

In the LIVING ROOM, RM Schindler built-in sofas, covered in Lee Jofa mohair; reproductions of RM Schindler coffee tables; Dosa ottomans; Ethiopian chair (towards rear window, c. 1940) from Galerie Half; white Hans Wegner Ox chair (c. 1950s) from JF Chen; Le Corbusier sling chair (c. 1965); Nun floor lamp by Pierre Chareau; Lisa Johansson-Pape table lamp from Galerie Half; cowskin rugs from Pure Rugs and Grand Splendid.

SPATIAL PURPOSE

The dual drives of creating a family space and honouring the original architect's intent made Pamela Shamshiri's home restoration a true labour of love.

BY TIFFANY BAKKER PHOTOGRAPHED BY ANSON SMART



THIS PAGE: designer Pamela Shamschiri. OPPOSITE PAGE: in the BREAKFAST ROOM, original table designed by RM Schindler for the house; Jean Prouvé Vitra Standard dining chairs; Alma Allen stool; Paul Henningsen light from Galerie Half; vintage clock from Object.



Designer Pamela Shamschiri and her sons, Reza, 13, and Basel, 8, share a bit of an in-joke about RM Schindler, the pioneering Modernist architect who built their 325-square-metre Los Angeles home in 1947. “We joke that he’s a ghost here, just floating through,” laughs Shamschiri, pouring tea in the galley kitchen. Even putting a tree in the front window caused serious angst. “We were whispering, ‘Schindler would really not approve.’”

Shamschiri, who runs the design firm Studio Shamschiri with her brother, Ramin (their celebrity clients include Oscar-winner Anne Hathaway and musician Beck), was initially drawn to the home because of a burgeoning interest in architectural preservation and history. “I wasn’t necessarily looking for a Schindler house, but I’m happy it happened because it embodies so many of the values and principles that we design by,” she explains, “like mixing high design with low materials, carving out space, and indoor-outdoor living.”

The home’s anchor is the living room, which juts out from the hillside, high above Los Angeles’s Laurel Canyon. Inspired by the

architect’s love of the cliff dwellings of the Pueblo Native Americans in Mesa Verde, Colorado, the room’s walls of glass and sweeping treetop views give the family an immediate connection to the outdoors. “It’s like a spatial cave to view nature,” Shamschiri says.

Things weren’t always so serene. Shamschiri recalls going inside the home before she bought it in 2008 and being so dismayed by the 1980s renovations it had undergone that she couldn’t imagine how to restore it per Schindler’s original intent. The ceiling wood had been sandblasted white, windows had been changed with metal that covered all of the construction-grade plywood Schindler preferred, a bay window had been added to the kitchen and random glass walls had been erected. “I mean, there were 17 layers of paint that we stripped,” Shamschiri remembers. “The home had lost its spirit.”

To resurrect the structure’s interiors, the designer delved into Schindler’s meticulous archives. She remade the built-in plywood dining table and chairs based on his original drawings and photographs as well as his coffee tables and asymmetrically angled sofas. Still, she wasn’t slavish about getting every detail exact. »



THIS PAGE: in the POOL AREA, landscaping by The Tropics Inc and L.A.-based landscape designer Matthew Brown; Shamsbiri's son Basel and Roquefort the dog play in the graffiti-decorated pool. OPPOSITE PAGE: in another view of the pool area, vintage Gae Aulenti Locus Solus chairs and ottomans, covered in outdoor fabric by Perennials.





THIS PAGE: in another view of the living room, Shamsbiri's own reproductions of RM Schindler-designed table and chairs. OPPOSITE PAGE: in the MAIN BATHROOM, hinoki tub by Bartok Design; Modern Basics bath tiles by Heath Ceramics; wooden stump by American sculptor Alma Allen.

