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Elle Decor

Ufficio Stampa La Cividina
0432 1746101
pr@carterandbennett.com

THIS STUNNING SMALL SPACE RENOVATION PROVES YOU CAN PROBLEM-SOLVE IN STYLE

Smart solutions and a symphony of materials define this chic Los Angeles bungalow designed by LAUN.



Los Angeles is a city preoccupied by the new, the now, and the next. So when homeowners and Eastside residents Satya Bhabha, an actor and director whose recent credits include HBO's *Love Life*, and Carter Batsell, an Apple executive, decided that they wanted to balance the city's more zeitgeisty, ephemeral inclinations with a space that felt grounded—and preferably a bit more secluded than their old townhouse on a busy thoroughfare—they paradoxically headed for the hills.

At the suggestion of a friend, they enlisted the architect and designer Rachel Bullock of local studio [LAUN](#) and together found and identified the potential in the Silver Lake bungalow the couple now calls home. Originally built in 1939, the home had a damningly narrow footprint but great views of the L.A. skyline below. Bullock immediately set about adding over 500 square feet of living space to the building by extending the rear of the two-story house on both levels; she also replaced an existing back deck with one twice its size.

The second major structural change was relocating the stairs. Originally, the split-level house had two separate staircases—one directly across from the front door that offered a steep trek down to the garden level (“It was definitely not up to code,” says Bullock); the other in the living room, leading to the upper-level guest suites above the garage. Bullock removed the first entirely and replaced the second with a reoriented staircase that unites both upper and lower levels and introduces a landing that allows for internal access to the garage, all hidden from view by a half-height curved wall.

In the reconfigured living room on the main level, Bullock proposed partitioning the space with a multifunctional box that would allow for privacy without the need for three completely distinct rooms. Bhabha glommed onto the unique design solution, spurred on by his background in immersive theater: “It evolved into this discussion of mass and void, and where we were putting an object and where we

were leaving space,” he says. “I would be in the space and I would put up cardboard or plywood and ask, If that wall is there, how does it feel? What’s the difference if I move it back six inches? You can have these big ideas, but then it’s like, how do we need it to function?”

But the project’s loftier talking points weren’t confined, as it were, to the implementation of the lacquered box, though it took many iterations to arrive at that specific shade of green: The kitchen received a monolithic pink marble island and unlacquered custom brass cabinetry, as well. “We worked really hard to get that brass in there,” says Bullock, who began design work on the property in May 2019. “We were far enough ahead so that all of the major stuff was already ordered before the supply chain issues hit.”

The color and materials story continues below at the garden level, where the overhang from the upper deck makes the lower-ceilinged rooms feel cozier and “a little mystical,” per Bhabha. “It’s a lot more saturated downstairs because it’s their private space,” notes Bullock. “It’s all-enveloping, whereas upstairs we kept the background sparse for poppy moments.”

Spatial noise was also kept to a minimum—there is no lip on the kitchen counter, for instance, nor nosing on the tread of the stairs—so that nothing would distract from the purity of the sight lines throughout.

Bhabha and Batsell worked together on furnishing the space, choosing new pieces that would tie everything together—a La Cividina sofa in a pink Kvadrat fabric to nod to the marble kitchen island, a brass bed frame to tie in with the sconces. But for all of the obsession with finishes, the home isn’t overly precious: In fact, the living room looks out onto the new cumaru wood deck, which provides a generous new expanse of entertaining space for guests who might never realize how perfectly the imported door handles complement the custom footing of the staircase landing.

But it's sweating the small stuff that makes this collaboration between designer and homeowner sing. Turns out that the hills are alive, as ever, with the sound of music.



LIVING ROOM In the living room, the pink sofa is by [La Cividina](#), upholstered in [Kvadrat](#) Divina MD. The light is by Michael Anastassiades for [FLOS](#). The rug is from Anthropologie. The floors are white oak from [Hurst Hardwoods](#), sealed with [Rubio Monocoat](#). Ye Rin Mok