

Portlandia Bungalow: That's My House (Oregon Home Magazine Dec/Jan 2012)

By Margaret Foley (photography by Eric Naslund)

At 7 a.m. on a hot September morning, Frankeyh Legarza and Lauren Sheets are straightening up while their 1-year-old son, Stanley, plays on the floor. "We keep our house organized," says Legarza. "The biggest project in getting ready for today was cleaning the yard."



Above: Homeowner (and Fred Armisen lookalike) Frankeyh Legarza is ready for his home's closeup. "The shoot was fun," he says. "I was proud that my home was used as a set."

Their usually quiet Northeast Portland street is busy. Signs restrict parking, and several trucks are pulling up to the house. Ben Lipsey, the location scout for *Portlandia*, the Independent Film Channel comedy series starring Carrie Brownstein and Fred Armisen, greets people as they report for work.

Sheets and Legarza’s blue, one-story bungalow is making its television debut as the location for two Portlandia sketches: one shot around the backyard firepit, and one shot inside that involves a case of mistaken identity. “I think they chose our house because they wanted a home and yard that looked natural,” says Sheets.

Sheets dances with the Detail Dance Company, and Legarza is an artist and musician. Their home has an eclectic look. Legarza’s colorful paintings hang on the walls. A bookshelf holds vinyl records, and a wooden case stores cassette tapes. Small cowboy boots top the piano. Reading material covers the eating bar, and a flat sculpture with white roses hangs above an entry. A collection of owl art livens the space next to the front door. “A lot of our things are from garage and estate sales,” says Sheets. “I love to find items and make collections.”

Lipsey, a Portland resident, scouted nearly 100 houses to find the 20 used as locations. Lipsey, who is also a musician and plays lead guitar for the Verner Pantons, a Portland-based band, met Legarza through another musician. “Frankyeh said he had a large back yard, and I needed to find one,”



Above: Frankeyh Legarza and Lauren Sheets with their 1-year-old son, Stanley.

Lipsey says. “When I took the director to see the yard, he instantly fell in love with their house. We needed a house that wasn’t modern or expensive-

looking — just an average place with a real aesthetic.”



Left: Production assistant Daniel Baker covers carpet for protection. *Right:* Kyle LeMire, stage manager, and Josh Smith, production assistant, review the day's schedule.

Before the day's shooting starts around 9:30 a.m., 15 to 20 people prep the house by photographing it, setting up equipment, arranging props and taping floors, walls and corners. "Sometimes we try to prep a house the night before," says Lipsey. "Because of baby Stanley, we prepped in the morning with a few more hands than usual."

Some of Sheets and Legarza's possessions, including a wine bottle decorated with colorful plastic balls, a tapestry with bucks on it and an old boat that was placed in the front yard were used as props, and the art department left Legarza's work on the walls for background. "I was happy that my art got to stay up for the shoot," says Legarza. "These pieces are some of my older paintings that I like a lot."

Having a television series shot in your home also gives you the chance to interact with the show's stars. "My cousin and his wife stopped by and Fred Armisen could tell from talking to her that she spoke Spanish," says Sheets. "His mother is from Venezuela, so he immediately started speaking Spanish with her."

The hardest part about having their home used in the shoot was not having people there all day but keeping track of the dog, Fusilli. "The shoot was a lot of fun," says Legarza. "There were really no hassles, except that Fusilli always wanted to be around the action."

While Sheets and Legarza were able to watch a lot of the filming, for noise reasons, they were required to stay outside during some of the interior scenes. They will discover what happens when that episode airs. Season 2

begins in January. “I’m looking forward to it,” says Sheets. “I’m curious to see how our house fit the show’s vision.”