

An asymmetrical collage named $1+3=1$ House



By Sam Lubell

How do you triple the size of a house when it sits on a small lot in Venice, California? Young Los Angeles architects Steffen Leisner, Ali Jeevanjee, and Phillip Trigas faced this challenge when they collaborated on expanding a house for a couple living in a 970-square-foot, avocado-colored Venice bungalow with shingled siding and a gabled roof near Abbot Kinney Boulevard, the town's vibrant central drag.

The owners—a filmmaker and a multimedia artist—asked the architects to provide them with 2,500 square feet of new space on the bungalow's long, narrow lot, including living and office areas as well as an art studio and rental unit. Since the bungalow, which contains a kitchen and an entertainment area, had been renovated only five years before, there was no point in knocking it down and starting from scratch. Knowing that a large addition would dwarf the existing home, the architects added three multi-story structures that distribute the new program around the site, making the existing bungalow a vital part of a new complex.

In front of the bungalow, which sits sideways on its narrow site, the architects built a 7.5-foot-wide, 26-foot-long, dark concrete pool, and added a 450-square-foot, two-story structure that includes a small, carved-out front porch, a work space, and a top-floor meditation studio. Behind the bungalow, the architects added a 1,000-square-foot structure that accommodates a sunken, 12-foot-tall living room, attached via an archway where they tore down the bungalow's east wall and a 160-square-foot second-floor bedroom. In the backyard, separated from the other two structures by a small, paved courtyard, they built a 1,065-square-foot building that contains a small, first-floor studio for renters, and a high-

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Project: $1+3=1$ House, Venice, Calif.
Architect: Steffen Leisner, Ali Jeevanjee, Phillip Trigas

Engineer: David H. Lau & Associates
General contractor: Calasia Construction



The facade of the front structure angles upward (far left in photo, above left, and drawing, below). The walls of the living addition that flanks the original house (in blue below) and the adjacent rental unit/art studio building both cant outward, helping shape the unique courtyard (above and below).



1. Pool
2. Spa
3. Deck
4. Library
5. Office
6. Dining
7. Living
8. Courtyard
9. Rental unit
10. Meditation room
11. Master suite
12. Art studio

The kitchen/dining room in the existing bungalow opens onto the living room (bottom). Tucked under a plywood ceiling, the second-story master bedroom suite resides in the addition at the back of the bungalow (below). The art studio is on the second floor of the back addition (right, with a functioning bathtub on the landing).



ceilinged, second-floor artist's loft. Above this, the architects provided the basic infrastructure for a rooftop lounge.

Spaces flow smoothly into one another: For example, the entrance hall and newly renovated kitchen in the existing bungalow open onto the new living room. A full-height window in the living room connects the space visually to the courtyard, while an open, wall-size window in the artist's loft offers views of the neighborhood.

By clearly differentiating the new structures, the architects complemented the bungalow rather than imitating it. In the process, they used a sophisticated modern palette of construction materials, specifying modestly priced items such as polished concrete floors, exposed plywood ceilings and doors, and greenish-blue windows with aluminum frames that kept the cost down to \$700,000. The structures too are inexpensive: simple wood-frame construction with gray hard-trowel stucco walls.

The architects designed the unusual progression of indoor and outdoor spaces and the house's intriguing geometries to generate visual drama, expand the sense of space, and maximize interior daylight, says Leisner. They also needed to meet Venice's often-quirky building codes, which, among other things, call for several parking spots on the site. Steeply pitched corrugated-metal roofs above the new structures face in different directions, frame lofty views out, and create what looks like a miniature village in elevation.

While the differences in scale, shape, and color between the existing house and the additions can be jarring at first, they create a small urban collage that seems appropriate for the makeshift quilt that is Venice. "We started with a strong idea," says Leisner. "Then we threw in the constraints and let the design happen." ■

Sources

Exterior cladding: *La Habra*
Roofing: *Galvalume Plus*
Windows: *Metal Window Corporation*

Glazing: *Solarban 60*

Bathroom tile: *Bisazza*
Paint: *Behr*
Bath fixtures: *Kohler*
Toilets: *Toto*