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Renovation



120

Kitchen and Bath

81

A smart refresh of your kitchen or bathroom can pay huge dividends. Learn from our favorite upgrades.

94 Case Study: Loft Apartment

100 Material Intelligence: Tile for Every Room

120 Dwelling: Bright Lights, Big Kitchen
A mid-century home in San Francisco by William Wurster gets a new entry-way that embraces city views and brings the house into the 21st century.

Landscape

105

Six modern houses that prove any home can open to the outdoors.

114 Case Study: Charleston Single



Fans of metal, see more in our story Top Brass, p. 82.

82

Preservation Colors

125

We reveal the tips and tricks of working what you've got through these five homes.

134 Case Study: Cape Cod

138 Material Intelligence: Sockets and Switches

147

Looking to add a burst of color to your project? Swipe an idea from a vibrant modern abode.

154 Case Study: Row House

160 Material Intelligence: Eco-Conscious Paint



158

Photo by Laura Flakorzinski (Top), John Short (Colors)

Bright Lights, Big Kitchen

A redwood-paneled bungalow from 1951 by noted Bay Area modernist William Wurster gets a loving renovation in San Francisco's Golden Gate Heights.



Project: Wurster Addition
 Designer: Jennifer Weiss Architecture
 Location: San Francisco, California
 Year Completed: 2012
 By Zahid Sardar
 Photos by Lucas Fladzinski

Designer Jennifer Weiss knows that artfully updating a pearl of mid-century design means discerning when to respect what's there and when to forge into the next century. Her thesis at Harvard's Graduate School of Design was on reworking modernist architecture, nicely situating her to refresh and add on to a boxy, L-shaped San Francisco bungalow from 1951 by influential Bay Area architect William Wurster.

Her clients, Rebecca Handler, a fund-raising consultant, and her husband, David Andrade, a finance professional, had lived with their two daughters for about a decade in the 1,700-square-foot home before considering alterations. Though the need for a new kitchen was pressing—the oven hadn't worked in a year—Handler and Andrade worried that changing the space would mean losing original details, like the signature vertical-board redwood walls and the small, humanistic scale that Wurster favored. They need not have feared, however, because Weiss's careful interventions maximized what they already had—stellar views and a charming courtyard—while adding a new foyer, some additional square footage, a new wall of glass, and updated fixtures. Fittingly enough, Weiss's work is entirely in keeping with one of Wurster's great declarations: "Architecture is for life and pleasure...and for people." ▶

Glass Act

Matching the kitchen's new courtyard-embracing wall of windows to those from the days of architect William Wurster was no small feat. Designer Jennifer Weiss credits the deft touch of the structural engineers at Holmes Culley for helping to create a wall "as light-feeling visually as the original," yet hardy enough to hold heavier double-paned glass.

holmesculley.com

Welcome Home

The renovation's tour de force was widening the entryway and installing the new, meticulously detailed wooden foyer doors between the living spaces and the courtyard. Weiss only half-kids that the way foreman and master carpenter Dan Krieg of BBC Construction lovingly matched the new doors to Wurster's "brings tears to my eyes."

bbconstruction.net

Kitchen Work

"Separating the kitchen and keeping it out of view was the norm during the 1950s," Weiss notes, so a primary goal of the renovation was to make it part of the everyday circulation of the house. She opened the kitchen wall that faced the garage, gaining about 60 square feet of space, which she used to form a foyer with French doors for a bright new entry. The space features a built-in redwood bench and connects to the courtyard.

“The bench, a shelf, a niche, a desk, and ribbons of redwood throughout the cabinets are episodic narratives and variations on a theme instead of being monolithic swaths of wood.”

—Designer Jennifer Weiss





Skyfall

To bring light into the remodeled areas, Weiss added two large round skylights by Richard Nagler at Skylight & Sun. After much debate about their shape, the team settled on circles as a nod to a subtle circular trim motif Wurster included elsewhere in the home.

skylights.com

Raising the Bar

"Inside, we opened up the kitchen by taking down walls above counter height," Weiss says. Although the footprint (about 325 square feet) remains essentially the same, opening the space created "visual and psychological connections between rooms," Weiss says. To delineate the open kitchen from the rest of the house, "we implied boundaries by raising the counter height for a bar and used different, lighter-colored materials in the kitchen." The new bar features Collins stools in Ocean with white leather seats by Room and Board.

roomandboard.com

Nice to Meet Hue

For a cheerful dose of color, Weiss picked yellow and orange penny-round tiles by Waterworks for the backsplash, a stove by Viking in Handler's favorite shade of orange (Pumpkin), and a table by Jared Johnson for Outerlands Design. Andrade quips that the high-gloss custom cabinets by JR's Woodworks made him "anxious before they arrived," but he's now come to appreciate the way they reflect light. ■■■

jrwoodworks.com

waterworks.com



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