

Up in the Bird Streets of the Hollywood Hills is a Spanish villa that's been given a glamorous new look by the larger-than-life Novogratz family

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# LA STORY



## cheat sheet

**Who renovated it** Celebrity interior designers Robert and Cortney Novogratz and their seven children, aged 13 to 24. Daughter Bellamy (pictured opposite right) currently lives in LA, where the house is.

**Style of home** Refined Spanish-modern rebuild on a large block.

**🕒** Construction started in early 2020 and was completed in the closing months of 2021.

**POOL HOUSE** Quintessentially L.A., the pool house is the hero of the party-ready backyard. Downsizing the original pool created space for the roomy structure and full bar, which is finished with Calacatta Viola marble and white-oak joinery. "Robert always wanted a cabana bar and put a lot of time and thought into the details," Cortney shares. "We used our hotel-design experience to create a boutique environment and even planted a lime tree next to the bar to pull fruit off for fresh drinks!" **INTERNAL COURTYARD** "This offers outdoor living in the centre of the house," says Cortney. Staying true to the original layout of the 1930s villa and embracing the outdoorsy Californian lifestyle, they reinstated the space and lined the floor with encaustic tiles from Clé Tile.





**S**et behind paparazzi-deflecting hedges in an exclusive Hollywood enclave that Elizabeth Taylor once called home, this modern Spanish villa is a blockbuster of a rebuild. Perched in the Hollywood Hills along a glamorous and highly sought-after strip called the Bird Streets (a cluster including Nightingale and Robin), the 1930s-era property was in poor shape when celebrity interior designers Cortney and Robert Novogratz purchased it in 2019.

The dynamic husband-and-wife team, known as The Novogratz, have been designing spaces for 25 years. They transform interiors worldwide, own an eponymous homewares and furniture range, curate pop-up stores and exhibitions, publish design books and are reality-TV stars. Add the seven Novogratz children to the mix and you rightly get the sense that fountains of inspired energy flow from the couple. In 2014, after living in New York for decades, they decided to shake things up and relocate the family to LA. The Bird Street House is the second west-coast home the duo has designed for their clan, and their largest project to date. “We found that it’s much more fun to build for yourself and make all the decisions,” says Cortney. “With no client to answer to, all the creative ideas are yours.”

The Novogratzes’ vision for the Bird Street House was to “bring back the original charm”, but digging through the layers of the tired corner property revealed countless issues. The only option was to tear the house down and start again, much to the couple’s disappointment. They replicated the original layout (wrapped around an internal courtyard) but extended the ceilings and added another level, bringing the bedroom count up to five to accommodate their XL-sized family. “To be frank, we were very lucky with the dimensions and layout,” says Cortney. “The house is quite large yet still feels cosy.”

Despite its newness, the villa slips right into the leafy street’s ensemble of historical mansions with a star-studded air. “We wanted to pay homage to the neighbourhood and the old Hollywood feel by staying with a Spanish design, from the



**LIVING AREA** (above) The soaring cathedral ceiling, clean lines and sophisticated palette of creamy neutrals with oak and black accents create a main living space with star quality. Over the Art Deco-inspired fireplace is a watercolour by Enoc Perez. The vintage timber benches are from Orange Furniture in LA. For a similar linen sofa, try Lounge Lovers. The artwork in the hallway (far left) is by Donald Baechler, who often features childhood imagery in his colourful works. **POOL-HOUSE BAR** (opposite) As the place to make post-swim smoothies in the morning and G&Ts as the sun sets on another warm West Coast day, the pool house gets a good workout. Taking their design cues from the mid-century, Robert and Cortney paired statement Calacatta Viola benchtops with customised white-oak joinery. Their choice of vintage Charlotte Perriand ‘Les Arcs’ bar stools in tan leather add extra style cred to this super-chic space.





