



BRIGHT SPOT

A PAIR OF LOS ANGELES CREATIVES TEAMS UP WITH AN ALL-STAR CAST TO TURN THEIR VINTAGE HOUSE INTO A MODERN FAMILY HOME.

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INTERIOR DESIGN / KATHRYN M. IRELAND, KATHRYN M. IRELAND
ARCHITECTURE / ODOM STAMPS, STAMPS & STAMPS
LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE / STEPHEN BLOCK, INNER GARDENS
HOME BUILDER / DONALD L. HANOVER, HANOVER BUILDERS INC.



For years, homeowners Stephen and Julie Block had had their eyes on a vintage house in Los Angeles. Its appeal lay in its Spanish Colonial Revival style, its garden and its location within a prized school district. Once it came back on the market, recalls Stephen, “We had to compete against three other bids but our resolve to buy the home was unwavering,” and the residence was finally theirs.

The couple was undeterred by the restoration work it required and knew they could rely not only on their own talents (Stephen is the owner of Inner Gardens and has created some of the city’s most beautiful landscapes, while Julie is a stylist and costume designer for television) but also on help from longtime friends like designer Kathryn M. Ireland. “I love designing houses,” she says remembering Stephen’s proposal. “We have similar styles, and I really like his sensibility. Plus, he loves color.” The couple also brought on residential designer and restoration specialist Odom

Stamps and general contractor Donald L. Hanover. “We had original elements like the front doors and hardware, but the house really was just a mess,” says Stephen.

So, the design team restored what they could and added what they needed. “Only the entry has remained the same. Its beautiful homage is what attracted us to begin with—the original doors and railings,” says Julie. Adds Stamps: “The house had great bones, but we wanted to be respectful. We added on from the middle to the back of the house, opening up spaces and enclosing an upstairs balcony. Stephen had great ideas and we could riff off each other.” They strove to make the new kitchen and the addition of some 1,500 square feet feel as if it had always been there. “I love extrapolating ideas from the original architecture,” says the residential designer, noting their efforts to duplicate doors and hardware and to bring in new tile surfaces in keeping with the history of the home.

Opposite: In the entryway to Stephen and Julie Block’s 1920s Los Angeles home stands an antique Spanish table topped with a hand-painted Moroccan bowl and a vase for seasonal blooms. The painting, *La Robe 2*, is by French artist Jean-Claude Hautin.

Below: The couple called on designer and longtime friend Kathryn M. Ireland to enliven the home with furnishings and textiles. In the family room, a selection of Ireland’s patterned fabrics cover pillows for the window seat and Minotti sofa, complementing the space’s paisley draperies. The 1970s Eames lounge chair and ottoman is upholstered with Otis Textiles. The coffee table is by Ireland.





Above: In the dining room, a Julian Chichester table pairs with antique French dining chairs. Above the table is a 1920s Spanish chandelier from Revival Antiques. Ireland's suzani drapery fabric complements a framed collection of pressed flowers.

Opposite: An intimate patio adjoins the dining room. There, Stephen, a landscape designer and owner of Inner Gardens, placed vintage dining chairs around a metal-and-polished-concrete table from his signature collection. The antique urns and planters that adorn the space are also from Inner Gardens.



As part of the home's renovation, residential designer Odom Stamps enclosed a balcony to create a hallway to the master bedroom. A painting by Corey Daniels hangs above antique French pottery vessels. The vintage Kurdish runner is from Amadi Carpets.



Above: A pair of sofas upholstered in Otis Textiles anchors the living room. Antique pieces include the angel by the fireplace and the grave marker mounted above the Chinese chair. The vintage rug is from Amadi Carpets.

Left: In a corner of the living room is a 1920s cast-iron table from Inner Gardens topped with the Blocks' collection of objets d'art, such as the Song dynasty two-handled jar, Indonesian mask and Anduze vase. The painting is by Corey Daniels.

An antique Chinese screen Stephen purchased from a photography studio where it was used as a backdrop now occupies a corner of the master bedroom. The chair is upholstered in an Ireland stripe. The drapery fabric is also from Ireland's collection.



The homeowners also incorporated some elements from their former house into the new dwelling. “We made sure to keep all the vintage lighting we’d found,” Stephen shares. Other items they bought and lived with for a while—sometimes keeping them, like the living room sofas, and sometimes letting them go, like an antique dining table they replaced with a more contemporary design. And that’s the very ethos of this house: It’s a family home that must evolve and adapt to the changing needs of the Blocks and their three daughters.

“We wanted it set up casually,” says Stephen of the interiors, highlighting the family room as a prime example of the feel they wanted to create. With its French doors, comfy sofa, Arts and Crafts chandelier—one of Julie’s finds on an excursion in Pasadena—bookcases and television, it’s really where the family lives. The nearby living room is a bit more formal with a pair of neutral-hued sofas, vintage pottery and antiques like the carved angel Bountiful in

Venice (in a twist of fate, the owner introduced Stephen to Julie). “We are big supporters of each others likes and style sensibilities,” says Julie. “My taste is always evolving. It currently leans toward modern while Stephen’s is more primitive. We overlap like a Venn diagram.” For his part, Stephen is responsible for the Asian pieces dotted throughout the house. “That’s all me!” he says excitedly, and recounts a trip to China in 1996 that opened his eyes to ancient work, especially ceramics.

And while the Blocks’ tastes might vary, they converge at a certain point—specifically at Ireland’s colorful, patterned textiles. “I brought Kathryn in because we’ve been friends for years—she’s just crazy good, generous and fabulous,” says Stephen. “I think we met doing a show house 15 years ago,” Ireland says. “Stephen’s so easy to work with. He’ll be planting and I’ll be hanging curtains—we roll up our sleeves,” she says. The Blocks share Ireland’s appreciation for comfort and color, so it’s the designer’s cheerful prints

The master bedroom features a painting of Provence that Stephen found while traveling in France. The coverlet and pillows are Ireland’s textile designs while the red velvet pillow is vintage.



Left: Lush plantings of ligularia and sculptural agave surround a 1970s concrete fountain by German artist George Wilhelm Marquardt. Growing above them are staghorn ferns.

Below: At the home's entrance is an antique iron table with a Texas shellstone top from Inner Gardens and a rare garland of cast-iron roses. The wrought-iron lantern is original to the house.



that fill nearly every room in the house. “Working with Kathryn is always a blast,” says Julie, adding that they often brainstorm over dinner. A mood-lifting range of yellows, greens and reds—Ireland’s signature color—can be seen on upholstered pieces, throw pillows and curtains. “You have to have window treatments!” Ireland says.

The colorful textiles continue upstairs in the girls’ rooms and in the couple’s master suite (part of the addition accessed by the now-enclosed balcony, which Stephen is currently eyeing as a conservatory). Pink hues dominate the space, which includes a custom bed from Indigo Seas and a bathroom fitted with a Barbara Barry vanity.

Stephen, not surprisingly, focused on the garden, which now boasts some of his favorite plantings: camellias, hydrangeas, staghorn ferns, agaves, philodendrons and Eden roses. Tall hedges screen the property and gravel walkways remind him of trips to Europe. “I love the crunch sound,” he says. There are antiques but also sentimental pieces, like a trio of heart-shaped pavers he discovered in Texas that reminded him of his daughters. “This house is eclectic,” he says, “but it’s heartfelt.” **■**



The master bedroom’s balcony overlooks the pool, where Stephen placed a 1920s French vessel. Floral-patterned pillows on the wood loungers pick up the blue hydrangeas around the 1880s cast-iron putto.