

## Annie Barrett and Hye-Young Chung Design "Centered Home"

**Los Angeles, CA**—Architects Annie Barrett (of [aalso architects](#)) and Hye-Young Chung (of [HYCArch](#)) have completely transformed an existing Spanish-style house in Los Angeles for a couple anticipating semi-retirement, and the programmatic shifts that a new phase of life brings. Centered Home marks a long, deeply collaborative process between the architects, who run individual firms on opposite coasts, and the homeowners, who are passionate lovers of design and art with impeccable, exacting attention to detail. The home facilitates the owners' aspiration to approach their future "expansively, intentionally, and with curiosity," says Barrett.

Approaching Centered Home from the street, a dense screen of San Pedro cacti makes way for a minimalist rectilinear form clad in charred shou sugi ban rainscreen siding, standing in contrast to the landscape's polychromatic lushness. Informed by a balance of meditative solitude and exuberant communal living, the home is designed as a series of nested conditions organized concentrically: an interior "cube," within a mediating shell of space for communal activities, within the perimeter of landscape. The most private programs are at the core, and the most public are oriented in relationship to the landscape and city beyond.

"While inside the house, one is either within the cube, or living between it and the visually porous exterior envelope of the building, creating direct connections to nature and amplifying the sense of the cube as a volume within a volume—or, a home within a house," says Barrett.

Intimate activities like bathing, meditation, stretching, and sleeping take place within the central "cube" volume, while communal activities like cooking together, watching football with friends, and taking on creative projects occur between the cube and the exterior shell. Carefully detailed millwork on the face of the cube facilitates a smooth transition between these zones: one zone conceals panel-ready appliances and makes room for a skylight that pulls light down to the kitchen counter. The other zone conceals storage designed to hold everything from puzzles to craft supplies—objects supporting family pastimes that unfold in the spacious, light-flooded living room.

Overall, the interior is composed of custom textures and subtly mischievous details to produce a softly tactile, bright living area. Wide-plank Dinesen flooring runs throughout, and plaster provides a shimmering, ever-moving quality to the walls and ceiling, creating textural impact while retaining a neutral palette that allows the art and furnishings to provide warmth and vibrancy. Significantly, floor-to-ceiling windows perforate the home, deepening light into the space and framing the exterior landscape. Sculptural skylights concealed by cantilevered planes "play a game of peekaboo as you circle the space," says Chung, and add floods of luminosity.

Moving from the center of the home out, the core centroidal bedroom is characterized by a white oak vaulted ceiling whose skylight pulls morning light down into the space. On one wall, custom CNC-milled panels with soft grooves create a crenulated texture of shadows. Informed by an

interest in unexpected details, this millwork is sized to fit the couple's wardrobe with precision; for instance, individual shoes were measured to ensure ample and accurate spacing. "We were intent on enhancing the lived experience of the owner and wanted to ensure we were meeting all their needs," says Chung. Also nestled in the central cube, a room for stretching and meditation is lined with softly ridged millwork that conceals storage dimensioned to accommodate yoga equipment, while white oak and felt wall panels and a custom ladder/peg system complete the space.

Emerging from the home's core, the rectangular geometry of a kitchen skylight responds to the form of the central cube and is mirrored by the kitchen island, painted black to accentuate its physicality in comparison to the flood of white light above. Humorous, playful customizations like a hidden, kick-activated step-stool below the sink and a custom kitty-litter drawer integrate into the millwork.

Adjacent, the living/dining room is activated by a custom skylight developed to pull the ceiling skyward and create faceted geometries that reflect south-western light through the space. "The unexpected and rigorously attuned geometry of the skylight itself and the shaped living room ceiling below produces a fluctuating reading of the room that shifts radically when viewed from north to south as one passes across the space," says Barrett.

This aperture amplifies the room's warm, vibrant furnishings (selected collaboratively by Barrett and the owners) and graphic artworks from the couple's collection. On the north wall, a Neowall sofa by Living Divani and gridded Sol Lewitt installation above are flanked by floor-to-ceiling windows that frame views of the greenery filling the side and front yards, respectively. Likewise, two expansive windows on the east wall create a lush, full-bleed backdrop for a custom dining table, made of Douglas Fir planks with whitewash finish and designed by Barrett.

Hallways leading to the rear of the house are also punctuated with tall windows. In a divergent but equally sensitive approach to natural light, the south wall was substantially thickened to respond to the blazing sun and heat conditions, while providing ample storage. Two offices are placed at the rear, overlooking the backyard and pool.