**GARDEN** (above, left and right, and opposite centre) The manicured backyard is designed for relaxing and enjoying the Hollywood lifestyle. Forgoing paving, the couple laid grass around the saltwater pool for a cooler feel underfoot. The pool house has a stucco wall finish that matches the main house and its reclaimed roof tiles are terracotta. Try Cosh Living for a similar outdoor set. **LIVING AREA** (below, left and right) With its epic proportions, the living room is a showstopper. The softly arched window, a key Spanish architectural detail, is highlighted by white walls and a refined earthy palette. Shop similar furniture styles via Temple & Webster. **INTERNAL COURTYARD** (opposite, top left and right) PK1 Chairs by Poul Kjaerholm are a light addition to the outdoor table. For similar occasional chairs, try the Lucy Laze sofa-chair design by GlobeWest. **THEATRE ROOM** (opposite bottom) Oak details continue in this space courtesy of the bespoke cabinetry and ceiling beam. The low Togo chair (through Domo) and portrait of David Bowie by fashion photographer Diego Uchitel bring some of the rock 'n' roll eclecticism that The Novogratz are known for.



classic terracotta roof tiles made in Santa Barbara to the copper gutters and white stucco," Cortney explains. The original internal courtyard, where indoors and out merge, screamed 'old Hollywood', so they made it the focal point of the home in their design, too. "We wanted to play the entire house off that," she adds. The open-air space, now finished in handmade encaustic tiles and bordered by steel-framed doors and windows, traps the sparkling Californian sunshine and circulates breezes throughout the voluminous interiors.

The Novogratzes are known for their playful approach to design, with a soulful, eclectic mix of high and low woven into their schemes, along with a healthy amount of colour, art and vintage pieces. As a departure from their usual 'more is more' method, the Bird Street House confidently radiates a pared-back vibe. "Someone said this house is our best-edited home, which I took as a compliment," says Cortney. "We love lots of things, so it's hard to edit, but the house dictated the final, streamlined look." Its clean, contemporary lines are warmed by oak details, softly hued Venetian plaster and custom flourishes such as the Art Deco-inspired fireplace.

