

TOP NORTHWEST ARCHITECTS

NORTHWEST HOME

JANUARY 2009

BEST OF HOME

OUR AREA'S
HOTTEST
ARCHITECTS
AND
CRAFTSPEOPLE

COOL COAT
RACKS

BEAUTIFUL
BUNGALOW
REDO

OPEN HOUSE:
MOD MARVEL IN
MADISON PARK

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Left: PLACE architects' rich remodeling of a 1960s Ralph Anderson original. Photo by Aaron S Britton.

Cover photo: This Bainbridge Island dwelling from David Vandervort Architects was carefully sited to preserve its forest setting. For more of the firm's homes, see page 14. Cover photo by Michael Moore.

RECREATING PLACE

PLACE merged old with new in the remodel of a 1960s Ralph Anderson modern classic by incorporating up-to-the-minute elements, such as sustainably harvested and reclaimed materials and sleek high-end finishes, that improve efficiency and livability while complementing the existing aesthetic. Natural light and views of the densely forested site are a theme throughout.



HEATHER JOHNSTON'S ENGAGING DESIGNS MAKE OLDER HOMES LIVE ANEW

BY JENNIFER SCHAEFER

Not long after earning a bachelor of fine arts degree in environmental design from New York's Parsons School of Design, Heather Johnston and a friend packed up their stuff and drove west, visiting multiple cities before deciding to settle in Seattle. "Seattle seemed as if it had what it needed to succeed," recalls Johnston. "It didn't have the same density as the East Coast, so growth management was still manageable." ■ Johnston worked for Seattle firms both large (including LMN Architects) and small before establishing PLACE architects in 1999. In August 2008, the firm saw the completion of its first PLACE House (placehouses.com), a new line of modern prefab houses created in partnership with builder DLH Inc. The single-family Kirkland house, complete with a detached garage and office, was assembled on-site over seven months from a kit of manufactured parts. Clients have

four stock house designs and an accessory building to choose from, each of which can be customized, with prices ranging from about \$300,000 to \$900,000. The purpose behind PLACE Houses, explains Johnston, is to offer people an easy and affordable modern green option. ■ Remodels make up about a third of PLACE's business, and Johnston credits the firm's ability to do them successfully with "a lot of research." She explains, "We carefully consider the detail of the rest of the house, as well as what's going on around it." ■ The firm's creative approach to remodeling is on full display in two recent addition projects. Johnston's remodeling riff for a drab Tacoma Craftsman resulted in a two-story dwelling that unexpectedly embraces a modern soul, while her addition of a 1,500-square-foot second floor to an original 1960s Ralph Anderson ranch is strikingly capped by a butterfly

shed roof. "You can't double up a ranch successfully, so we knew we couldn't match the addition to the existing structure," says Johnston. "Our solution for adding onto this mid-century modern house was to use a style I call 'new-century modern.' We incorporated natural materials, open spaces, a lot of light and a really strong connection to the outdoors." ■ Johnston is in the process of taking PLACE's thoughtful design global: she and her husband (who is Canadian) have moved into and are renovating a mid-century modern house in Horseshoe Bay, B.C., from which she will launch a Vancouver division of the firm. (Johnston will continue to accept Seattle clients as well.) ■ "Eventually, I'll get a studio and build it step-by-step, just like in Seattle," she says. "Vancouver and Seattle have a lot in common, and [PLACE Vancouver] will be a really fun way of generating conversation."



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- HEATHER JOHNSTON, FOUNDER
- YEAR FOUNDED: 1999
- WHAT INSPIRES JOHNSTON: "THE IDEA OF PUTTING NEW [STRUCTURES] INTO THE PHYSICAL WORLD WITHOUT OVERWHELMING IT."

Clockwise from top: An unassuming bungalow in Tacoma was given a vibrant modern look via industrial materials and bold splashes of color. An open floor plan makes the existing space feel more connected and spacious. The original plate-glass windows were replaced with new operable windows that let in fresh air, and new skylights and high operable windows fill the space with light.

