



One step *beyond*

Ryan and Diego's open-plan, ranch-style home in LA is designed so that rooms flow from one to another with the utmost of ease

Photography - Richard Powers
Words - Jenny Tucker



Home profile

THE OWNERS Ryan Brown and his partner Diego Monchamp, both interior designers. They live with their daughter Chloe, eight. The couple are co-owners of interior design company Brown Design Group.

THE PROPERTY A Fifties ranch-style house in the Hollywood Hills, Los Angeles. The property is on one level and comprises a main open-plan living room, dining area and kitchen. There is another open-plan section, which includes the master bedroom, bathroom, office and dressing room. There are also two more bedrooms and bathrooms, a laundry room, den and WC. In the back garden, there is an outdoor swimming pool.

POOL AREA

With the LA climate, it was essential for the family to have a pool. Ryan and Diego spend a lot of their time outdoors. 'There are always kids at our house,' says Ryan. 'Running in and out of the yard. We love it.'

GET THE LOOK The poolside furniture is from US homeware company Design Within Reach.

LIVING ROOM

The oppressive low ceilings were removed throughout, then raised and replaced with tongue-and-groove. The intention was to create space, but to keep the atmosphere of the area welcoming by choosing wood over plaster.

GET THE LOOK The sofa was specially designed by Ryan and Diego. 'We wanted something cool yet comfy,' says Ryan. They also had the coffee table and the blue and wood chairs custom-built, basing the designs on vintage photos they'd found. The Moroccan rug is from HD Buttercup in LA. The tiles around the fireplace are from US store Arto Brick.



It's a very special home that makes a serial mover

put down roots. But this traditional Californian-style construction, with its simple, ground-hugging profile, snared interior designer Ryan Brown and his partner Diego Monchamp at first glance. 'We're pretty picky,' admits Ryan, 'and we'd seen a ton of houses beforehand. But we loved that it was built on one level, there was a pool, it felt rural (but close to the city) and boasted the most beautiful views from the hills. We started drawing plans for the renovations the same day we saw it. The owners hadn't even accepted our offer.'

Two years later and the pair are still deeply ensconced. 'We have a tendency to bounce around,' says Ryan. 'We've lived in Europe, South America and the US, in loads of different houses. I actually got into design because I'd buy real estate, renovate it, then move on every four to five months. But now our daughter is older, we realise we need to stay put. But when we tell our friends and family that, they raise their eyebrows, smile and say, "Yeah, sure you are".'

Even though the house ticked plenty of boxes, the interiors were stuck in a time capsule when the couple first saw it. The family who built the property in the Fifties were now the vendors and although they'd lovingly nurtured their home, the lava stone fireplace, original bathroom tiles, orange colour scheme and aluminium windows had never been updated.

'Obviously, we wanted to start from scratch and with the exception of the roof, everything was replaced,' explains Ryan. 'We tore out the rooms to make it open plan and raised all the ceilings – some of the original ones were only seven-feet high, which was so oppressive. Also, we wanted to add loads of glass, especially at the back, to bring in more light and give the impression of endless space.'

The construction work was completed within six months and Ryan admits they worked at breakneck speed, often poring over the design after finishing their day jobs and once Chloe was tucked up in bed.



'It would be one in the morning and we'd still be discussing which bathroom would go where,' he says.

Essentially, they wanted to utilise the simplicity of single-level living. Because of the LA climate, hanging out poolside is standard, so seamless sliding glass doors were a must. 'We're big entertainers and there's never a dull moment in our household,' says Ryan. 'Kids coming and going, friends over for dinner... We wanted a place where people could go from the pool to the dining area to the sofa and it would feel like one big, open, communal space. We also love the fact that we can leave all the glass doors open and walk from the kitchen, across the back yard and into our bedroom. Who would ever miss loads of stairs?'

When quizzed about the furnishings, Ryan reveals that everything was either designed or bought from scratch. 'The last house we sold, the buyers wanted everything inside it too, so we had to start again,' he says, laughing. 'Of course, it's fun buying fresh, but being a designer means I see everything that's out there. Sometimes I find it hard to make a decision when choosing for our own home and we have to live with it.'

Ryan also admits that because it's him and Diego making joint choices, their style veers towards the masculine. But what happens when their daughter wants pink floral? 'Ha, ha, we've already gone through that stage and come out the other side,' he says. 'Diego and I used to joke that the design gene had skipped a generation with our daughter. But she's young, she's still got time for taste.'