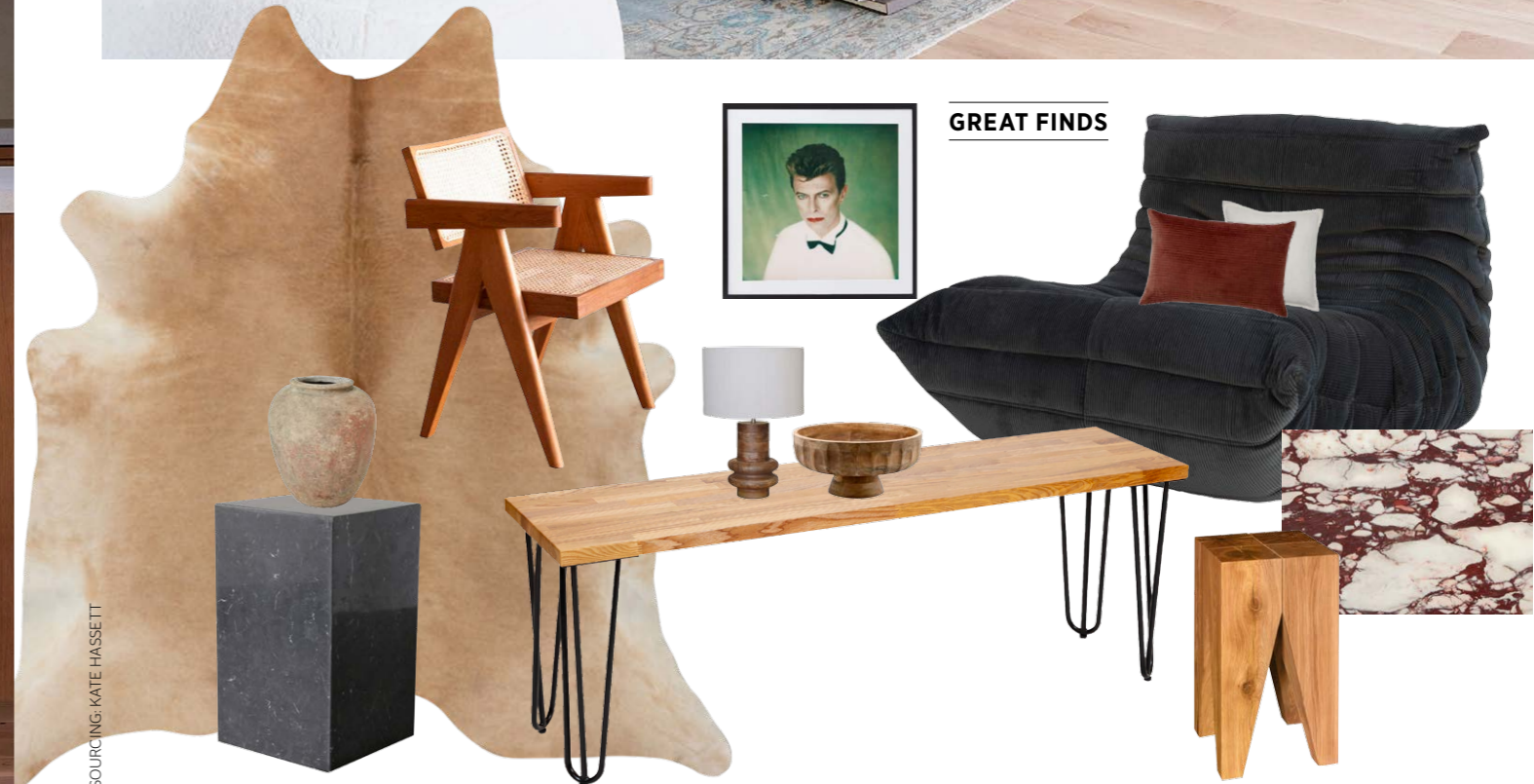
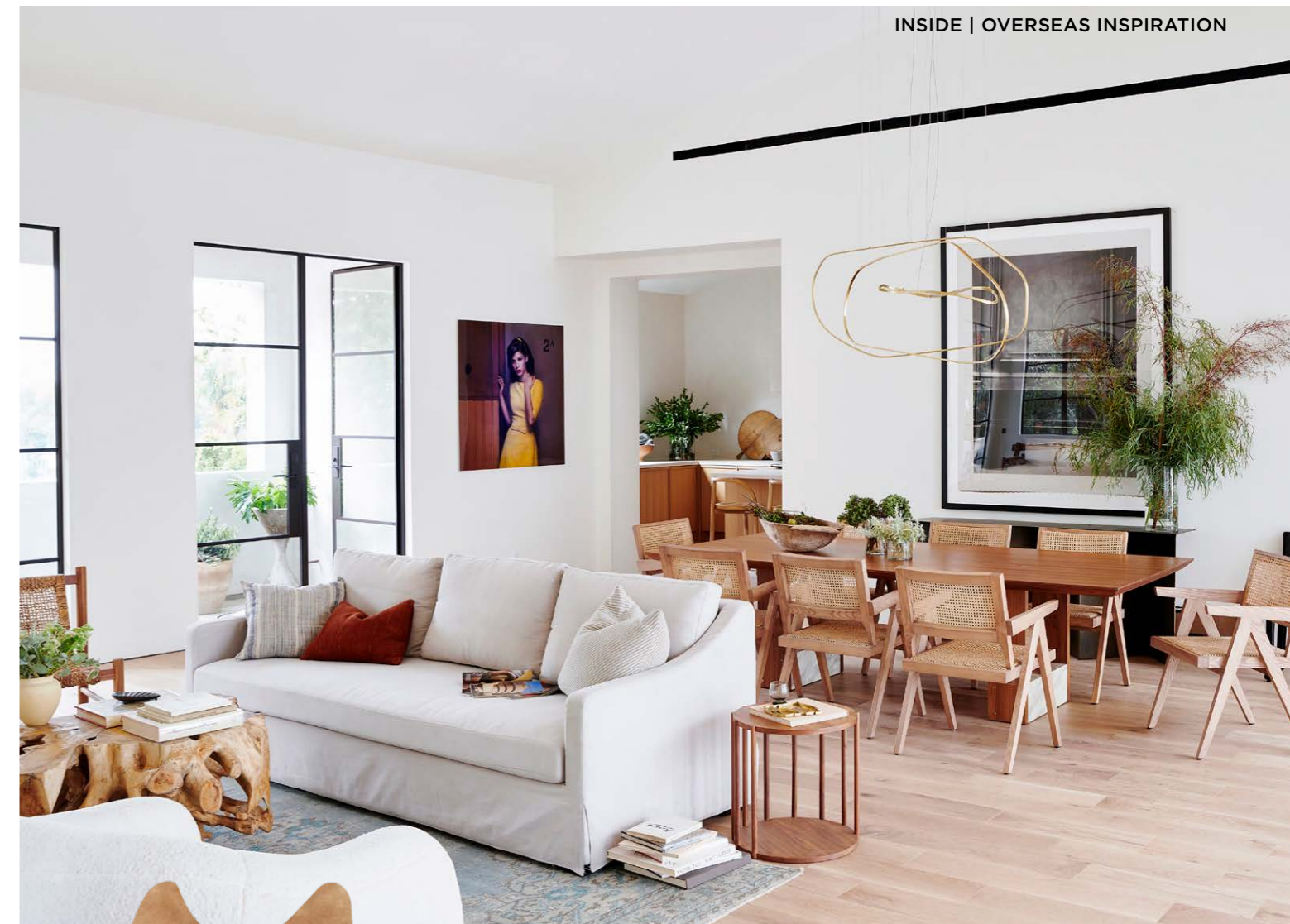
New Yorkers at heart, the family recently returned to their roots on the east coast, putting the Bird Street House on the market and leaving the LA lifestyle behind. "We really love the house, but it was time to go back to New York," says Cortney. They are currently rehabilitating a 19th-century townhouse in Greenwich Village, which they plan to move into as soon as they can. One does wonder, however, when the next exciting project will tempt them elsewhere. "Somehow, we always end up selling the houses we live in," says Cortney. "We were once called high-class gypsies and it's sort of true!" **LD**

