

california

HOME+DESIGN

TALES OF THE CITY

4A

Kenneth Brown designed this L.A. loft for himself before turning it over to a friend and client, p. 1

LOS ANGELES
OLD WORLD
GLAMOUR +
NEW LOFT STYLE

SACRAMENTO
LIBESKIND'S
VIEW FROM
THE TOP

SAN FRANCISCO
ART DECO IN NO
HILL + MODERN
IN NOE VALLEY





Despite their view of Wilshire Boulevard, the Angles' collection of antiques and furniture of their own design, including the coffee table and black-and-white sofa, gives this living room the look of a Left Bank salon.



ANGLE *of* REPOSE

ALEXANDRA AND ELIOT ANGLE
TURN THEIR CLASSIC
MID-WILSHIRE APARTMENT
INTO A MIX OF OLD WORLD
ELEGANCE AND CALIFORNIA COOL.
BY SALLY SCHULTHEISS
PHOTOGRAPHY BY GREY CRAWFORD
STYLING BY CHAR HATCH LANGOS



The Angles' eclectic style is apparent upon entering their apartment; the Beanpole console, part of the Aqua Vitae furniture collection, displays a few of the couple's favorite finds.

F

ive stories above Wilshire Boulevard in Los Angeles's Koreatown, interior designers Alexandra and Eliot Angle have created an antidote to L.A. They've left austere modernism to the city's hills and beaches and carved a slice of old-world glamour from a beautifully restored 1924 apartment building. "We did the L.A. suburban thing, now we're doing the L.A. urban thing," says Eliot, of their recent move from a modernist late-1940s box situated on a hillside in Echo Park to their new residence, a doppelganger for a grand New York penthouse.

The three-bedroom, 3,000-square-foot apartment does triple duty for the couple, who use it as a showroom, living quarters and the offices for their party-planning-turned-interior-design company, Aqua Vitae. The spacious living room, dining room, foyer, library and guest and master bedrooms showcase their aesthetic sensibilities, as well as Alexandra's furniture designs. Tucked behind the kitchen, the apartment's former butler and



maid quarters have become his-and-her offices. The residence gives visitors the hard sell, as well as a warm welcome. Almost everything in this space is for sale and yet is deeply personal to the Angles, who started their business seven years ago as high-end event planners. "We would transform a room for a party," says Alexandra. "And afterward, the client would say, 'Now can you do that to the whole house?'"

For the most part, Eliot Angle—seen here with his adoring dog Sturtevant—handles the space planning and architectural aspects of the work, while Alexandra designs much of the furnishings.

In their own home, a broad enthusiasm for a variety of styles and objects results in surprising juxtapositions. "We enjoy mixing the very old with the very new," says Eliot. Indeed, no one could accuse the Angles of being narrow-minded: Panel moldings, painted white, pop out from eggshell-blue and deep-sage walls; three different Hermès scarves cover the

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cushions of a chocolate suede sofa; a triad of colorful abstract paintings by Chris Gallagher punches up a large wall. Spontaneity also plays a role in the mix. “The living room has an African vibe, with all those reds and oranges and blacks,” says Alexandra. “It wasn’t intentional, but that’s how it turned out.”

One of the challenges the designers faced was parlaying the festive playfulness of party staging into rational spaces for living—for working and relaxing as well as for entertaining. As a result, Alexandra says, “We’re big on process. We spend a lot of time learning about the way people live, as opposed to the look they want. Only after we find that out can we apply a look to their lifestyle.” They also insist that their clients love every item they purchase. “That’s a priority,” says Alexandra. “You should really enjoy the things we put in your home. They should have inherent value.”

Their particular brand of eclecticism comes from artistic wanderlust. Alexandra, who studied cooking in Japan—“I wanted to do something creative yet practical, and I thought Japanese cooking was both”—majored in international communications at NYU before becoming the managing partner in an investment firm. Eliot attended Haverford College, just outside Philadelphia, where he studied English literature and

For the dining room, the Angles created a table that seats eight of their Arc chairs, which are covered in a lime Larsen fabric called Roxy. Artful touches of black include a large print by Meghan Gerety.







