



Native scrub plants, including many varieties of cacti, surround the stark architecture of a concrete home that Jenny and Jonny Graham designed in northwestern Argentina.

OPPOSITE: In the living room, the vintage fiberglass chair is from Spitalfields Market in London, and the cocktail table on wheels was designed by Jonny. Artworks by Mariano Cornejo. For details, see Resources.

TIERRA

NOZON

In Argentina, a wild hilltop with views of the Andes becomes a creative canvas for a London landscape designer.

BY ANA KARINA ZATARAIN
PHOTOGRAPHS BY
MARK LUSCOMBE-WHYTE

The northwestern Argentine province of Salta offers a dramatic landscape where the imposing peaks of the Andes mountains frame Spanish Colonial architecture. Here, the farm where landscape designer Jenny Graham spent her childhood later became the same place she and her husband, Jonny, a commodities broker, chose to settle after three decades of living in London.

Though the vast terrain of the farm encapsulates areas for crops and cattle, it consists primarily of the sort of untouched nature that characterizes the region—low scrub vegetation and the surfeit of wildlife it attracts. “I believe the landscape should dictate what the architecture becomes,” says Jenny Graham of the site they selected for the home they designed. “We found a little barren zone on a hill where there wasn’t much wilderness to remove, and then the project just emerged.”

The ample one-bedroom residence, organized around an interior patio, is a contemporary take on the traditional typology of local farmhouses, with a nearby guest cottage featuring the same dimensions as the courtyard, as if extruded from the main volume. With a landscape so untamed, there is often a desire to mimic nature in the

architecture by employing natural materials and a subdued color palette. But Graham took a different route: The main home’s front doors are painted in bold hues of blue as well as in orange, her favorite color. The juxtaposition stands in pleasant tension with the enveloping wilderness that meets the facade.

Built in concrete block, the house was intended to feel not just connected to but inextricably linked with the landscape in all its scales: the surrounding greenery so close to the ground floor that one can make out all its details; the wide vistas of the mountains and sky framed by the upstairs windows. And so, the project functions almost as an allegory of our contemporary condition—the encounter between the artificial and the natural realms, a struggle in which one suspects and, perhaps unwittingly, even hopes the latter will emerge victorious.

For any landscape designer, including Graham, the decision to leave a terrain largely intact is an intentional one. “I did add some aloe plants and some agaves that are kind of scattered around,” she says of her subtle domestications. “I opened up, ever so slightly, a few views to the hills. But primarily, it is wilderness all around.”

In tune with the running theme of dichotomy, the sleek interiors are a different story altogether—polished concrete floors, details in chrome and aluminum, and pristine white walls contrast the occasional and vividly colored objects and artworks. One painting, Graham’s own, stands out—an orange crescentoid, one of the study drawings for a sculpture she made while living in London. Otherwise, the rooms are airy and minimal.

Early on, the owners decided to embrace their large, fairly empty spaces. “When we were designing, many people asked, ‘How are you ever going to fill this up?’” recalls Graham. “I said, ‘I’m never going to!’”

The couple’s days begin early, with the sun’s rise flooding their rooms with light. Leisurely breakfasts prepared in the vast kitchen are enjoyed in the even vaster dining area. Later, meandering walks through the farm in the company of Dulce and Rosa, their two dogs, are a fixture of their afternoons, which are otherwise spent working or painting in the studio, picking and arranging flowers, and conducting art workshops with the children who live on the farm. But Graham’s favorite activity is one in which the landscape is once again the protagonist.

“Depending on the time of day, there are shadows of the trees being cast on the walls, changing all day long,” she says. “You’re always aware of the weather here, of what the sun and moon are doing.” Hearing her say this, one understands her decision to leave most walls bare; her house is a stage upon which nature is projected. For someone who traded the buzzing streets of London for a slice of wilderness, this daily spectacle is surely worth making room for. ■

Jenny Graham with a vintage armchair in orange, her favorite color.



The kitchen’s complementary color scheme includes an aluminum door painted orange and Formica cabinetry in a custom cobalt. Dividing wall and floors in poured concrete; counters in polished cement with stone insets.



The antique enameled cast-iron tub in the primary bath came from Graham's childhood farmhouse in Argentina.

OPPOSITE, LEFT: A pair of puppy toys by Eero Aarnio for Magis perch on the folded sheet metal staircase. Artwork by Graham's brother, James Leach.

OPPOSITE, RIGHT: With no heating in the house, the bedroom's wood-burning fireplace comes in handy in the chilly winters. Custom bed and artwork above mantel by Graham.

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—JENNY GRAHAM