The Novogratzes' design projects are at [thenovogratz.com](http://thenovogratz.com) or [@thenovogratz](https://www.instagram.com/thenovogratz). See their furniture and accessory ranges at [shopthenovogratz.com](http://shopthenovogratz.com)





**KITCHEN** This follows the home's original footprint and is partially closed off to the living and dining areas. Floating open shelves have replaced what were bulky cabinets, and the taller ceilings emphasise a feeling of calm clear-headedness. Features include the vanilla-hued Venetian plaster walls, limestone benchtops, white-oak joinery, impressive La Cornue range cooker and timber bar stools. **DINING AREA** (opposite) Defined by the sculptural brass Ophelia pendant light by Stahl+Band, this space has Pierre Jeanneret-style dining chairs gathered around the mid-century-inspired timber table (for similar, try Life Interiors). Another large framed art photograph by Diego Uchitel sits above the console, while a striking portrait by Erwin Olaf adds a dash of mustard to the room.



**GREAT FINDS**

ADDITIONAL PRODUCT SOURCING: KATE HASSETT

**CLOCKWISE** (from top left) NSW Leather cream and beige cowhide rug (180cm x 170cm), \$484, Temple & Webster. Pierre Jeanneret Re-Edition 'Office V Leg' chair, POA, Tigmi Trading. *Bowie*: Hollywood 1993 limited-edition Polaroid reproduction print, POA, Diego Uchitel Prints. Ligne Roset 'Togo Fireside' chair, from \$1425, Domo. Lucille cushion in Cream, \$39.95, James Lane. Sheridan 'Wharton Breakfast' cushion in Bitter Chocolate, \$89.99, Myer. Calacutta Viola marble surface, POA, Artedomus. E15 'Backenzahn' side table in European Oak, \$1465, Living Edge. Hairpin bench seat, \$197, Chairforce. Kenya pedestal bowl, \$129.95, Madras Link. Heirloom table lamp, \$349, Madras Link. Stage marble side table, \$599, RJ Living. Painted antique pot, \$210, Clo Studios.





