

# Designers' delight

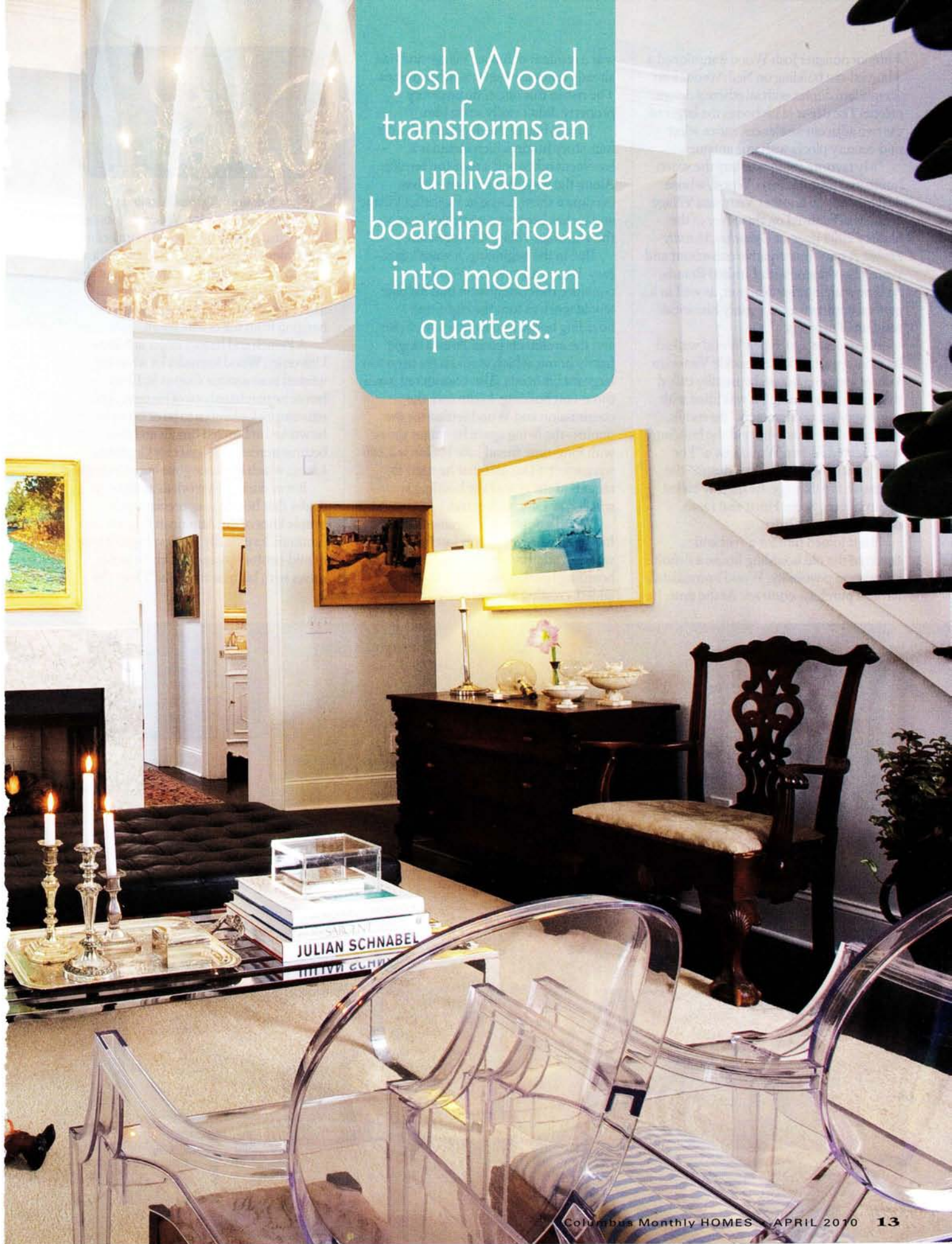
by Sherry Beck Paprocki

Photography by Michael A. Foley/Rycus Assoc.



Josh Wood sits comfortably in the living room of his Victorian Village home, where his ability to easily mix mid-century pieces with true antiques is apparent. An 1840 Empire chair situated near the stairway is just steps away from the Mies van der Rohe daybed.

Josh Wood  
transforms an  
unlivable  
boarding house  
into modern  
quarters.



Interior designer Josh Wood transitioned a burned-out building on Neil Avenue into a modern duplex with an ethereal design palette. The décor of his home, the larger of the two adjacent residences, mixes select mid-century pieces with true antiques.

"My favorite thing is to buy the worst house and fix it up," says Wood, whose design work on another Victorian Village home was featured on the cover of the January 2009 issue of *Columbus Monthly Homes*. A one-time creative consultant and visual coordinator with Limited Brands, he is now an interior designer, as well as a general contractor, on mainly historical, residential projects.

A few years ago, when Wood walked by what was then a ramshackle Victorian Village rooming house, he usually called the police. "By the end, it was filled with some very scary characters," he recalls. But then there was a fire and the building was vacated. When Wood saw a "For Sale" sign go up in the yard, despite the extensive fire damage, he quickly called his architects, Steve Hurtt and Dean Berlon of Urban Order.

