

House painter Gage Academy of Art cofounder and artist Gary Faigin hangs his artwork throughout his home. A waterfall painting conceals a stereo cabinet built into the wall in the living room.



The Bifurcated House

A Seattle art school's founding family puts a modern face on a Ballard bungalow. **BY JESSICA VOELKER**

It's one of those Ballard blocks where perfectly pruned perennial gardens border wild and weedy hippie homes. Second in from the corner sits a three-story cube with steel balconies slung in front of the top two levels, red and pea-green patio furniture popping against the industrial gray facade. Approach it from the street, and you'd never know that the back half of the house is a 1,300-square-foot, periwinkle bungalow built in the 1920s, the sort of bungalow you see all over this North Seattle neighborhood.

In 1989, Pamela Belyea, an architect, decided to start a realist art school with her painter husband Gary Faigin. They called it the Gage Academy of Art. In Gage's early years, Belyea and five other employees administered the school out of the bungalow's cement basement, while upstairs her two small children played with a nanny. Twice the couple brought Gage back from the dead by refinancing their home, but in 2000 the academy went nonprofit and things got easier. Gage moved to a proper office space and the family spread out. But it was 10 more years before they created the addition that would more than double the size of their home.

Today, the front door of the addition leads into a mudroom, and directly to the right is Faigin's new painting studio, where tidy rows of well-washed brushes stand at the ready. A sliding door to the rear of the studio connects to the bungalow's original cellar. Across from the studio, a narrow flight of stairs leads up to the new dining room and living area on the second story of the addition. A patio facing the street extends outward like the helm of a ship, adding to the already vast and airy feel. What was once the bungalow's facade is now an interior wall. To mark the transition from the modern addition to the old house, architects Ray and Mary Johnston (johnstonarchitects.com), another husband-wife team, built what they refer to as a "gasket," a glass-lined breezeway. Through it, the former facade is plainly visible. "It's a very modern point of view, a wall that goes from inside to out," explains Mary. On this level, the breezeway



Thoroughly modern (Above) Patio furniture extends the bright interior palette to the outdoors. (Below) A glass breezeway shows off the original bungalow, a “very modern point of view” says architect Mary Johnston.

connects the addition and what used to be the bungalow’s front room.

Brass hinges still hang in the door frame to the bungalow’s old entrance. During the construction months, the family would pad over to their front door in their pajamas each morning and wave at the construction workers toiling a few feet away. For months after the addition was completed, they left a door hanging between the cube and the bungalow, not quite believing the two spaces were now one. “We called it the bifurcated house,” recalls Belyea.

Today the couple still sees the modern addition as a metaphor for the public side of their lives, a place to entertain neighbors and Gage school donors, while the old rooms in the bungalow form the backdrop for their private moments. The bungalow’s front room is now

a book-lined office with two desks, one for their son and the other for their 17-year-old Japanese exchange student (daughter Sarah is away at college). The kitchen, with its funky 1940s stove and light pink walls, contrasts mightily with the bold palette and stylishly lined but frankly utilitarian midcentury sofas (one blue, one green) in the new space. Belyea’s friends always ask her why she, an architect trained at Cooper Union in New York, the premier modernist architecture school in the world, didn’t design the addition herself. Architecture, she says, is not a weekend job. Plus there was the minefield of building the house your husband will live in. “I wanted to get out with my house *and* my marriage intact,” she said. Gage made it, too. The school celebrated its 20th anniversary last year. ✨

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