**DESIGNER TIPS**  
**Cortney Novogratz,**  
*The Novogratz, New York*  
 Home-transformation handouts

**+ Building on a sloping block**

"Tackling a site like that can trigger stress, no matter how seasoned a design professional you are. Los Angeles construction can be very challenging and building into a hillside is not for the faint-hearted. That was definitely one of the main challenges of this renovation."

**+ Renovating an older home**

"Try to keep the character of the home while at the same time making sure you have everything modernised and working perfectly. Sometimes you can't save old things, or homes, due to issues such as

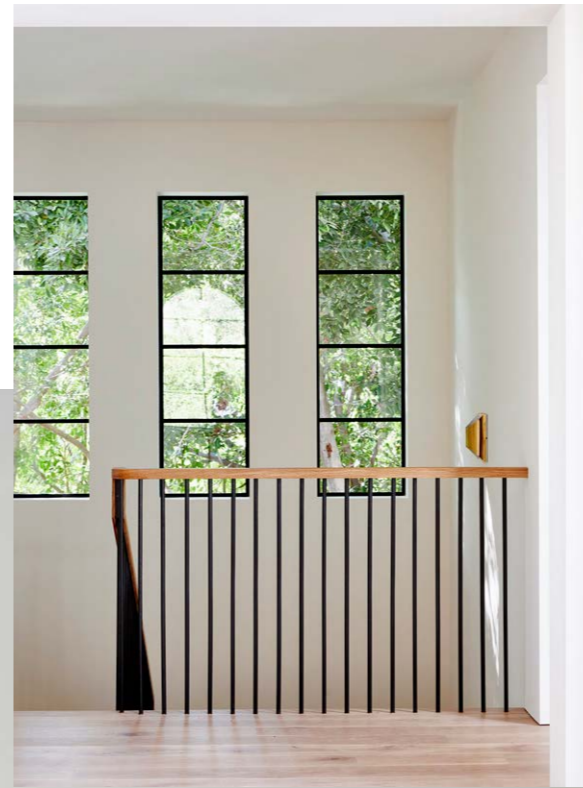
mould or asbestos. We feel a clean slate is the best way to recreate a canvas and bring back the old charm through textiles, fabrics, antiques and art."

**+ Transforming a room with colour**

"Paint is the best way to create an entirely new canvas. We also love using vintage lights and cool, unique pieces."

**+ Choosing art**

"When it comes to selecting art, people say you should buy what you like, but I take it deeper. I recommend having some knowledge of the art or artist, and understand why you like the piece. Our art also makes us happy."



**MAIN BEDROOM** (above) Located on the home's new top level, this is a light-filled sanctuary that flows onto a private balcony with views across the city. The Novogratzes found the chaise at a flea market in Paris. Their Charles Dudouyt table lamps are from Orange Furniture. For a similar style of bed, try MCM House. Artwork by Ivan Witenstein. On the balcony is a faded Willy Guhl 'Hourglass' planter, also from Orange Furniture, which is one of many that appear throughout the home. **GUEST ROOM** (opposite top) On the ground floor, with easy access to the pool, this space features a bed and rug from The Novogratz furniture range, coordinated with an artwork by Tracey Emin and a vintage chair from Orange Furniture. **MAIN ENSUITE** (opposite bottom) Breezy and natural in colour, this wet area is a soothing retreat with a freestanding tub, elegant fixtures and metal-framed windows that swing open to the beautiful garden.