Hurtt joined him for a visit and declared the old boarding house a definite renovation possibility. Wood immediately wrote a purchase contract. At the time, he

was a resident of Italian Village and had already renovated several other homes. The risk in this one-time unsavory property didn't easily scare him.

Today, half of the duplex is Wood's four-story home which includes a basement office and a roof-top terrace. Along the way, Wood's project has become a show house in Victorian Village and he has become a commissioner on the Victorian Village Commission.

But, in the beginning, it wasn't that easy. It took a while for Wood to convince the commission that his plan would work to turn the eight-unit boarding house into a duplex. First, he and the architects considered a single family home, which would have been too large for his needs. Also considered was a three-unit building. In the end, the commission and Wood settled for the duplex—the living space he shares today with long-time friend Julie Hallan is 2,100 square feet. (The unit that he rents to tenants at the rear of the building is smaller, at 1,400 square feet.)

Wood's duplex has regained the Italianate façade that was lost in the 1950s when an addition was created for the boarding house. Double doors were added, creating a grand entry.

It was during his work as an antique dealer that he began appreciating the simple lines of the American Empire furniture.

New oak flooring was installed throughout the interior. Wood points out the intricately coffered living room ceiling, describing the placement of a now-hidden 800-pound steel beam that was required to provide structural support. Visitors, instead, see only a dazzling chandelier hanging from the ornate room.

A French and history major at Miami University, Wood learned a lot when he worked in an antique shop in St. Louis before he purchased one of his own. After returning to Columbus to be closer to family, he worked at Limited Brands and then became a creative designer for Organized Living, which has since gone out of business.

It was during his work as an antique dealer that he began appreciating the simple lines of the American Empire furniture. Eventually, he developed a love of mid-century pieces, which he easily mixes with his true antiques. "I love the



Floor-to-ceiling shelving allows ample space for books and Wood's collection of white pottery.



The small master bathroom is well lit by a chandelier and sconces that are attached to the vanity mirror.

An elegant addition was made to Neil Avenue when architects Steve Hurtt and Dean Berlon, of UrbanOrder Architecture, fashioned this upscale duplex out of a run-down and burned-out boarding house. Homeowner Josh Wood resides in the front section of the building, and leases the rear section to tenants.



simple lines of the American Empire and how it mixes with modern pieces," he says.

His living room, in fact, is a testament to his ease of mixing it up. With a light décor enhanced with Ralph Lauren pale blue paint, he has successfully created a luxurious abode in limited spaces. His placement of diverse and interesting furnishings attests to his visual creativity.

An 1840 American Empire chair that most likely came from a South Carolina plantation home sets barely two feet from the Mies van der Rohe daybed. Two clear acrylic chairs, early Phillippe Starck designs, are enhanced by a chrome bench given to Wood by a friend in St. Louis. A baby grand piano is also nearby.

Wood continues to add to his expansive art collection, which includes works by Columbus artists, as well as Russian painters. It was not unusual during the construction process for his subcontractors to be told that electrical switches and other utilitarian items needed to be moved to make space for a piece of art.

The nearby kitchen and dining area is highlighted by sleek white aluminum cabinets from Lowe's. The modern décor was irresistible, says Wood, who had not yet attested a modern kitchen in any of his

prior renovations. White, Carrara marble is used as the countertop. A peninsula that divides the compact kitchen work space from the dining area also features the cooktop. Appliances are from KitchenAid.

Wood adds bookshelves to any renovation project he creates, and his own home is no exception. Ceiling-high shelving in the dining room provides ample space for many books, as well as a white pottery collection. Part of Wood's extensive collection of designer Dorothy Thorpe's glassware, also mid-century in style, is also displayed nearby.

The dining room table came from Grandview Mercantile and was shellacked in white, and then surrounded with GoodForm aluminum chairs. "They were an obsession since the first time I saw them in St. Louis," explains Wood.

On the lower level of the home is a cozy family room inhabited mainly by a television and West Elm sofa. Most of Wood's work time is spent in an adjoining, windowless office where he's usually so busy with design plans that he doesn't miss having windows.

On the second floor, Wood's master suite is painted the same Lauren color used on the floor below—although the

hues appear different depending on the influx of natural light. Dupioni silk drapes provide privacy in this urban setting. An adjoining bathroom is done mainly in white, and a sparkling chandelier seems to make it glisten. Two sconces are incorporated into the wall mirror, adding to the effect. A similar guest suite, currently inhabited by Hallan, is nearby.

On the top floor, a tiny sitting space situated under a peaked roof provides a quiet area for reading and study. Here, another sectional sofa by West Elm is placed just under a skylight. A narrow passageway displays various pieces of art and leads to the quaint roof-top terrace, which allows wondrous views of the Neil Avenue area, weather permitting.

For now, Wood is content focusing his design skills on a portfolio of rental properties that he owns with some partners. "It's the perfect size and I love the location," he says of his duplex. But, being the visionary that he is, he quickly follows with a laugh. "I'd pack up and move tomorrow for the right challenge," he says. ■

*Sherry Beck Paprocki is editor of Columbus Monthly Homes.*