

AT HOME

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THE
COLOR
ISSUE

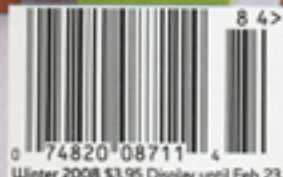
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SEE PAGE 64

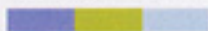
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THE COLOR ISSUE

Let nature dictate a no-fail, multihued palette of blues and greens.



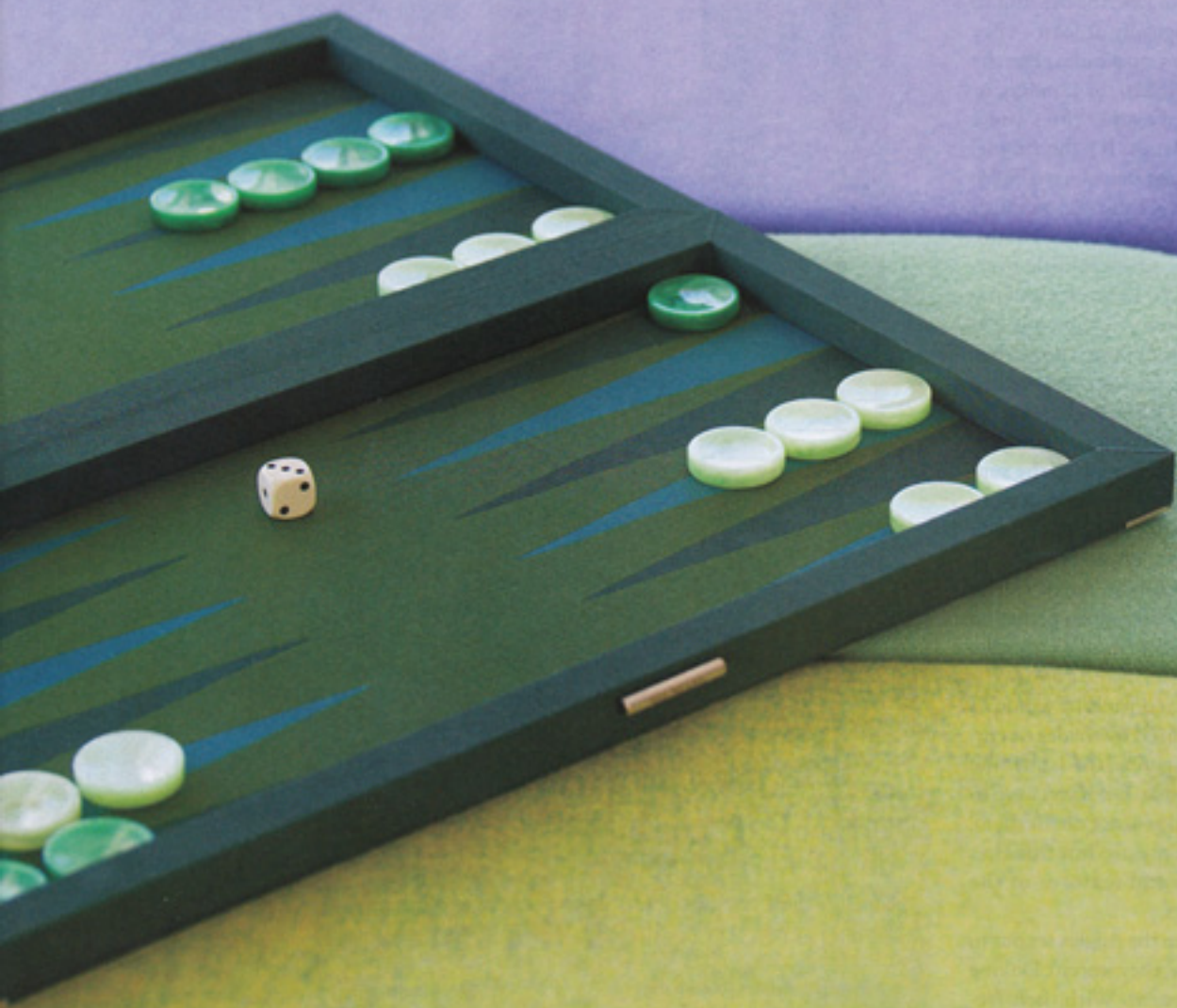
Back to the Land

Taking their color cues from the view outside their windows, Alexandra and Eliot Angle built a cottage to rival the brilliance of its Nova Scotia surroundings.

By SALLY HORCHOW Photographs by LUCAS ALLEN



A built-in window seat spans the entire width of the Angles' home. Covered in nine shades of woolen fabric by Kvadrat, the channeled cushion represents the variety of colors that make up the view. **OPPOSITE:** The couple's 52-acre hilltop parcel overlooks the Gulf of St. Lawrence.



