

# lookout home

## IN ACTION

Follow the progress of Old Town Home's kitchen renovation.

Renovating a dark, 1,300-square-foot ranch-style house isn't easy, no matter what you see on HGTV's "Property Brothers." So when Sherry Petersik's husband, John, suggested blogging about their DIY home-improvement efforts in Richmond, Va., she wasn't quite convinced. "He said that things would be frustrating and that a blog would be a way to vent," she says. "I thought it seemed like a lot of trouble though!"

Five years and more than 2,000 posts later, that somewhat perplexing notion has turned into a brilliant idea. The Petersiks' blog, *Young House Love* ([Younghouselove.com](http://Younghouselove.com)), now gets more than 5 million page views a month, serves as their full-time jobs and has spawned a photo-filled book, "Young House Love: 243 Ways to Paint, Craft, Update, and Show Your Home Some Love" (\$26, Artisan Books), as well as product deals with Benjamin Moore paints and a line of light fixtures at [Shadesoflight.com](http://Shadesoflight.com).

"In the beginning, we were writing things like, 'You know what I'm talking about, Mom,' because we were literally writing to our friends and family," Sherry Petersik says. "Now we reach people from all different countries and of all different ages. It's mind-boggling."

The Richmond-based Petersiks aren't the only ones who feel compelled to share every time they pick up a power tool or paintbrush. Plenty of other bloggers use their own homes as muse, writing about all their renovation and decorating triumphs and tragedies. And there's no shortage of readers who want to follow each project or gut job one strip of wallpaper or subway tile at a time.

"Here's this private space — someone's home — that's now public," says Scott R. Talan, an assistant professor in the School of Communication at American University. "When else can you look in someone's home? You would have to be there and be invited in."



1



2



3

1, 2: COURTESY OLDTOWNHOME.COM; 3: FAR RIGHT: JASON HORNICK/FOR EXPRESS

# Something to Blog Home About

Modern nesters fix up their pads — and share all the details online

BE THEIR GUEST!

Want more? Check out these other blogs that take readers inside the writers' homes. B.L.

**Door Sixteen**

[DOORSIXTEEN.COM](http://DOORSIXTEEN.COM)

Follows the renovation of an 1891 Victorian rowhouse in Newburgh, N.Y.



Alex and Wendy Santantonio (shown with pup Lulu) blog about rehabbing their Alexandria Victorian house at [Oldtownhome.com](http://Oldtownhome.com). Over the years, it's shown them take their kitchen from dingy (1) to updated (2) and, finally, to upscale-appliance dreamy (3).

# home lookout

## Madison Square Home

MADISON SQUARE HOME.COM

Two married architects use iPhone photos to document their rehab of an 1862 Philadelphia home.

## My Old Country House

MYOLDCOUNTRYHOUSE.BLOGSPOT.COM

Shares the challenges and charms of inhabiting a colorful, art-filled circa-1880 Virginia home.

## Rambling Renovators

RAMBLINGRENOVATORS.BLOGSPOT.CA

Tracks the redo projects undertaken by the owners of a 1950s-era semi-detached house in Toronto.

Bloggers invite the online world into their homes for a variety of reasons. Ohio-based Dana Miller started her blog, House\*Tweaking (Housetweaking.com), because, "I had all these ideas swirling around in my head that were keeping me up at night," she says. "My husband was getting tired of me telling him my ideas, so I started writing a blog just to get them out of my head."

After adding their personal style to a builder spec home, Miller and her husband have now moved on to a complete redo of a 1950s ranch they lovingly call "The Underdog." Writing the blog helps them stay on track with their transformation.

"It keeps us motivated to keep going on our house," Miller says. "Otherwise, I think by now we would have fallen into 'Let's stop and take a break,' and that break turns into a year and we haven't done anything."

For Old Town Alexandria residents Wendy and Alex Santantonio, their blog, Old Town Home (Oldtownhome.com), allows them to share their renovation exploits with friends, family and interested readers. It also promotes their appreciation of their late 19th-century residence and others like it.