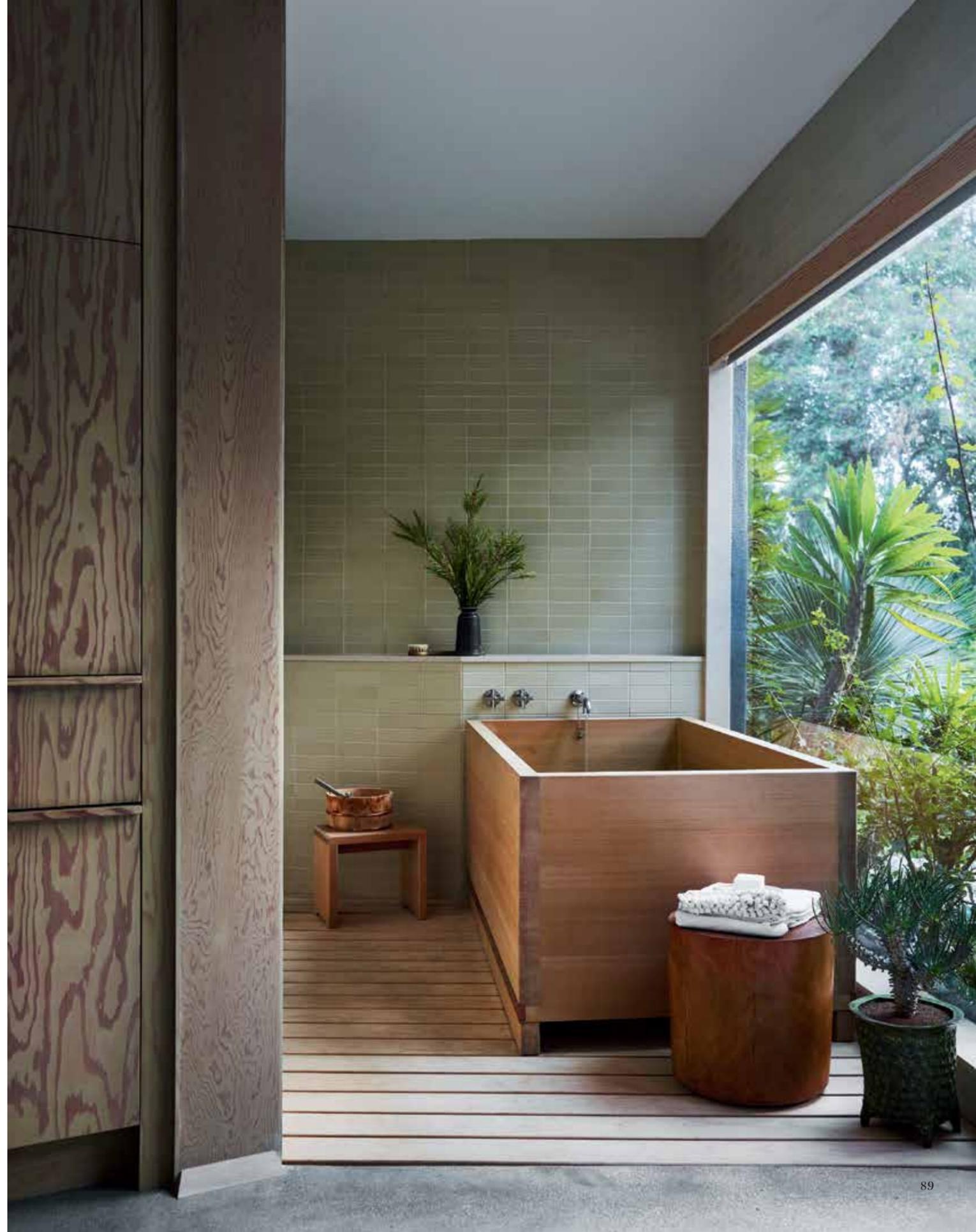
« She also added pieces she thought would sit comfortably alongside Schindler's principles — such as the stunning Piet Hein Eek table and chairs, which were purchased during a trip to Amsterdam. “He was one of the first people to make furniture from reclaimed pieces,” says Shamsbiri. “I think it works so well here because it's the same ethos; it's a beautifully designed chair with really old pieces of wood.”

Indeed, wood — usually inexpensive plywood — informs much of the design principle behind the home. “You can simplify and achieve the same level of design and thought regardless of the material you're using,” she says. She chose plywood for the Japanese-inspired main bathroom that was added downstairs and features a hinoki cedar tub and steam room. “The bathroom looks like it's original, but it's not,” she says. “In terms of what I designed for the house, it's my favourite part.” The outdoor deck, with furniture by Los Angeles artist John Williams, was an addition that Shamsbiri says adds a whole wing to the house. “We kind of live out here. It's been such a nice addition.”

The pool — adorned by murals and graffiti painted by her boys and other guests — is next in line for repairs. In the meantime, Shamsbiri says, “the kids love it”. It's clear that family life has informed much of Shamsbiri's design thinking. The kitchen was expanded and reconfigured galley-style so she could achieve her long-held goal of having a cooking area with plenty of benchtop space and a clear path to the living room — and also keep her kids within earshot when doing their homework. “Kitchens from back then are not suitable for today,” she notes. “I love a lot of people cooking in the kitchen together.”

Ultimately, when it comes to her kids and their rambunctious border collie, Roquefort, tearing through the house, Shamsbiri isn't at all precious. “My kids skateboard down the hallway, and Roquefort has the run of the house, so it's fine,” she says. “I feel like we honoured Schindler and his work in the restoration of the building. But once it came to living in it every day, I thought, ‘You know what? It's time for it to be ours.’” *VL*

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“THERE WERE 17 LAYERS OF PAINT WE STRIPPED. THE HOME HAD LOST ITS SPIRIT”

THIS PAGE: in the MAIN BEDROOM, dresser by Gilbert Robde for Herman Miller; Dunbar chair, upholstered with Loro Piana fabric; BBDW Captain's mirror; Apparatus Studio hallway lights; cowskin rugs from Pure Rugs and Grand Splendid; Farrow & Ball Inkyra Blue paint. OPPOSITE PAGE: on the DECK, low table by Tenio; other furniture by Los Angeles artist John Williams; landscaping by The Tropics Inc.

