

pg 4



VOLUME IX, ISSUE 25

SANTA MONICA

# Mirror

REFLECTING THE CONCERNS OF THE COMMUNITY

pg 17



NOVEMBER 29 - DECEMBER 5, 2007

# Venice Eco Beach Cottages

Lynne Bronstein  
*Mirror Staff Writer*

The Venice Beach Eco Cottages are now open for rental. These three small houses at 447 Grand Boulevard, built in 1922, have been remodeled by husband and wife entrepreneurs Karel Samson and Cynthia Foster, with interior design by artist Kelly LaPlante. They are not only decorative, each in a different way, but are totally "green" in both maintenance and in the materials used to remodel and decorate the cottages.

Foster and Samson live in a bungalow next door to their project. She is an artist and has worked in the entertainment industry. He is an environmental economist who teaches sustainable entrepreneurship at universities in the Netherlands and across the U.S. They had been looking for a property to remodel and had "eyeballed" the cottages, but didn't think they would be available.

"We looked at a lot of properties around Venice," says Foster. "After about three months of looking and not finding what we wanted, we asked Coco [Lopez of Bulldog Realty] if she would contact the owners and see if they were interested. The very next day we got a note in the mail from our landlady saying that she'd heard the guy next door was going to be putting his cottages up for sale. They actually never even got on the market. We had Coco contact him, made the deal directly, and that's how we got them."

The three houses share the lot, linked by decks made from composite recycled wood, and surrounded by a picket fence made from FSC-certified Douglas Fir. One of the decks features an energy-efficient hot tub built from recycled milk jugs. The exterior landscaping is drought-resistant and uses hardscaping made from broken concrete. And the cottages are solar-powered, with 12 solar panels on the roofs.

The cottages share the same footprint:

a small living room, kitchen-dining area, bedroom and full bathroom. Each cottage has a theme design. "Papa Hemingway" features dark wood furniture and paneling, Hoosier cabinets in the kitchen, warm brown and subdued blue colors. "Aunt Zoe's Place," has an American 1940s ambience with vintage movie posters, and objets d'art, while "Le Bebe" has a doll-house feel, candy colors, and a touch of French style.

All sorts of things that one might normally discard were turned into fixtures or materials. "Normally you tear an old house down and use new wood," says Samson. He points to the wall paneling and adds: "But this is all re-used wood."

Likewise, the bathrooms feature old farm sinks that have been refinished, as are the vintage claw-foot bathtubs. The bathroom floors are made of cork from old wine bottles. The mantles for the gas-burning fireplaces are hewn from the branches of a

eucalyptus growing outside the property.

One unique item of furniture at the "Le Bebe" cottage is a chair made from a large birdcage, painted red, fitted out with a red seating cushion.

Not everything is old. The kitchen appliances are state of the art – but energy efficient. And behind the framed pictures above the fireplaces, panels conceal widescreen home theatre systems with TV, Ipod, and WiFi.

Foster and Samson are looking to offer guests the traditions and graces of Venice culture. The paintings decorating the cottages are by local artists and are for sale. Pets are welcome (organic homemade treats are provided), and three percent of gross revenues will go to charities selected by guests from a provided list.

The Venice Beach Eco Cottages are available for weekly rentals, private events, and location shoots beginning in December 2007. For information, go to [venice-beachecocottages.com](http://venice-beachecocottages.com) or call 866.802.3110.

---

They are not only decorative, each in a different way, but are totally "green" in both maintenance and in the materials used

---