



OPEN HOUSE

Reinventing Space
for Simple Living

Pays &
Bernsen

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Reinventing Space for Simple Living


Amanda Pays & Corbin Bernsen

In a down-to-earth style that's practical and intimate, Amanda Pays and Corbin Bernsen reveal their passion for home renovation that started nearly thirty years ago. They share tips and insights that have saved time, money, and heartache. And they divulge the keys of their home decorating style, which has resulted in comfortable, lovely homes where they have raised their family and entertained friends over the years.

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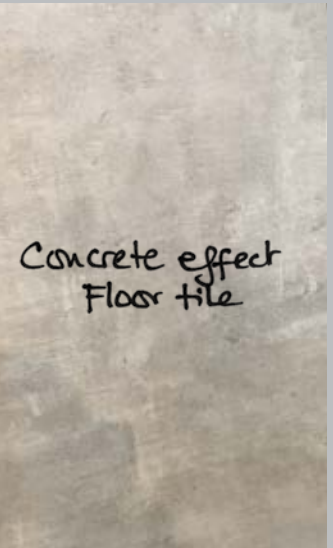


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The variations on a theme of white establish an excellent neutral palette upon which to build any number of overlaying color stories. White is a springboard for those who want to play with bold color or those who want to double down with neutral tones. Either way, a white background is an inviting burst of gesso. I love white and find in it almost infinite varieties and tonal differentiations based on underlying materials, time of day, and surrounding complementary hues.



Some of the best-kept secrets in LA are the countless suppliers of stone, marble, granite and tile, and I always go deep into the San Fernando Valley for my finds.

MAKING SPACE FOR THE BOYS

It's one thing to not waste space but an entirely different thing to exploit the space at hand. Our Studio City house came with a large work shed in the back garden. Corbin thought we could convert it into a bunkhouse for our three oldest boys. With no room for expansion, Corbin had to coax utility out of every square inch. And he's a genius at this.

He set to work by dividing the square footage into two bedrooms separated by a ladder to a mezzanine third bedroom carved out of original headroom.

Underneath the treads of the stairway, he created closets, open shelving and cubicles for each of the two ground-floor bedrooms. He insulated the place and lined it with reclaimed siding.

At Olde Good Things in downtown LA we found vintage nautical sconces for over-bed lighting and another pair of steel-and-glass doors. We made small bedside shelves out of the remaining pieces of scaffold planks we had saved from the home's new staircase. Corbin's forte is finding a place for everything! Nothing goes to waste.

This ad hoc bunkhouse became an unofficial clubhouse, and for years it was jammed to its whitewashed rafters with rambunctious teenage boys! If you build it, they will come.







RESTORE - REUSE - RECYCLE



We made shelving all around the house out of aged scaffold planks that we bought from our builder for \$10 a plank.



I found this pair of unique wall sconces made from old bread tins at Big Daddy's Antiques.



We collected a bunch of similarly patinated vintage work stools that sat perfectly around our kitchen island.



On a trip to Marrakesh, we discovered these beautiful, chunky brass taps at the souk. They made their way into our powder room.



This is how we really saved some dollars: making curtain poles and hand rails out of galvanized plumber's piping.

With regard to the various extensive surfaces—horizontal and vertical planes that really defined the interior space—I found the original hardwood parquet floors to be in great shape and had them sanded and, yes, stained gray. In the kitchen, office space and bathrooms I had a new screed of concrete laid, which we matte sealed. We were lucky the original steel-cased sliders were in great shape, and all we had to add were any new steel single and double casement windows to various rooms for added light.

We were also able to reuse all of the kitchen lower cabinets—which we painted a muddy blue-gray—together with their hardware. This coupled with new Caesarstone Fresh Concrete countertops, bright white painted brick walls and sparkling new steel appliances really turned this inspired treasure into an upgraded jewel.



We really didn't touch the floor plan except to delicately remove a few interior walls and open the space to extend the view even further within the house. We opened the kitchen to living areas, creating a version of our now signature hub—and massaged three bedrooms, three baths and a powder room out of the original two bedrooms and one bath, which, although they were on a smaller scale, worked perfectly within the new flow we were creating.



Comfort

Mas Maroc,
France

Downstairs, I applied my tried and tested “great room” layout technique, opening up the entire floor from wall to wall. And after the whitewashing of all surfaces, the painting of all floors, my Greek-inspired farmhouse was ready to go!





During this French renovation, we were also busy downsizing stateside for our move to Sherman Oaks, and were deep in the process of “getting rid of stuff!” But when comparing the cost of buying new for France or shipping there what we already owned in LA, we were happy to discover it would be far cheaper to ship it! So off went a twenty-foot container—door to door—with the comfortable, familiar pieces to furnish our family farmhouse.

Everything from bedframes made by Corbin, to sofas, linens, books, artwork and even kitchen utensils were in that container. We did not have to buy a thing for France. (Well, maybe the odd tea towel.)