Alexandra's office, like the entire apartment, serves as a laboratory for her ideas: A writing desk of her own design is paired with another Arc chair; roman shades in a Manuel Canovas toile called Siam offer a charming traditional touch.



acting. "That means I had a lot of different jobs," he jokes. Their respective dabblings have surfaced frequently during the course of their seven-year-old partnership: Eliot has used his perspective as a former bartender in their party planning, and Alexandra's financial know-how lets her move between the worlds of art and commerce with ease—a rare combination of skills for someone in her field.

"We made the transition to design naturally," Alexandra says. After co-authoring *Cocktail Parties with a Twist* in 2002 (Stewart, Tabori and Chang), the Angles embarked on their metamorphosis from party throwers to interior designers. After two years of doing both, they dropped the party part and let the design part take over. Their first project was their own house in Maine. "I loved it, and I loved working together," says Eliot, who does most of the architectural design work, while Alexandra focuses on furniture and art. "Eliot envisions the space," says Alexandra, while "Alexandra does the pretty stuff," says Eliot.

There was no shortage of pretty stuff in Alexandra's upbringing—her father was a sculptor, and the family lived in Rome until Alexandra was three years old. Later, they moved to a farmhouse in Vermont. Her mother grew organic vegetables; her father carved sofas out of logs. "It was a creative, chaotic house that was in a state of constant change," she says. That sensibility is still with her, and several heirlooms of exquisite taste populate the apartment. Alexandra plucked each piece, from the Louis Vuitton steamer trunk to the enormous portrait of her great-great-great-aunt Lydie, from family storage.

Another view of Alexandra's office shows the playful combination of a cowhide rug, a flamestitch-covered sofa and the repeated use of stripes, against leather-colored walls.

Not all style is inherited, of course, and both Alexandra and Eliot have approached interior design as students, devouring books and pursuing their



aesthetic education. Alexandra admires *A Pattern Language* by Christopher Alexander, as well as *Wabi-Sabi for Artists, Designers, Poets and Philosophers* by Leonard Koren. Eliot enjoyed *Rembrandt's Eyes* by Simon Schama. "We have a big library," says Eliot. They also take classes on design, and Alexandra is pursuing an ongoing education in contemporary art. "Louise Bourgeois is number one for me," she says. "But my main interest is in my client's collections. Eliot and I like to use artwork as the inspiration for a room."

Alexandra's own furniture designs offer a nod to the past, often with a wink, combining the modern and the baroque, the elegant and the slightly scary. Her S cocktail table perches delicately on the tips of serpent-tail legs; the surprisingly comfortable Arc chair,

The portrait of Aunt Lydie makes a grand statement over the Louis Vuitton steamer trunk, and offers a play on scale when juxtaposed with a child-size chair, a series of Chinese prints and a drum made in Africa.

which makes an appearance as a set of six around their dining table, is an enlarged human spine; the Tiered table suspends three artist-palette-shaped surfaces, à la Toulouse-Lautrec, on a single spear. The pieces give the surrounding antiques some street cred while pulling everything—old and new—together.

With all this reverence for the past—personal and historic—will there ever be a tug to return East, to the homeland? Will they tire of Los Angeles? A few projects a year keep them traveling between the coasts; their families in Vermont and Manhattan lure them home during the summer; and they have started construction on a house in Nova Scotia, where they plan to spend a couple of months a year focusing on furniture designs and taking a break from the hectic pace of their business.

But leave L.A.? Nah. "I love how open it is here, and the weather," says Alexandra. "And there is more opportunity to be inventive." "We've built a refuge here," Eliot says. ■

The color scheme for this bedroom was borrowed from the hand-embroidered rug by Fedora Design—huge fans of Fedora designer, Federica Tondato, the Angles chose another one of her rugs for their foyer.

