

FEBRUARY 2011

House Beautiful

makeovers!

problems
solved

LIVING ROOM
BEFORE & AFTER
(DO IT IN A DAY!)



REFRESH
YOUR SOFA
(WITH PILLOWS!)



NEW

TYLER FLORENCE *in the* KITCHEN

\$4.99



Interior design by
ALEXANDRA ANGLE

Interview by
DAVID A. KEEPS

Photographs by
VICTORIA PEARSON

LIGHT & BRIGHT

MAKEOVER!

PROBLEM

- TEXTURED DRYWALL
- PLASTIC INDOOR SHUTTERS
- ENCLOSED STAIRWELL

SOLVED

- WHITE WALLS AND FLOORS
- SWEDISH STYLE
- TRADITIONAL BANISTERS

In the living room of a Cape Cod-style cottage on a canal in Venice, California, designer Alexandra Angle freely mixed checks and stripes with pillows by Peter Dunham. She added a Country Swedish Gripsholm armchair and a primitive Queen Anne-style tea table with a bench of her own design that complements both styles. OPPOSITE: Once enclosed by drywall, the new staircase is a streamlined take on traditional railings. An enlarged window lets sunlight in to play on the blue Egyptian glass chandelier from Liza Sherman Antiques.



DAVID A. KEEPS: May I say that this house looks really yummy?

ALEXANDRA ANGLE: It's like one of those long, beautiful ribbon candies in white and blue, with a yellow stripe. It's young, light, and happy. Houses need to make you experience a feeling, and each room should tell a story.

How does this story go?

Once upon a time there was a house that had gotten lost. It was a dark mess. And a nice little family found it and decided to make it their own. They wanted it to be pretty, with fun things, a place that says, 'Come and play with me.'

Describe the dark mess.

Every wall and ceiling was drywall, with sprayed-on texture. There were plastic mullions on every window and door. There were prefab wood floors, lots of built-in wardrobes and heavy-looking cabinets, a floor-to-ceiling mirrored wall in the dining area, a looming solid banister staircase, an enclosed kitchen.

In what ways did you wave your magic makeover wand?

We opened it up and brought in light. We put in new windows and doors, new floors, added beadboard to the walls, and gave it a Scandinavian summer style.

And let's please not overlook that drop-dead fireplace.

It was inspired by antique Swedish tile stoves. There was just a plain firebox there, and I came up with the idea of tiling the wall with antique Portuguese tiles. I took them all the way up to make it more of a focal point.

Aren't white floors a luxury in a house with kids and a dog?

We used antique wide-plank pine and stained it with a nontoxic German finish that seems indestructible. You can drag something across it and just wipe the black marks up.

Aren't pine floors notoriously soft?

The whole point was to have something that would show wear and tear, like those older East Coast country houses. That's why I like painted furniture that will distress with elegance. It's not going to look worse as dirty hands touch it.



ABOVE: Maine Cottage Windsor armchairs surround a Liselund dining table from Country Swedish in the dining area. Yellow shades add a lemony punch to the matte-white cast-resin bird chandelier.

OPPOSITE: Antique Portuguese tiles make the minimalist hearth the centerpiece of the living room. "It dictated the color palette," Angle says. Walls are painted Farrow & Ball's Wimborne White; trim is Benjamin Moore's Glass Slipper. The coffee table, an Angle design, references the outdoors with its picnic-bench silhouette. Ross Plaid rug by Elizabeth Eakins.

You seem to like leggy furniture, too.

I like stripes and lines, and legs give you that. I also like seeing some space under a piece of furniture. I don't do a lot of slipcovering or skirting.

This house mixes Americana and Swedish country. Are we in the midst of a Scandinavian revival?

It does seem so. There's a trend toward being unpretentious and relaxed and real, and people like airy spaces. The way Scandinavians bring light into a room, having these long dark winters, is amazing. People seem to like the simplicity of the historical Gustavian pieces, and the contemporary furniture is novel and a little bit wacky and very well crafted.

Some decorators base their schemes on rugs. Where do you start?

Rugs can be art, but I look at the art collection. It's going to land in the house, and you can either enhance it with your design or turn it into troublesome spots on the wall fighting the design around it, which doesn't make any sense.

What gives you the decor chills?

I don't like things that feel sterile. There has to be some texture, like worn stairs or a beat-up antique in a minimal house. But not overdone. I love mixing things up, but not just for the sake of it. I don't like 10,000 layers of something unless it's an 80-year-old woman who's been collecting all her life, and then it makes sense.

When you're 80, what will you have amassed?

There's nothing I collect for the sake of collecting. I take seedpods and rocks from the beach; I take beautiful dead beetles, butterflies, or moths and put them in glass display boxes or make a little pile on shelves around the house. I do have a lot of china. It's an inherited habit from my grandmother. She had 25 sets and never used any of them. We didn't use our Deshoulières wedding china for 10 years, but now we eat on it every day. Because why do you own it if you don't use it?

If you were Mrs. Blandings, how would you decorate your dream house?

No froufrou. It would have handcrafted things, some Danish, some of my designs, all simple and textured with wicker, felt, and really heavily woven linens and cottons.

Do you ever shop from catalogs?

I use them sometimes, but using a lot of pieces from them in one place is not a great idea. And I can't stand things that are supposed to look like something they're not. A bad period reproduction is like bad plastic surgery.

What simple luxuries can you simply not live without?

NPR, a great cup of espresso in the morning, and really good stereo speakers. Music is important. I listen to Michael Franti, Ben Harper, Bob Marley, and a lot of blues.

What would you be if you weren't a decorator?

I'd be a Japanese chef, which I was before I went to college. I made *kaiseki*, the very formal meals of tea ceremonies. It's the haute cuisine—small dishes with a beautiful presentation. It's practical art, art you can eat. And I think interior design is art you can live in.

STYLIST SEAN MCGOWAN





The small bluestone patio is hedged in for privacy. Teak furniture, a Mecox Gardens faux-bois concrete bench, and John Robshaw floor pillows create an intimate entertaining space. OPPOSITE: To give the kitchen a sense of lightness, Angle removed upper cabinetry and replaced it with open shelves, painted Farrow & Ball's Teresa's Green. She chose bronze-finished bin pulls and knobs by Rejuvenation: "You can get too airy. You need something dark to keep a room grounded."





TOP: Angle turned a dark corner into a tiny nook for reading. ABOVE: She converted an upstairs walk-in closet into a his-and-hers office. RIGHT: Beadboard paneling painted Benjamin Moore Blue Haze on both the walls and ceiling make the master bedroom "feel shiplike." Two distinctive lamps—John Derian's Green Organic Grid and Jamie Young's Dalton—add a twist. "I don't like everything to be matchy-matchy," Angle says. "It's a little oppressive and seems totally unnatural." Lapis Kochi quilt by John Robshaw. West Elm headboard. FOR MORE DETAILS, SEE RESOURCES



