

NOT YOUR MOTHER'S



STORY BY DAWN MOORE | PHOTOS BY GRE

R GRAND- S PRE-FAB

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I love the look on people's faces when I tell them I live in a trailer park. “Is she kidding?” their dilated pupils exclaim. Head tilt (theirs). Beat (mine). “Really.” I confirm.

I had been living a highly unsustainable life in a mid-century Encino Hills ranch for eight years. 3000 square feet of published perfection: formal landscaped gardens, Schumacher fabric-covered walls, marble baths. The term “grown-up” would be periodically uttered by friends as in, “she’s such a grown-up.” (You know, even if you technically are, no one wants to be called one.) The maintenance of this environ had taxed both my psyche and wallet when finally, a disobedient sprinkler head made me throw in the towel. Now what.





I love my vintage antler chandelier over the Victorian marquetry dining table. The rustic with the refined. A 17th century "Plan for the Entertainment of Supper" is the perfect blueprint for a feast.



“The hillside site begged for walls of glass to allow the sparkling San Fernando Valley to spill within.”

A Trex deck was carved out of the postage-stamp lot by stepping the first two modules, which both the master bedroom and dining room open to from French doors. Rebar and redwood comprise the guard rail.





“Experienced with building homes, but not with one built on wheels, to say I was **doe-eyed would be gentle.”**

If you're going to live in L.A. you should have a view, I reasoned. And quirky architecture. Well, a kooky trailer park in Topanga Canyon certainly qualified for the later. When I learned I could create a custom home, own the property and sequester myself gazing at a multi-million dollar view, I was in.



Right: Editing dozens of family scrapbooks led to this gallery of inspiring vintage photos of my parents. The hall frames a spectacular northern view of the San Fernando Valley.







Custom sisal rugs define living from dining areas. The work "Medium II" features a memory skirt filled with talismans and holds court from a 1980s glass coffee table.

The home's 1625 square feet was designed as a single open space for living, working, and cooking. Art including African shepherd staffs, a silvered bronze by Jean Dalou, and a drawing by Frank Gehry of Bilbao, is tucked into every corner.

Having always loved the board and batten cottages of Montecito's San Ysidro Ranch, I took my cue from their stone fireplaces and weathered floors for the home's vibe, but looked to Case Study architecture for the volume and light. Experienced with building homes, but not with one built on wheels, to say I was doe-eyed would be gentle. However, a partnership with premier manufactured-home builder Silvercrest and their savvy agents Structural Consultants significantly reduced my accelerating angst.

The hillside site begged for walls of glass to allow the sparkling San Fernando Valley to spill within. Clerestory windows and skylights in the kitchen, bathrooms and hallway caused some re-figuring of the truss system (and subsequent grumbling by the factory's engineers), but proved crucial to maximize the view and energy usage.







“In fact, with the low E dual-pane windows, tankless water heater and energy efficient appliances, my utilities bill are never more than \$150. Combined.”

Chalk up one for off-site building.

Soulful interiors - i.e. ones with integrity - come from the thoughtful display of your stuff, not stuff made to look like your stuff. That said, paring my stuff down to a half-sized home required quite a bit of editing. Self-medicating and editing. An extraordinary turn-of-the-century Rococo game table made the cut; the collection of Sevres porcelain, not. A mahogany balloon-back chair with original horsehair seat, in; the 200-piece collection of American cut glass, out.



Left page: A 19th century Chinese panel, midcentury crystal blocks and laughing “Kelpies” welcome visitors in the entry.
This page: Dopey (yes, originally mine) perched on the Mahogany balloon back chair keeps the burl wood Secretary company.



The master bath's natural light from the skylight and shower's 5-foot window (a favorite of my neighbors) falls across Ming porcelain and a French cane settee. Rock crystal drops added to the eBay chandelier infuse an organic glow.



