

# MAKEOVER ANNIE SELKE

PART I

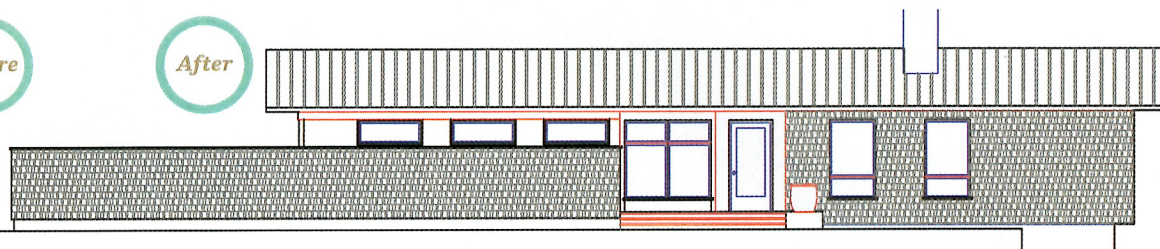
## The Inspiration

Pine Cone Hill's Annie Selke makes a big life change. In this yearlong series, she'll share her experience as she renovates a 1960 ranch house.

Interview by  
DAN SHAW



Before



After

### Why did you sell your beloved house in the Berkshires?

The short answer: I'm getting divorced; my daughter, Charlotte, is away at school; and I didn't need an eight-bedroom house.

### And the long answer?

I knew I had to move after watching *Grey Gardens* on HBO. I thought, 'That could be me one day, surrounded by my dogs and piles of old magazines, with raccoons living in the empty rooms.'

### What were you looking for in your next house?

I wanted something much smaller, with much less upkeep. And I wanted to be closer to town. Lenox, Massachusetts, is a lovely place. I grew up here, and my mother lives down the street from my new house.

### Didn't it scare you to make such a big change?

It's healthy to move. You have to confront your life. I realized I didn't want to be tied down by a big house anymore. And even though I'm very attached to stuff, I wanted to drastically pare down. It took about three months to get rid of things. *You've created a lifestyle brand based on a very feminine, colorful cottage style. Does this suggest that Pine Cone Hill is headed in a new direction?*

We're not as country as we used to be. We've gotten cleaner and cleaner. I'm tired of ruffles and bed skirts.

### But why a 1960 ranch house?

Watching *Mad Men* put me in an early '60s frame of mind. I was born in 1963, so I decided to immerse myself in the era of my birth. I would drive by and feel myself there. When I walked up to the front door, I knew. I thought, 'This is kind of sassy. This will be my chance for loft living.'

### Did you visualize right away how you'd renovate?

I expected that it would have to be gutted, and I imagined turning two bedrooms into a fabulous master suite, but I didn't really know what was possible—like taking down a wall and putting up a steel retaining beam. When my contractor, Lou Boxer, first saw the house, he thought it was a teardown. But then he discovered it was actually well built. And when I sent pictures to my friend John Gilmer, an architect in Palm Springs, he said, 'We can work with that.' He understands the '60s vernacular. He lives it. He said the house would sing if I changed the roof.

### Change it how?

Raise it. I would have never thought of that. I don't think of putting big holes in things.



1. Annie checks architect John Gilmer's plans for her ranch house, which had to be gutted. 2. The 1887 Berkshires house she sold. 3. The roofline of "Desert Modernist" Albert Frey's 1963 Palm Springs house inspired the new roof.

## GET IT RIGHT

### • HIRE AN ORGANIZER

Moving from a 5,400-square-foot house to an 1,800-square-foot one meant Annie had to divest herself of many possessions. She hired a professional organizer, Judy Moss. "She was opinionated, and I like opinionated people," says Annie. "She said, 'You have enough bedding for 40 bedrooms. Get rid of it.' She transformed me from being a pack rat. You get to the point where you don't want anything new."

### • OUTSOURCE YOUR TAG SALE

Annie didn't want to watch people haggle over things she had lovingly collected, so she hired Sawyer Antiques ([sawyerantiques.com](http://sawyerantiques.com)) to conduct an estate sale and went on vacation for a week with her daughter. She donated everything that didn't sell to the Berkshire Immigrant Center.

### • DON'T HOUSE-HUNT ALONE

Annie's architect, John Gilmer, was always available via e-mail to look at pictures of houses she considered buying: "He thinks on a three-dimensional scale, and I don't," she says.

### • KNOW WHAT'S NON-NEGOTIABLE

Annie needed a house with land that could be fenced in so her three Clumber spaniels—Dash, Daisy, and Emmet—could play outside on their own, as well as a mudroom where they could be cleaned: "We took down two trees the day we closed because they made the house so dark. Then I realized those were the trees that were going to hide my dog fence. So now I'm desperately searching for the perfect fence." \*

NEXT MONTH: THE ROOF AND FLOOR PLAN