"Alex and I are both incredibly passionate about the restoration of historic properties," Wendy Santantonio says. "When you purchase an old home, you purchase a piece of history, and it's your responsibility to protect and improve upon that piece of history. By sharing our love of our old home and the care with which we treat it, we hope to help grow a community of like-minded people."

Local interior designer Annie Elliott, who blogs about her work and her own home at Bossy Color Blog (Blog.bossycolor.com), has found that writing about her own decorating problem has helped her find solutions. When, after seven attempts, she still couldn't perfect her living room paint color, she asked readers of her blog for help.

"Some people thought I was crazy

blogging about my own living room," she says. "But I wanted to 'crack the code,' and blogging about it really helped me sort it out."

And mistakes and major disasters can serve as some of the best subject matter. "Mishaps are, in some ways, our favorite posts to write," Wendy Santantonio says. "We don't want to sugarcoat the renovation process. One of our pet peeves is how easy they make it look on TV. In real life, it's a lot of hard work. Disagreements take place; you run into snags. Those moments that don't go so smoothly are the times we get the most feedback."

But a couple of iPhone photos and a few hastily written sentences about choosing countertops or ripping up carpeting won't draw readers who'll offer advice, words of encouragement or praise for a job well done. It takes

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— WENDY SANTANTONIO, DIY BLOGGER, OLDTOWNHOME.COM

compelling and useful content written in a personal voice to build a following — and lots of high-quality pictures. This means showing not just the before and after but the during as well, stopping to pick up the camera in the midst of installing a pedestal sink or changing out a light fixture, even if you're wearing dirty sweats.

"There are aspects of blogging that are busywork to me," Sherry Petersik says. "Like sizing and uploading pictures — I could never do it again and I wouldn't miss it. But we're all in this DIY club together, telling each other what works and what doesn't. And the price for admission to that club is blogging. I really think our lives would feel incomplete now if we ever did a project and didn't talk about it. We would be dying to tell people about it."

BETH LUBERECKI (FOR EXPRESS)

## ON DYING LOVE



Richmond, Va., couple Sherry and John Petersik chronicle their DIY efforts of two mid-century homes via their popular blog [Younghouselove.com](http://Younghouselove.com). Their new book by

the same title (\$26, Artisan Books) uses photos, diagrams and easy instructions to detail such projects as installing tin-tile backsplashes, re-covering lamp shades, creating cheap-yet-cool artwork and growing "plants that probably won't die immediately."

### DO THIS: Paint a Headboard On the Wall

**1** Pick up a quart of paint. Use painter's tape and a level to tape off a simple rectangle on the wall behind your bed. (Make it the same width as your mattress, so it feels balanced, and about 32 inches tall for a standard look.)

**2** Fill in the rectangle with your new hue using a paintbrush or a small

foam roller. Two or three coats should do the trick.

**3** Remove the tape right away (before the last coat of paint dries for the cleanest result) and celebrate your faux headboard with a nap on the sofa while it dries.

**Note:** You can sketch a more ornate headboard shape on a giant piece



KIP DAWKINS

of cardboard (or a template created by taping card stock or poster board together). Then trace that curvy or geometric shape onto the wall and carefully outline it with painter's tape, or paint the edge with a small paintbrush. Then just fill it in.

Adapted from "Young House Love" by Sherry and John Petersik (\$26, Artisan Books)

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SAT 2	<b>MOON/BOUNCE DANCING AFFAIR \$7</b>

### UPCOMING SHOWS

2/7- **BROWN BIRD**, 2/8- **THE MARDI GRAS CARNIVALE: JONNY GRAVE & THE TOMBSTONES**, 2/9- **MIX-TAPE**, 2/12- **MICE PARADE**, 2/13- **HILLY EYE**, 2/15- **TEXAS IS THE REASON**, 2/17- **THE MAC-CABEES**, 1/19- **NICO VEGA**, 2/20- **THE SEA LIFE**, 2/26- **BENJAMIN FRANCIS LEFTWICH**, 3/5- **THE RUBY SUNS**, 2/8- **KEPONE**

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