The

husband-and-wife design team Alexandra and Eliot Angle live and run their business, Aqua Vitae, out of the fifth floor of a 1924 apartment building in Los Angeles. But to get *home*—psychologically, at least—they have to travel some 3,000 miles. For the Angles, home isn't Tokyo, or London, or New York, or any of the other cities where they've set up residence. It's the simple, Cape Cod-style retreat they started building two years ago in Nova Scotia, on a high promontory of Cape Breton Island. Perched on a yellow-green hillside overlooking the Gulf of St. Lawrence and the dark, piney mountains of Highlands National Park, the Angles' house is more than a country place—it's a nature observatory.

"This bit of land is the high point on the whole coastline, so you see not only up and down the shore, but west, to the sunset," Eliot says. "It's rugged and remote and gorgeous." Hawks and eagles circle above the meadows, children can cut across the grassy hillside down to the water's edge; and at dusk, adults gather on the wooden wraparound deck to sip wine and spot whales.

The Angles erected walls of windows downstairs, unobscured by shades or curtains, to let in as much of the landscape and the light as possible. But if you were to look into those windows, not out of them, you would see a domestic interior that mirrors the colors and textures of the house's surroundings.

Surprisingly, when the Angles set out to find a vacation place, they weren't looking for anything permanent. With their frenetic schedule, the couple was accustomed to hopping planes on a moment's notice, spending entire days on the phone or at the computer, and always regarding their housing situation as temporary—wherever they happened to be. In Nova Scotia, they intended to purchase a "little farmhouse" and enjoy it for a year or *(continued on p.79)*

Benjamin Moore
BRITANNY BLUE 1633



COLOR LESSON #1

An unexpected detail—like an aqua stair riser—can really bring a room to life.

Eliot and Alexandra Angle hang out in the kitchen with their 11-month-old daughter, Elefe. The beadboard cabinets, maple farm table, and vintage floral chandelier all play off the idea of a traditional country home. The white Autoban Octopus light, however, hits a purely urban note.

Farrow & Ball
ARSENIC

*Cape Breton changed the Angle family.
“We immediately felt committed to this place;
it was just emotional,” Alexandra says.*

Benjamin Moore
BRITANNIA BLUE 1623

COLOR LESSON #2

Unify an elaborate and varied palette with one piece that incorporates every hue.

The colors spread throughout the Angles' house are picked up in the cushions of the built-in window seat. Alexandra chose the two Vittorio Bonacina rattan chairs that flank the Knoll Toothpick table because "they remind me of seashells."

Benjamin Moore
BRITTANY BLUE 1633



(continued from p.76) two before moving on. "We thought: It really doesn't matter if we never go," Alexandra says. But Cape Breton changed them. "We immediately felt committed to this place; it was just emotional," she explains. So, instead of a disposable fixer-upper, the Angles invested in 52 acres, and began to build the dream home they hadn't known they craved. "We were so taken with the view," Eliot says.

At first, the couple hired an architect, who drew up "brilliant" plans for a steel-and-glass house—the kind that works well in desert climates. But as 150-mile-an-hour autumn gales lashed the Cape Breton coast, the Angles realized they'd have to adapt. Their neighbors, for instance, had all chosen snug wooden homes that weathered windstorms with aplomb. Scrapping the blueprints that would require importing both materials and labor, Eliot and Alexandra designed a more elemental shingled cottage, facing the shore-hugging Cabot Trail. Area contractors constructed the building with locally sourced maple and birch, and then the Angles set about coloring in their vision.


Alexandra wandered the countryside with a camera in different seasons, photographing the grasses on their journey from bright green to wheaten tan. "I brought back pieces of everything that I could find—bark, wildflowers," she says. "That was how I did my color research." All those elements, tacked to a board in the couple's L.A. studio, guided the resulting palette, which takes into account the changing hues of the water, the lilac of the afternoon sky, and the yellowish glow of the grass that darkens to black amid the trees. "There are 10 different kinds of blue, gray, and green in the house," Alexandra notes.

Harnessing the colors of the wilderness, she bought vibrant panels of Kvadrat fabric—in cornflower, (continued on p.80)



The front door of the cottage, left, overlooks the Cabot Trail leading to the Cape Breton Highlands National Park, where Eliot hikes with the couple's Tibetan terrier, Sturtevant. BELOW: The west-facing deck, built with locally harvested pine, is outfitted with two Ikea recliners. Alexandra says the wooden riser along the perimeter serves as both continuous seating and a de facto railing for Elefe.






Benjamin Moore
VAN ALEN GREEN HC-120

Benjamin Moore
PALLADIAN BLUE HC-144

ABOVE: The Angles bought the master bath's vintage claw-foot tub in Halifax and had its underside painted the same cool shade as their bedroom. Antique stools hold books and beauty products. **RIGHT:** A small skylight cut into the eaves of the guest bath gives the room an ethereal glow.



