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In summer, the Angles leave the French doors of their "sleeping barn" open all night.

Old house, ● new tricks



From ramshackle Los Angeles farmhouse to indoor-outdoor oasis—
all you need is creativity, flexibility, and a tolerance for sloping floors

BY JESS CHAMBERLAIN | PHOTOGRAPHS BY ERICKA McCONNELL | STYLING BY MIRANDA JONES

THE LISTING READ something like “adorable fixer-upper,” but the 1890s house hidden in the middle of a block in the Los Feliz neighborhood of Los Angeles barely qualified as habitable. There was no heat, no insulation, no foundation. The bathroom floor was a few layers of linoleum over dirt, and holes in the walls were patched with cardboard. “It had been built by a family of adventurous—or desperate—pumpkin farmers on the outskirts of what was then the city,” says Alexandra Angle, an interior designer who back then (2009) was living in

downtown L.A. with her husband, Eliot, and their baby daughter.

The house was small—just 900 square feet—but the yard, covered in cinder blocks and tile, did have a handful of old citrus trees and a grape arbor, and the whole property was shielded from the street by a neighboring duplex. “We’d just adopted our daughter, so we wanted the feeling of a real neighborhood, but also some privacy,” Alexandra says. “The inspectors said we were crazy, but we went for it anyway.”

Initially, the Angles thought they would convert the stand-alone garage



The house was, the family has been told, the first in what's now Los Feliz. The rest of the block was built up over the years, leaving the little farmhouse almost marooned in the middle. **RIGHT** Covered with a trellis, the outdoor hallway linking the corrugated-steel sleeping barn and the farmhouse doubles as a breakfast room.





"We stained the deck white and stenciled it with silver paint—now it feels more like a room than a pass-through" —ALEXANDRA ANGLE



LEFT Bamboo and a new fence help screen the yard from outside eyes. **BELOW LEFT** In the tiny living room, a built-in sofa is raised on the left to make up for the sloping floor. **RIGHT** Alexandra chose a palette of whites and gray blues for the inside of the farmhouse—heavy colors, she says, will make an already small space feel even smaller.

into living space, but “even the studs were too far gone to save,” says Alexandra.

“So we built a sleeping barn in its place,” with two small bedrooms, a bath, and a laundry closet. A new deck and vine-covered trellis now serve as an outdoor hallway connecting this unit to the original farmhouse.

“Given how small our indoor living spaces are, we tried to make outdoor living spaces,” Alexandra says. With the cinder blocks and tile ripped out, the yard is now home to a grapefruit, a persimmon, and three kinds of orange trees; a California oak; jasmine and bougainvillea; and lots of bamboo and ferns—as well as an outdoor living room, a dining room, and a tub.

As for the farmhouse, its footprint remains the same. The walls and ceiling are original beadboard (no drywall!), and all the wooden windows (in a wild array of sizes) are original. In the living room, the Angles installed a mini stove fireplace from Denmark—the only heat source—but they decided to leave the room’s off-kilter floor alone. “Instead of trying to layer in new flooring, we decided to love the house for what it is,” says Alexandra. “Even its sloping floors.”

DESIGN Alexandra Angle Interior Design, Los Angeles (alexandraangle.com) ■



"We loved that the building was so simple—it could incorporate my very contemporary style"

