in many Swedish homes.

At the rear of the home, a new deck and staircase provided access to the exterior patio while creating space for a dining table — but leaves the home with a normal-sized backyard. They replaced the concrete with stone pavers to pick up on the brick of the home's chimney.

"We wanted a deck, but not for it to swallow the backyard," explained Bjorn. "It's not big, but it does everything you need it to do."

The Stansviks were conscientious about not adding too much square footage to its footprint. To better fit in with the neighborhood, they decided not to increase the footprint other than a six-foot entryway extension and the addition of the patio.

"We wanted it to reflect the period in which it was built," explained Bjorn. "Simple, elegant and timeless."

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