Pratt & Lambert
HALTHORNE 22-29

(continued from p.79) lavender, jade, kiwi—for the simple window seat, built by local workers, that spans the width of the living room. And in the kitchen, on a narrow display shelf above the stove, lime-green pots and chartreuse French goblets give lift to the word *backplash*—mimicking the sensation, says Alexandra, of walking through a field dotted with bright yellow asters. Even the underbelly of an antique claw-foot tub the couple found in Halifax was repainted to match the organic, seafoam green of the bedroom it adjoins.

To strengthen the newly constructed house's historical, contextual roots, the Angles sought out both vintage and local goods. The nearest town—Cheticamp—is famous for its handmade rugs. So Alexandra commissioned a design of her own from the “hookers” (as the artisans at the co-op jokingly call themselves), bringing a piece of that tradition to the floor of the master bedroom. With each detail, Eliot and Alexandra were determined that “authentic” would not mean “rustic”—as design professionals, their aesthetic incorporates iconic country elements in a subtle and sophisticated way. Industrial hardware and bayberry paint give humble beadboard kitchen cabinets a very modern swagger. A maple farmhouse table is surrounded by chairs with cane seats—albeit chairs by Gio Ponti. And while the living room's rattan thrones hint at homey wicker, their swoopy shape reads as avant-garde.

If the interior seems at all spare, it is because, Alexandra says, “We won't bring things here unless we love them.” And in contrast to the work the Angles do for clients, there are no deadlines for completing their own interiors, so the couple chooses instead to add and subtract as the mood strikes them. Which may also account for the different, more idealized versions of themselves they become when they're here. (continued on p.83)

COLOR LESSON #3

Relax, it's only paint!
If you try something
and don't like
it, just start over.

After she'd cloaked the office in a soft green, Alexandra decided to scrap it and go with blue-tinged gray instead. A vintage chair contrasts with the Piet Boon desk made of corrugated cardboard. When the room is dark, the felt light fixture by Mixko casts butterflies on the walls.



Laurentide
BRITTANY C134-10



Their 52-acre parcel "is rugged and remote and gorgeous," says Eliot. "We were so taken with the view."

COLOR LESSON #4

Warm up an ultracool hue with a variety of natural textures.

Beechwood swing-arm sconces by Le Klint and a table Elliot crafted from driftwood steer the seafoam wall color to a woody place. Likewise, linen sheets and a quilt from Anthropologie soften the angularity of the custom-made bed. Alexandra commissioned the rug at a local artisans' co-op and picked up the butterfly prints at the Winter Works on Paper gallery in New York City.

Benjamin Moore
PALLADIAN BLUE HC-144



(continued from p.80) In Nova Scotia, the Angles have developed new priorities and take pleasure in the simplest tasks. They opted not to install a dishwasher because, Alexandra says, "it's fun to do them by hand." Although they set up a satellite dish to help them keep up with office projects, Alexandra can be found elbow-deep in flour several days a week, baking bread, which, she says, "I don't even eat when I am in Los Angeles!" She spends day after day in clogs or sneakers (the L.A. freeway a faint, impossible memory), taking long runs and pressing flowers. Or reading, as most afternoons find her curled up on the expansive window seat like a cat, exploring design theory or the biography of another designer couple, Charles and Ray Eames. Meanwhile, Eliot relishes working with his hands—building furniture, clearing underbrush, and sometimes combining the two. He made the couple's bedside table out of bleached driftwood that he found on the property. "As a Manhattan boy, it's a total romantic fantasy for me," he says. There were still deeper changes to come.

Last March, after a complicated two-year process, the Angles flew to Ethiopia and adopted a baby daughter, Elefe (Eliot says the name means "she who is great and surpasses everything" in Amharic). Returning to America, they recognized how much their lives had changed, and were grateful. They still live much of the year in Los Angeles; they still travel frequently; and they still work on demanding projects for demanding clients. But now they have a family, a home—"a forever house," as Alexandra calls it. This past summer, the Angles spent nearly three months on Cape Breton, hosting relatives from Maine. While Elefe met her cousins and explored her surroundings, her parents learned, while doing, how to enjoy the moment. The house on a hill had taught them a better way to live. **Q**



Eliot cradles Elefe, left. **BELOW:** Heirloom items give the guest room authenticity: The Alvar Raito bureau and fish print came from Alexandra's family; Eliot's grandmother gave him the embroidered nautical scene. John Robshaw cotton robes allow guests to travel to and from the house's outdoor shower with their modesty intact.



Benjamin Moore
 PEACH PARFAIT 2175-70

Benjamin Moore
 BLUESPRUCE 1637