

INSIDE

INSPIRING HOMES WITH HEART

a fresh start

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SLIDING DOORS

SITTING ON A LEVEL BLOCK IN THE LA FOOTHILLS, THIS SINGLE-STOREY STUNNER IS SO OPEN TO ITS LUSH GARDEN THAT IT'S EASY TO FORGET THE MOVIE-STAR VIEW AT ONE END

cheat sheet

Who lives here David Thompson, architect and principal of Assembledget+, his wife Jamie Thompson, a real-estate agent; their two daughters: Lyla, 16, and Zoe, 14; and mutt dog Georgie.

Style of home A completely rebuilt single-storey house in LA's Laurel Canyon, inspired by Southern California modernism.

 David and Jamie bought the property in 2014 and started rebuilding in 2017. Tools were down by June 2019 and the first swim in the new pool was shortly after that.



FAMILY ROOM Massive sliding glass doors completely dissolve the home's boundaries. The dark-grey modular sofa and see-through coffee table help draw the eye out to the pool area.

Architects rarely buy renovated homes. In order to fully flex their considerable skill set, ‘falling-down dilapidated’ is often their condition of choice, and that was pretty much the case for LA’s Assembledge+ architecture boss David Thompson when he bought a 1956 bungalow in 2014.

Though it gave the impression of thick, green California forest, the 1670-square-metre property the house was on is only 10 minutes’ walk from ice-cream on Studio City’s Ventura Boulevard. So there was no getting lost in suburban sprawl for David’s real-estate-agent wife Jamie and their two daughters, who lived in the leaky home for three years while David got to work on the revamp. He focused on the concept of oasis and was excited by the idea of keeping the existing central courtyard but simplifying its many levels and materials. The rest of the house was basically a knock-down job, which, he says, made it easier to flatten the complex pitched roof and “rationalise [open] the irregular series of nested, closed rooms”.

Like his Modernist idols, he imagined a single-storey, tri-pavilion structure with interconnecting glass hallways and large windows framed like walls, looking out on ‘soft’ gravel, green grass and, beyond that, mature trees. While the previous home David built for the family in Larchmont had lots of windows, its smaller block size and proximity to the street had earned it more than a few ‘goldfish bowl’ descriptions. This design would allow him to extend their living experience “even further into the landscape”, but in a more private way.

Once the three pavilions – one containing the living areas, one for the main bedrooms, and one for the guest quarters and garage – were mapped out, Assembledge+ provided the detail, complete with a host of environmentally friendly elements. These include reflective roof surfaces, photovoltaic panels, LED lighting, high-efficiency HVAC (heating and cooling) systems, insulation and glazing plus permeable ground surfaces and a rainwater collection system to combat drought conditions. Having such smart technologies and operating systems ensures the family ticks over as sustainably as possible in their new home.

Though the house feels very open across its expansive public spaces inside and out, there are many more intimate spaces as well. “Most of the interior walls are white to highlight the openness and abundance of natural light,” says David. “However, in a few key areas, such as the kitchen, we painted the cabinetry a dark charcoal to mimic the deep smokiness of the exterior

LIVING ROOM/NOOK As well as being a more formal space to entertain, this is where David likes to chill out. Eames lounge chair (by shelves) from Design Within Reach. Sofa and armchairs, RH Modern. Coffee table, designed by David. Side table (to the right of the sofa), Cuff Home. The Haute Bohemian rug from Mehraban mimics the ceiling.



LESSONS LEARNT

“Design and orientation are very important”

DAVID THOMPSON, ARCHITECT/OWNER

“Our deep overhang mitigates solar heat gain and shields us from the sun. Having a single-storey residence ensures the building is largely shaded below the surrounding tree canopy, and the large roof area permitted the installation of a 15kW photovoltaic system capable of feeding excess power back into the city’s grid.”



DAY BED (above) Another space where the window seems almost non-existent.

GARDEN (above right) Entry to the property is through a stunning western-red-cedar fence. **WALKWAY** (right) Glass walls make travelling between pavilions a visual treat.