Like Centered Home's interior, outdoor spaces are honed to the couple's particular way of life and interests. "The project was commissioned in anticipation of the couple's semi-retirement, and they approached the design process less as a means towards an end and more as an opportunity to deeply consider how their constructed environment would participate in shaping 'phase two' of their life," says Chung of the project.

The collaborative nature of this project cannot be overstated. When the owners reached out to Barrett, an old friend, to work from Brooklyn on the design of their home, they had questions about how the process would work at such a distance. "It was deeply important to all of us that

the process be open, inquisitive, and inspiring and I immediately thought of LA-based Hye-Young and how we could cultivate exactly that together, 3,000 miles apart,” says Barrett.

The architects and clients joined together for marathon 8-hr meetings regularly throughout the intensive design process, to ensure every detail of the project had been harmoniously discussed. “The evidence of the care and thought that went into the house was born of endless conversations, sketches and ideas amongst everyone in the project,” continues Chung. “The vision was built on a foundation of joyful collaboration, and it shows in every detail of the house—down to the felt scribe around the outlets.”

### **Project Credits:**

**Design Architect: aalso architects**

**Interiors: aalso architects**

Annie Barrett - Principal Architect

Alex Collier - Project Manager

**Architect of Record: Hye-Young Chung Architecture (HYCArch)**

Hye-Young Chung - Principal Architect

Meaghan Pohl - Project Manager

**Construction: GHBW**

**Structural:** Ibarra / Marco Ibarra

**Lighting:** Theia Lighting / Kathryn Toth

**Landscape:** Hocker Design - Landscape Architect / David Hocker

### **Project details by room:**

#### **Kitchen / Dining:**

- Island: Custom 11' island with Neolith sintered porcelain countertop and integral [PITT burners](#)
- Table: Custom design by Annie Barrett; [Dinesen](#) Douglas Fir planks with whitewash finish
- Dining table lights: [Foscarini Aplomb](#) (white) suspension fixtures
- Dining table chairs: Fritz Hansen [Drop Chair](#) custom upholstered in [Maharam](#) Divina and Huddle fabrics
- Island stools: [Omera Stool](#) in walnut / maple by Philip Von Hase Timothee Boyat
- Tile: [Pico by Ronan and Erwan Bouroullec](#) for Mutina
- Artworks by Julian Opie (east wall) and Seton Smith (south wall)

**Living:**

- Sofa: [Neowall sofa by Living Divani](#)
- Lounge Chair: [Metropolitan Chair](#) by Jeffrey Bennett / B&B Italia
- Lounge Chair: [Husk Chair](#) by Patricia Urquiola / B&B Italia
- Side Tables: [Rabbit and Tortoise collection](#) by Studio Juju for Living Divani
- Rug: [Bravoure 60 rug](#) by Kvadrat
- Table lamp: [Sage LED table lamp](#) by Nao Tamura
- Hearth: [Cocoon Aeris](#) suspended hearth
- Artwork by Sol LeWitt (north wall)

**Steam Room:**

- Custom teak bench and integrated toilet seat
- Tile: [Pico by Ronan and Erwan Bouroullec](#) for Mutina
- Sink: Alape
- Controls: Dornbracht Faucet; Vola Shower Controls

**Meditation / Stretching room:**

- [Ribsy](#) Felt wall panels by FilzFelt
- Custom white oak storage / stretching millwork

**Window Seats:**

- Custom upholstery in Maharam Huddle fabric
- Light fixture: [LaDOdo](#) by domenico de palo for viabizzuno

**Bedroom:**

- Stool: [July stool](#) by Nao Tamura
- [Artemide Dioscuri](#) wall-mounted light fixtures
- Custom integrated bedside tables
- White oak ceiling
- Plaster wall finish

**Studies:**

- [Slumber poof](#) by Casalis
- [Atlas Industries](#) storage system
- [Zig Zag chair](#) by GERRIT THOMAS RIETVELD / Cassina

**Throughout:**

- Flooring: [Dinesen Ash](#) 300mm planks w/ Lye and white oil finish
- Windows: Fleetwood
- Sliding doors (south): [Otiima](#) 38 Series Classic

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HYCA  
Hye-Young Chung Architecture

- Plaster wall finish

**Outdoor:**

- Chairs: [Junya Ishigami "Family Chairs"](#)