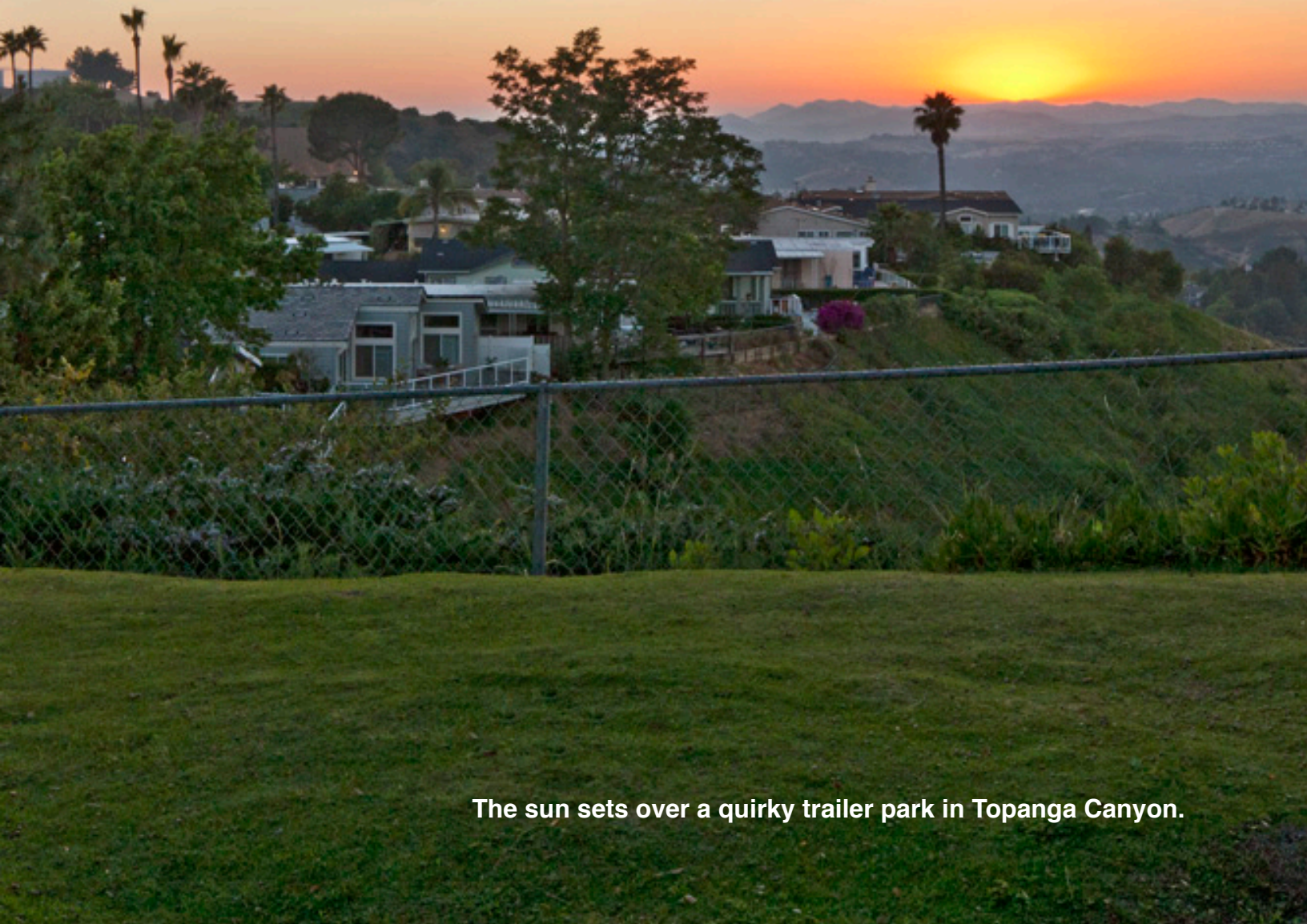
Clerestory windows allow both sun and moon to bathe the handpainted Grace wallpaper panels. Old Master drawings continue the master bedroom's sage and ivory hues. With a little irreverent burlap thrown in.





The living space was designed as a single open area genuflecting to the view. A neutral palette was chosen so the warm burl and walnut antiques could anchor the organic textures encouraged by the terrain. Sensual fabrics including velvety corduroy and chenille in blond and vicuna hues continue the visceral experience. And living in Topanga is nothing if not visceral. Can you say “sandalwood incense?”

After this experience can I envision a pre-fab utopia? You bet, just ask me.



The sun sets over a quirky trailer park in Topanga Canyon.