



Ode to Casablanca

An equestrian's design dream takes the reins

BY Jane Lightle. PHOTOS BY David Sutherland

In 2003 equestrian rider Tracy Turner built a ranch-style home and a barn to house five horses. Her heart was set on building in north Vancouver's Maplewood neighbourhood because it had all the ingredients for an equestrian lifestyle.

Maplewood is a quiet neighbourhood located on the east side of the Lynn Creek wrapping around the Seymour River. At the time, there were quite a number of horses on other properties in the vicinity, so Turner could enjoy riding the trails with her neighbours.

Over the years there were eventually fewer horses nearby and in 2010, on Thanksgiving Day, Turner's last remaining horse, Casablanca, passed away at the age of 20. Her barn stood empty. Soon after in 2011 her mother and two family dogs also died. With four deaths so close together, Turner was in mourning.

Turner's horse Casablanca, a Trakehner warmblood, played a big part in inspiring this passionate rider in what came next. Ready to turn the page in 2012, she decided to redesign the old barn into her own riverside cabana. Turner wanted to create an oasis with a suburban barn vibe. She wanted the style of the cabana to retain the

integrity of the original barn but take on a more adult focus without being too upscale. Turner's horse, Casablanca, whom she lovingly refers to as a "gentle spirit and treasure", would soon have a space where his legacy could live on.

Synthesis Design was the architectural company she contracted when she built the original home in 2003, and it was a positive experience for her. So, Turner headed to the company with hand drawings in 2011. She wanted an entertainment space, inside and out.

Synthesis Design's principal Curtis Krahn says, "Tracy was very much part of the creative process and had a clear direction with respect to her vision" says Krahn. "The project's lead designers, Ken Best and Kevin Li, worked directly with her, and they all constantly challenged each other to push the creative bounds. The result, in my mind, is a cohesive cabana that we are all proud of."

The main house and a three-car garage were already on the property. The barn became the riverside cabana and two pools were added. In previous years, the yard was horse-friendly with plenty of grass so they could roam and eat. It has now been



re-landscaped by landscape designer Lara Volgyesi from Urban Niche Design.

The barn was previously a workspace for Tracy Turner. Now it's recreational space for relaxing.

Steve Gladdis at the Greens Keeper Gardening Company also played a huge part in the outdoor renovation, doing all the softscape and hardscape landscaping. Adco Pools designed and installed the pools, where the paddocks were. The sand was used as drainage for landscaping so that there was very little materials waste. Turner installed a Swim Jet swim spa from Endless Pools.

The riverside cabana houses an entertainment space, spa room for acupuncture and treatments, laundry facilities and a change

room for the pools. Turner and her two cats enjoy the space now. She takes a short walk

from the main home and ends up in a whole new space with an amazing feel that she describes as airy, bright and happy.

Synthesis Design was enthusiastic about Turner's commitment to retain elements of the original structure as much as possible. "We often talk about the integrity of design at Synthesis Design," says Krahn. "The riverside cabana is full of integrity as we paid homage, as much as possible, to the original intent of the structure, and to keep the memory of Tracy's horse, Casablanca, alive."

ABOVE
Insulating the ceiling in the barn was challenging because the ceiling had to be insulated yet the rafters kept exposed.

TOP RIGHT
In keeping with the theme, the bathroom has a barn-style door.

RIGHT
The exterior siding keeps the integrity of the original barn look.



Pool Pleasure

A crucial part of the plan was to create a design where swimming became the main exercise at her riverside cabana. Initial plans provided a long thin pool (100 feet) enclosed with glass and numerous doors that could open during the warmer months. Unfortunately, Turner was maxed out on indoor space according to city bylaws to build a pool of this nature. She decided on two small pools in the end. One smaller pool, that she uses during the summer, contains a Swim Spa unit and hot tub and the other is saltwater and closed during winter months.

As soon as weather permits, the large pool is heated and used to swim laps. Both pools use ultraviolet rays to cleanse in place of chlorine. The setup offered a nice transition away from the long days of tending to the chores in the barn to refocusing on her swimming, something she spent doing hours each day in her earlier years — even with an Olympic trainer who had high hopes for her. Her parents referred to her as "the fish," and she also proudly notes that she is a Pisces, known water lovers.



As many elements as possible were saved from the barn, and re-integrated into the new space. Casablanca's stall sign still proudly hangs in the building. It is apparent that his spirit and the equestrian feel are infused in the space.

Sliding doors were worked in as media area cabinetry and salt licks became candleholders. The stall doors were lightly sanded, oiled and used as wainscoting, but Turner elected to keep the molasses stains and imperfections caused by the horses nibbling on them. Rusted hay mangers were made into light fixtures above the new island. The barn door hangs as a backdrop in the outdoor dining pavilion.

The main event of the renovation was





Turner elected to keep the molasses stains and imperfections caused by the horses nibbling on the doors.

keeping the pitch of the ceiling and leaving the wood exposed. Also, quite possibly the most challenging part of the renovation, because the ceiling had to be insulated and the rafters were exposed. In the end it was worth it, as it maintained more of a barn feel. Windows and skylights were added,

providing more light and making a better visual connection to adjacent pools, patios and grounds.

The colour palette is neutral, with the focus on wood. Her furniture is white and beige. The outdoor theme colour is green. Turner describes Maplewood as an established neighbourhood. She wanted the property to blend in with the neighbourhood.

With the renovation Turner has taken on a healthier lifestyle. She's also entertaining

more. To her the cabana feels "more like a summer cabin." Vegetable gardens have taken over the area that housed the horses.

Horses were Turner's dream, but they take a huge time commitment and now she has more free time. The barn was previously a workspace for her. Now it's recreational space for relaxing. She's created a space that has let her trade one love for another. Of course she misses Casablanca, but his spirit is alive in the riverside cabana. **HC**

