





Addition and subtraction

Using her upcoming move as an opportunity to start fresh, this city homeowner reduced her collections—vintage wallpapers, salvaged light fixtures, artwork and more—by 60 percent, then focused on how best to reuse them in her new home.

By ERIKA HOWSARE

Photography by VIRGINIA HAMRICK

The first time she saw her house, no one lived there and the doors were not even locked. For years, its previous owner had held onto it, not yet ready to sell. But in a stroke of good timing, just when the current owner got interested, the house became available—something of a rarity in this coveted, leafy city neighborhood. She made contact with the seller and “bought it that day,” she says.

That was seven years ago. The lucky buyer was coming from a farm in Greene County where she’d collaborated with design/build contractor Enoch Snyder on renovations. The new house, built in 1930, had “good bones,” she says, but its layout was “wonky” and she knew she would need to make changes. Snyder reorganized the

floor plan and designed a rear addition including an art studio.

Snyder’s approach with additions is to make the new portion “blend as seamlessly as possible, making you wonder just exactly where the original house stops and the addition starts.” He carried materials and detailing from the old house into the addition, and, he says, “lowered the roof lines so that the mass of the addition didn’t overwhelm the main house.” On the exterior, field stone walls tie various areas, which lie at different elevations, together.

Early on, the owner called interior designer Alana Woerpel, whom she’d known for a decade. “I said, ‘You’re going to be my beacon in the storm,’” she laughs.

Moving was an opportunity to start fresh. “I wanted to change my living vibe to calm, empty and edited,” says the owner. Woerpel understood it would be a big change. “The farmhouse was warm, layered, textured,” she remembers. “This is much more serene.”

Edit and revise

The first basic task was to get rid of, the owner estimates, 60 percent of her things. “I looked at everything she had, measured, catalogued and decided what would make the cut,” Woerpel says. Possessions included not only furniture but the owner’s collections—vintage wallpapers, salvaged light fixtures, artwork and more. There

CONTINUED ON PAGE 43



Though the look is indeed very serene, it isn’t minimal—there is lots to see here—and it isn’t generic.



The house has a pleasant old-fashioned vibe throughout, with floral fabrics on Laura Ashley chairs, antique furniture and vintage collections mixed in.



Salvaged objects lend character and help marry the old portion of the house with the additions, as in the studio, where recycled windows illuminate the space with its built-in bookshelves and long farm table, or a powder room, where vintage wallpaper mingles with a custom vanity cabinet.





Like many pieces in the home, the kitchen island is salvaged. Once an antique counter and cabinet from a fabric shop, it is the centerpiece of the room. "The whole kitchen was built around it," says the client.



"Serenity doesn't mean 'not textured.' When you add sisal, raw wood and matchstick blinds"—as she did in the upstairs nook—"you're adding the texture back in." **ALANA WOERPEL**

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 41

was a need to pare down, but no urge to dump possessions wholesale. Instead, Woerpel, Snyder and their client thought in terms of reusing and refreshing familiar objects. Woerpel says she appreciated the contrast with what she calls "our throwaway culture."

One major strategy was to simply repaint many pieces of furniture. Woerpel refers in shorthand to the new house as "white," but few elements are stark white. Instead, it showcases many warm, subtle shades of cream, buff, distressed and antique whites and other neutrals. David Currier, a local painter, refinished a number of pieces for the owner in whites that appear to have the patina of time.

Though the look is indeed very serene, it isn't minimal—there is lots to see here—and it isn't generic. The home clearly communicates the owner's unique sensibility through quiet patterns and recurring motifs. For example, moons and stars show up in many artworks and objects throughout the home, from a small framed print facing the side door, to a rug in an upstairs reading nook.

Salvaged objects lend character and help Snyder's addition marry with the old portion of the house. "We searched salvage dealers throughout Virginia and beyond," says Snyder. "We found transoms, doors, hardware, sinks, you name it. It's all meant to blur the lines between old and new."

Unified look

In the studio, salvaged windows illuminate the space with its built-in bookshelves and long farm

table, repainted in white. A tiny vintage sink fits into a corner, relocated from a powder room that used to be off the original house's hallway—so small that, says the owner, "a lady could not sit down in it."

The new powder room, near the studio, is more accommodating. Vintage wallpaper from the owner's collection is a perfect match for a blue closet door sourced from Caravati's in Richmond. A salvaged sink was given a custom vanity cabinet by Snyder, and antique curtain holdbacks flank the window.

In the kitchen, the island is an antique counter and cabinet repurposed from a fabric shop. "The whole kitchen was built around it," says the client. It anchors a room filled with subtle color and texture: green vintage tile, stained-glass windows used as cabinet doors and a restored 1950s stove exactly like the one the owner grew up with.

Snyder added a wide doorway between kitchen and dining room, where strangely there'd been no opening previously. Woerpel and her client gave the dining room the quietest palette of any room in the house: a sisal rug, white paint on the round metal table and sideboard, linen drapes in a color called "beach." A collection of antique candlesticks fills the fireplace mantel.

There's a pleasant old-fashioned vibe throughout, with floral fabrics on Laura Ashley chairs, shutters repurposed as closet doors and a suite of fairy and nymph artworks on the piano room's long wall. Yet, as Snyder puts it, "It's not a collection of shabby-chic junk, but a seamless project filled with great details that back up

the design. Even when we had to buy new materials, [the owner] pushed me to find the real deal. We found a source for authentic reproduction subway tiles on the West Coast. She then scoured the internet and found some Art Deco accent tiles that we were able to mix in."

Woerpel's custom-made furniture and window treatments, and her understanding of the design's many layers, were key to achieving a unified effect—calm, but detailed. "Serenity doesn't mean 'not textured,'" she says. "When you add sisal, raw wood and matchstick blinds"—as she did in the upstairs nook—"you're adding the texture back in."

The owner's unique tastes are, through the shared vision of the team, able to find just the right expression here. Perhaps her quirkiest collection is a group of "stairways to heaven"—a type of woodworking project once popular in high school shop classes. Sharing certain stock elements, including the moon and star motifs found elsewhere in the house, yet individually customized by their many amateur creators, they are a kind of folk-art form—and, of course, the stairwell is the perfect place to hang them. Though the owner once possessed 150 of them, she displays here about two dozen of her favorites.

The house asks for the kind of appreciation that can only unfold over time—a collage of objects, eras and histories. "The credit goes to [our client] for her years of collecting," says Woerpel. "She was able to take so much of what she had and yet end up with a drastically different house than she had before."