So, with everything in place and life pottering along, is this really their forever home? 'It's right for us now,' concedes Ryan, 'but I'll admit, you never know what the future holds. We do so love other cultures and we have been talking about moving to Barcelona for a year. Perhaps that will happen...' The eyebrows of those friends and family are currently rising in a unison chorus of *told-you-so!*

See more of Ryan and Diego's work at browndesigninc.com



Home truths

RYAN, WHAT'S THE FIRST THING YOU DO IN THE MORNING? I get up and make myself a 'bulletproof coffee'.

It's a special brew, you'll have to Google that one. Gives me tons of energy for the day.

AND THE LAST THING AT NIGHT? Hmm... I try to wind down with an hour of reading or TV – when I can.

WHAT'S YOUR FAVOURITE SUMMER SMELL? Jasmine growing in the neighbourhood.

TELL US SOMETHING WE DON'T KNOW ABOUT LOS ANGELES... It's a fab city, but I do feel bad for tourists.

It's so spread out and sometimes it's difficult to find great spots. A new hot area to share – La Brea Ave. It has loads of cool stores for clothing and furniture.

WHAT'S THE ONE THING YOU'D LOVE TO OWN? A pied-à-terre in Paris, specifically Le Marais. Because it has cool architecture, shopping, cafés, everything!

WHICH TRAVEL DESTINATION SOOTHES YOUR SOUL? Europe in general. We try to visit at least once a year. We love Spain, Italy and France.

SEA OR SWIMMING POOL? Sea, no doubt. I grew up at the beach and nothing melts away the worries of the world like the ocean.



◀ DINING AREA

When it came to the renovation, the couple's love of entertaining was a crucial factor. 'Our 30ft vintage Balinese table is one of the few things that has followed us everywhere - we built this whole section around it,' says Ryan.

GET THE LOOK The dining chairs are by Hans J Wegner from Danish Modern LA. The light fittings are by Stimulight at Etsy. The picture of the pointing lady, created by using tiny dots of nail varnish, is called Julia on Lavender by Paul Rusconi.

KITCHEN ↑

Diego is the cook in this household, so he took the lead when it came to what went where in the kitchen. A place for onlookers to sit and chat while he prepares food was part of the deal.

GET THE LOOK The marble-topped island came from US homeware store Schoolhouse Electric, while the main units are by Ikea. The handles on the units are from US hardware firm Emtek and were added to make a stronger statement. The stools are from LA store Modernica and the tiles on the wall are from Arto Brick.



MASTER BEDROOM ↑

Comfort and practicality go hand in hand. 'Although I tend to function at a million miles an hour, being able to relax is important too,' says Ryan. 'This area had to feel inviting.'

GET THE LOOK The bed was custom-designed by Brown Design Group. Key factors are the leather-tiled headboard, integrated nightstands and an overall appearance that the bed is floating off the floor. The vintage safari chair is from a dealer in Austria. The overhead reading light is an antique carnival sign of a large-scale billiard ball.

MASTER EN SUITE ↗

The bath and shower area was secluded from view with this freestanding hand basin and shelving unit, custom-made in walnut wood.

GET THE LOOK The unit was designed and made by Brown Design Group.

DRESSING ROOM →

'I adore my closet,' says Ryan, laughing. 'It makes me happy every time I walk in there.'

GET THE LOOK The vintage marble table and leather stools are from Big Daddy's Antiques in LA. The mid-century Sputnik lamp is from LA interiors emporium Downtown.





OFFICE ↑

This study area sits at the far end of the bedroom. Ryan wanted a working zone incorporated into the room as design ideas often come to him when he's relaxing in bed.

GET THE LOOK The tan Sorensen sofa is from US homeware store Restoration Hardware. The marble coffee table is from West Elm. The vintage desk is by Sven Aage Madsen from Danish Modern LA. The desk lamp is from US lighting specialist Arteriors.

CHLOE'S BEDROOM ↗

The hideout bed unit was designed with Chloe's input. She wanted a secret nook for playing in.

GET THE LOOK The bedside table is from CB2.com. The blinds were custom-built and painted in varying shades of blue.

The blueprint



MASTER EN SUITE

A bold mix of graphic tiles, striking glass and warm woods combine to make the bathroom an outstanding feature.

GET THE LOOK The Tulip bath is from Canadian bathroom specialist Wetstyle and the fittings are from Brooklyn-based Watermark. The reinforced glass shower unit was specially built by Brown Design Group. The wall tiles are from Porcelanosa.



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