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CELEBRATE
DAY OF
THE DEAD

RUSTIC REVISITED

A rustic still life arrangement featuring a wooden shelf with antlers, pinecones, pumpkins, and a vase of greenery. The scene is set against a white wall and a dark wooden surface. The top shelf holds a pair of large, curved antlers and a small branch with green leaves and a yellow fruit. The middle shelf holds a pinecone, a small pumpkin, and a dried leaf. The bottom shelf holds a large arrangement of pumpkins, pinecones, and antlers, along with a vase of greenery and two tall, thin green candles in wooden holders.

WHERE TO START WITH A GUT RENOVATION ON A THREE-MONTH TIMELINE?
DESIGNER ELIZABETH MORGAN ALBERT TOOK HER CUES FROM
THE WORLD OUTSIDE HER NORTHERN CALIFORNIA HOME AND BROUGHT
IN NATURAL MATERIALS, COLORS, AND TEXTURES.

BY KATHLEEN HACKETT PHOTOS DAVID TSAY PRODUCED BY EDDIE ROSS



For Elizabeth Morgan Albert, decorating her Sonoma County, CA, home for fall means walking around the corner to a neighbor's pumpkin patch, where she opts for imperfection and a variety of shapes and sizes.

All-over white brightens the living room and integrates the shelving nook.



Designer Elizabeth Morgan Albert took one look at the 85-year-old fruit trees behind a ramshackle 1960s house in Sonoma County, CA, and she was sold. Never mind the rotting siding, wacky layout, and foggy windows. Those things could be fixed. But a backyard orchard? That you don't find every day. So Elizabeth fast-tracked a three-month reno to get settled with her kids, Myles and Morgan, in time for the new school year. How'd she do it? "I had an absolute vision for the space," she says. Sticking to a limited palette of materials (heavy on the acacia wood and knotty pine) and painting almost every wall white simplified the decisions Elizabeth had to make at breakneck speed, with the added benefit of tying together the choppy floor plan. Embracing the home's quirks (some cockeyed shelving here, some underutilized square footage there) and filling it with her collections and some passed-down family furniture ensured the remodel didn't erase the soul of the place or of the family she's raising in it.



All the furniture has a story. The living room's camelback settee, top, was her grandmother's then her mother's. Elizabeth covered the original chintz in navy blue indoor-outdoor fabric. Another gift from her mom, the barrel back chairs have been in every home Elizabeth has lived in.

Plan A for the fireplace surround was to work with the existing brick, *opposite middle*, but demo revealed its condition was too poor to save. Plan B: Incorporate the same type of wood, knotty pine, used in the kitchen. Running floor to ceiling, the horizontal boards simplify and modernize the wall.

“
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”

ELIZABETH MORGAN ALBERT

A basket of fall produce and a few branches set a seasonal tone.



The combo kitchen and dining area got a major upgrade without changing the footprint. Removing upper cabinets visually integrates the spaces, and switching out a basic double sink for a deep apron-front model gives the highly visible area a showpiece.

Twelve-pane windows replaced inefficient models and contribute to the modern farmhouse vibe.



NEW ENOUGH

"You never want to entirely erase the charm of an old house," Elizabeth says. Here are three choices that gave her the mod farmhouse look and feel she wanted inside a 1960s shell.

WHITEWASH

Elizabeth painted all the walls Swiss Coffee and the trim Pure White (both Benjamin Moore). The all-white interior blots out any layout quirks and is a modern contrast with her traditional furniture.

CONSISTENCY

Acacia wood floors, knotty pine cabinets and paneling, and white subway tiles appear throughout the house. The repetition creates a calming visual flow from one room to the next.

STRAIGHT LINES

Flat, squared-off window trim and crown molding, rather than rounded or carved, imparts clean sophistication.

EAT

Basic white subway tiles are "so inexpensive and good-looking," Elizabeth says.

Elizabeth chose knotty pine cabinets despite the soft wood's rep for being easily dented. "I love the knots, and a few dings just give it character," she says. To make up for lost upper-cabinet storage, a little-used utility room off the kitchen became a pantry.





Elizabeth uses her ever-growing collection of chairs as sculpture and side tables. In son Myles' room, one of them pulls up to an antique rolltop desk that adds more storage and charm. The wallpaper is Feather by Serena and Lily.



1



2



3



4

1
PATIO

As the seasons change, so does this flexible outdoor seating area. For fall, a fire pit flanked by stained Adirondack chairs takes center stage. The arrangement blends into the tiered landscaping.

2
MUDROOM

Elizabeth solved the stray shoe problem by installing open shelves designed to accommodate sneakers and sandals. A utility sink makes the space work even harder.

3
MYLES' BEDROOM

Opening the wall over an odd waist-height cupboard revealed a big hollow space. Adding shelves, seating, and an access ladder turned it into a cozy reading nook.

4
THE ORCHARD

The trees are heaving with plums, pears, nectarines, cherries, persimmons, apples, figs, olives, and walnuts. "I open it up to friends and family for picking. There's no way I could use all that bounty!" ■