

# Getting to Know Your Neighbor - 921 East 25th

## Kelly Simmons and Keith Crane

Keith and Kelly bought their first home together in 1989 at 1102 Columbia. It was a striking 1916 Craftsman Bungalow that had been badly abused and needed extensive TLC. This first home was eventually on HHA's Home & Garden Tour in 1997. In 2000, they decided to design and build a warehouse-inspired residence

and purchased a double lot at 448 Columbia. This home was on the AIA and HHA's home tours. After five years, they made a decision to "live smaller" and once again hired their good friends and architects, John Rogers and Suzanne Labarthe, to design their current home.

Their search for the dirt took them to a location of the greater Heights they had not ventured before. Never timid of urban or transitional areas, they found a section of Sunset Heights sandwiched between North Main and Airline Drive (walking distance to the Farmer's Market) where many residents have lived all or most of their adult lives. The homes range from the 1920s to a few as late as 1950. Being very interested in modern mid-century architecture and design, they fell in love with a double lot where sat a brick storefront structure—originally a grocery store and most recently a machine shop—built in 1950. Another major attraction was the majestic 175-year-old Live Oak—now a registered Champion with the Texas Forestry Service—living on the site long before there were surrounding homes or roads. The storefront's former parking area would be perfect for their new home.



The first project was to gut and renovate the storefront, which is now home to Kelly's mother. She and her three dogs live in 1600 square feet of mostly open space and a small backyard for vegetable and fruit gardening. Two large unsightly metal buildings and a carport, and their concrete foundations, were then abated from the property, and between this prep work and the architectural plans, it was two years before construction began on the home.

Kelly and Keith's main criteria for the mid-century-inspired design would be a low maintenance and energy efficient one-story home under 2,500 square feet. With the help of their good friend, Bill Baldwin, Kelly acted as her own general contractor for the project, which took eight months.

Several large walls were specifically designed for hanging art, and the home is filled with playful artwork, antiques, and artisan furnishings. The foyer opens up to an open living, dining, and kitchen area that is perfect for entertaining large numbers. It is literally filled floor to ceiling with pieces collected over their last 22 years together—from fine art to Kelly's collection of 1960s Donald Duck rubber toys (which grew from one toy her mother had saved from her childhood). Just a few of their favorite local artists include Mark Bradford, Anthony Butkovich, John Henry Childs, Kermit Eisenhut, Betsy Evans, Rachel Hecker, Greg Kolanowski, Kim Kolanowski, Yu Cha





Pak, John Palmer, Patrick Palmer, Marieli Alberti Peterson, Chris Silkwood, Liz Conces Spencer, and Sandra York.

The metal roof is single-sloped and the slope is mimicked inside the master bedroom and living room, which also exposes three beautiful glu-lam support beams. Kelly and Keith hand-picked the mid-century designed light fixtures by Artemide, Italianaluce, and Flos Splugen Brau, a red fixture named “Double Octopus” by Autoban—a Turkish design house—over the dining table, and other vintage and found fixtures. One of their favorite finds is a flashing “Sputnik” sign light originating from a 1960s burger joint.

Keith created the base of their ten-foot, glass-topped dining table out of found industrial metal scrap and it is surrounded by black and white Eames bucket chairs. The kitchen uses chrome Metro shelving to showcase their collections of Fire King jadeite, Fiesta ware, and Shawnee Cornware. Kelly also collects Occupied Japan ceramic dog figurines and looks for the pieces that convey humor. Other furnishings include several vintage institutional metal pieces, including his and hers desks and chairs



and a guest bedroom set. Their love for all that is metal is evident inside and out with furnishings, art sculptures, and market finds.

The Hollywood-style pool and water feature can be seen from most rooms of the home through large fixed store-front windows and custom sliding glass doors. Surrounding the pool is a collection of fire-engine-red, vintage “motel” furniture and stainless steel sculptures by Mark Bradford. The colorful and art-filled master bedroom is their sanctuary where they hang out with the dogs, read, work on their laptops, and watch movies—all with a picturesque view of the pool and courtyard. Keith is a metal artist and vintage car enthusiast in his spare time and pays the bills with a job in business development for a French power giant. Kelly spends her time managing their home and three dogs and working as a volunteer for the Houston Heights Association—most recently as Co-Executive Chair for the Houston Heights Home & Garden Tour and Candlelight Dinner.



Keith serves as a Director on the HHA Board and for Interfaith CarePartners and

Kelly is Vice President of Fundraising and Sponsorship for the HHA. They both love animals and have rescued and placed many dogs into loving homes, as well as given homes to 11 beloved canines of their own over the years. Kelly has organized several fundraising galas and auctions for local animal welfare groups and they continue to support their favorite animal rescue groups now.

