

# SIMPLE

Two die-hard Angelenos and their young children find comfort and happiness on a 2-acre ranch far from city life in Encinitas.

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Photographed by Nader Essa*

# THE LIFE

An L.A. family's new Encinitas home is located within Olivenhain, an equestrian community 10 minutes from the coast.







Los Angeles had been great to Don Carroll and his wife, Jessica Marks-Carroll. Born and raised in the city, Carroll has owned Dej, a successful hair studio in Sherman Oaks, for more than 20 years, while Marks-Carroll, a Chicago native, had her own clothing line and boutique on West Third Street before deciding to become a full-time mom to their children, Lola (9) and Beau (6).

"We always loved L.A., but something happened to me in 2016, and I had this kind of spiritual awakening," says Marks-Carroll. "We had a healer from Hawaii stay with us, and he said that while our house in L.A. had gorgeous views of the surrounding hills, we were only seeing the nature—we weren't touching the dirt and the trees. He suggested we get closer to the water, perhaps someplace like Hawaii or Encinitas. It got into my head."

Shortly after, Marks-Carroll took a trip with her sister to Omni La Costa Resort & Spa and was blown away by the surrounding area of Encinitas. The self-realization center, the beach, the bohemian boutiques—they all resonated. "I fell in love right away, but I had no idea how to get my family down here. Don had a successful business, the kids were happy in school... but I just knew this would be the place for us," says Marks-Carroll, who then introduced her family to the area the following summers of 2017 and 2018 by renting houses in nearby La Jolla for the season. "It was a great way to test the waters and see if we'd like it. Of course, everyone did. It was completely magical."

The couple began their house search with a clear vision in mind. Marks-Carroll wanted something that was on 2 acres of land, had at least 6,000 square feet of space and was enough of a fixer-upper so the couple could impart their own style on it. They also



From top: The living room features a framed photo of the family's hands; the foursome relaxes in the kitchen, which features a pop of color with the Bertazzoni range.



From left: The master features a four-poster bed from Alder & Tweed and nightstands from RH, above which Pierre Frey textiles are framed as art; the master bathroom is a refuge of calm.



wanted to be on a flat street for their kids to play on and not be too far from the water (Carroll is an avid surfer).

“We came across it in January 2019 when we were looking online,” recalls Marks-Carroll. “It looked like a dump, and Don looked at me and said, ‘That’s the house. I have no doubt.’” For starters, the house—a 1990s Sedona-inspired abode with lots of textured walls, most in shades of yellow—was poorly taken care of. However, Marks-Carroll acknowledges that the layout was incredible, and the land—2 acres of it—was a find, complete with tennis court, kids play structure and mini-golf. (The couple have since added a large garden, a swing pergola, a yurt and a chicken coop.) The couple saw it on Valentine’s Day and made an offer shortly after.

Located in Olivenhain, just 10 miles from the beach and within an equestrian community surrounded by trees and nature, the home and its neighborhood won the couple over with their soul and personality. “We didn’t even know this kind of place existed in California. It actually feels more like you’re in Tuscany,” says Marks-Carroll.

Although one of the things the couple bond over is their creativity, they conceded that they needed an expert to come in and help execute their design vision. Local interior designer Kitchy Crouse of KC Interior Design ([kc-interiordesign.com](http://kc-interiordesign.com)) worked with the couple to create a modern and bohemian space with quirky global accents.

“The first time I saw it, it was so ugly,” recalls Crouse. “The architecture was really outdated. For starters, the master bedroom had a ton of those glass cube blocks.” After ridding the home of any previous architecturally offensive references, Crouse worked with the homeowners to devise a layout more conducive to family life, enlarging the kitchen and dining rooms, as well as reworking the interior finishes. “It’s a big house, but we wanted to make every room thought about and used,” says the designer, who also incorporated the couple’s love of natural accents and crystals. “And we decided to add color in really controlled ways—for instance, the kitchen is white and calm, but then we brought in a burst of orange with the Bertazzoni range. And when we did introduce color, we went all the way.”

To that end, color is prominent in areas like the dining room, where an expansive piece of wallpaper from Pierre Frey makes an impactful statement next to a wood dining table the couple got in Mexico, which is surrounded by dining chairs from West Elm, and two accent chairs from Safavieh. On one end of the dining room, a sculptural console from Noir Furniture is placed against a charcoal-black wall. Dark tones and textured walls carry through to the poolroom, where dark-painted custom cabinetry, quartz countertops, a smoked glass-tile accent wall, and custom pool table and DJ booth commingle with braided wallpaper from Phillip Jeffries.

Beau's room carries a jungle theme, with custom wallpaper from Photo Wall. The bed is from RH; the sofa is from PB Teen.



However, nowhere is color more predominant than in the kids' rooms and play area. In Beau's room, a bed from RH—one of the few things the family brought with them from their previous home—is complemented by a custom swing and bookshelf. The striking wallpaper was custom created for the space online by a company called Photo Wall, giving it a jungle feel, while a natural fiber rug from Jaipur softens the space. Lola's room features a bed from RH, along with custom pillows, while an art piece entitled "She is Fierce" hangs above the bed. "We did a lot of the furniture shopping at the Las Vegas furniture show and came across this painting there," says Crouse. "Don and Jess loved it so much, the rest of the room's design was based on it."

In the play area, Crouse used color for drama. "You can't spend money everywhere," she says. "We experimented with shapes and created his-and-hers desks that were all built in. It instantly creates a fun space." Other accents in the room, such as the throw blanket and basket, are treasures hunted from the Rose Bowl Flea Market in L.A., while the rug was a serendipitous find at Target.

For the grown-ups, the master bedroom serves as a tranquil retreat. A plush, four-poster bed and pair of stools are from Alder & Tweed, while the blush-pink oversize chairs were discovered at Interior Define. Above the RH nightstands, framed textiles from Pierre Frey work as art. "I've always felt that something beautiful isn't judged by price," says

Marks-Carroll. "My favorite pieces in the home are a Picasso drawing from my father, a Ralph Lauren chandelier in the living room and a bullhorn piece I got at a swap meet for \$50."

Another favorite framed piece is a family photo. In the living room, flanked by a pair of dramatic, double-height curtains, an enlarged photograph of each family member's hands together in the prayer position is framed in a repurposed mirror. "It's a great first visual of the house and the feeling I wanted to create when people walked in. I wanted it to really feel like a family home," says Marks-Carroll. "It just shows that even when you think a change might be hard, you can always do it. If you're clear with your energy and intentions, things will just come together."

Although moving during a pandemic—the couple officially claimed their new residence in July—can have its challenges, they have no regrets about their new way of life. Carroll has since scaled back on his day-to-day responsibilities at the salon, commuting just a few days a week, reserving the rest of the days for family bike rides and surfing sessions. Now, the couple sees their next chapter inspired by their move, as the experience has made them want to start their own home-flipping company, Bootstrap Builders, and Marks-Carroll has created her own business, The Soul Lodge ([thesoullodge.com](https://thesoullodge.com)), based on her spiritual journey. "This home really found us," she says, "and we all have no doubt that we'll be here forever." ■