KITCHEN (opposite) The importance of skylights in the flat-roofed design is most apparent here. Benchtops, Calacatta Crema. Cabinetry colour, Off-Black by Farrow & Ball. Stools, CB2. Flooring, oak.



“EXPERIENCE IS MORE IMPORTANT TO US THAN STATEMENT SO WE AVOIDED CREATING AN OLD FORMAL DINING ROOM THAT NO ONE EVER PASSED THROUGH. ALL OUR ROOMS OR AREAS ARE ‘ACTIVATED’ EVERY DAY”

DAVID THOMPSON, ARCHITECT/OWNER

panels and provide a seductive backdrop that highlights the warmth of the wood flooring and marble benchtops.” Jamie and the girls love to cook so the high-spec kitchen sees a lot of activity. “It starts with our morning coffee, which we have in the outdoor room just off the kitchen,” she says. “That slider is usually opened first thing in the morning. If it’s a weekend, we open up all the sliders in the living and dining areas so the whole house has a breezy feel.”

Meanwhile David, who also designed many of the home’s key furniture pieces, is more likely to be working in his study. In his downtime, however, he’s quite partial to relaxing in the living room’s Eames lounge. “It’s one of the pieces I’ve always wanted, and when we were designing the living space, I had this particular piece in mind,” he shares.

Other elements were selected by interior designer Susan Mitnick, a family friend who worked with the white oak flooring and was instrumental in choosing furniture, finishes and colours.

“We had a preference for simplicity and natural materials, like the wooden floors and siding [cladding],” says David, “and we wanted the siding in a charcoal that would set off equally well from the warm siding and the light blue LA sky. The hardest thing was the specific choice. How many charcoals did we try? And how many white paints for the interior walls? Dozens!” ¹⁰

To see more of David Thompson’s work, check out assembledge.com or [@assembledge](https://www.instagram.com/assembledge). Susan Mitnick Design Studio can be contacted through [susanmitnick.com](https://www.instagram.com/susanmitnick) or [@susanmitnickdesignstudio](https://www.instagram.com/susanmitnickdesignstudio)

DINING AREA This space faces the front courtyard. “It’s a balanced room of shapes and colour,” says interior designer Susan Mitnick. “The table functions as a big architectural landmark.” Custom dining table by Reeve Schley of Seed LA Design + Build. B&B Italia ‘Metropolitan’ chairs. Line pendant in natural brass, Douglas and Bec. Green artwork by Bradley Duncan.



“FOR US, LANDSCAPE
PLAYS A ROLE THAT’S JUST
AS SIGNIFICANT AS THE
INTERIORS. THE EXTERIOR
AND INTERIOR PALETTES
INFORM THE LANDSCAPE
AND VICE VERSA” DAVID



GREAT FINDS



CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE LEFT Impressions laminate in Black Nuance, POA, Laminex. *Malachite* acrylic and oil artwork by Natalia Prutski, from \$624.15 for a 30cm x 30cm canvas, Etsy. Zaza 2 upholstered deep outdoor sofa, from \$5936, King Living. Model 375 oak table lamp, \$1130, Great Dane Furniture. Injiri 'Fur Jat 23' cushion (40cm), \$148, Spence & Lyda. Wittmann 'Miles' swivel lounge chair, from \$7250, Domo. Saqqara linen in Chalk, \$206 per sq m, Walter G.

ADDITIONAL PRODUCT SOURCING: KATRINA YAXLEY



ENSUITE (both images above) The skylight creates a spa-like vibe, especially when the sun hits the tiles and makes abstract shadows. Marble bathtub and benchtop, Modul Marble. Tiles, Porcelanosa. Apparatus Studio 'Trapeze' wall scone. **MAIN BEDROOM** (left) "In order to achieve a complete indoor/outdoor experience, there are no window dressings," says David, who also designed the bed. Throw, JG Switzer. Rug, Mehraban. Bolle Sola pendant light by Galotti & Radice. **PATIO** (opposite) While the plantings around the pool and fire pit are kept low, the native grasses further from the house are taller and wilder. Fiore Landscape Design laid out the garden, including mature olives and a few pre-existing oaks. The outdoor furniture, all by Gloster, was chosen for its architectural design and scale.