

Home & Garden

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BOOKS



Matthew Williams / © "Remodelista: A Manual for the Considered Home"

Fine tuning the plan

The owners of a home featured in "Remodelista: A Manual for the Considered Home," devised components for the kitchen with specialists at Ikea; their architect then fine-tuned the measurements and drew up the plans. Also pictured: Restoration Hardware's Boulangerie Table and vintage Danish chairs from Circa Modern.

Field guide for home renovators

Julie Carlson, the Mill Valley force behind site Remodelista, shares inspirations in her new book

By Chantal Lamers

When Julie Carlson set out to remodel her Mill Valley home in 2006, inspiration was scarce. Shelter magazines were folding and there were but a handful of design blogs on the Internet. So she found herself constantly on the phone comparing notes with pal Francesca Connolly, who was doing a remodel of her own in Brooklyn.

"We were literally calling each other every day and saying, 'What kind of cabinet pulls are you using in the kitchen?'" says Carlson, who worked at the Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies in New York, the New Yorker and a San Francisco magazine. "We have the same taste, so she would find something, and we really collaborated on our choices."

Those conversations would ultimately become the

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Mixologists' must-haves for the bar cart **N4**



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Catherine and Justine Macfee **N5**

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The best time to plant seeds **N2**

FROM THE COVER



A true living room

Julie Carlson with her husband, Josh Groves (who signed on as Remodelista's publisher), turned a Mill Valley teardown into a lofty, bright family home. A key to the home's success is this great room, which architect Jerome Buttrick reworked by raising the rafters and inserting French doors to bring the outdoors in. The room reflects the Remodelista's design sensibility: eclectic minimalism.

Photos by Matthew Williams / © "Remodelista: A Manual for the Considered Home"

Decor haunts

Julie Carlson on her favorite local sources for achieving that coveted Remodelista look:

Atomic Garden: Stylish sustainability. Owners Adrienne Armstrong and Jamie Kidson choose their products "with people and planet in mind." Offerings range from hand-forged cheese knives to leather key fobs made in San Francisco. 5453 College Ave., Oakland; (510) 923-0543. www.atomicgarden.oakland.com.

The Future Perfect: A newcomer to the San Francisco scene (the original is in New York), this shop keeps a sophisticated collection of cutting-edge design. 3085 Sacramento St., San Francisco; (415) 932-6508. www.thefutureperfect.com.

The Gardener: Alta Tingle has defined organic Bay Area style for the past couple of decades. Some of my favorite household finds come from the Gardener (a hand-turned wood pepper mill, hand towels from Dosa, cast-iron candlesticks). 1836 Fourth St., Berkeley; (510) 548-4545. www.thegardener.com.

March: Sam Hamilton's culinary emporium is much more than a kitchen shop. Her aesthetic is impeccable and her influence is far reaching. When I was looking for a present to bring Martha Stewart when I appeared on her show, I headed straight for March. 3075 Sacramento St., San Francisco; (415) 931-7433. www.marchsf.com.

Sue Fisher King: I love this design doyenne. Her shop is filled with the best selection of Astier de Villatte ceramics in the Bay Area and all sorts of little luxuries. 3067 Sacramento St., San Francisco; (415) 922-7276. www.suefisherking.com.

Summer House: My favorite hometown housewares shop. Owners Jane Walter and Robert Adams scour the world for the best linens, candles and glassware. The shop has a great bohemian, eclectic vibe. 21 Throckmorton Ave., Mill Valley; (415) 383-6695. www.summerhouse57millvalley.com.

Field guide for the remodeler

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basis for Remodelista, a home design website. Carlson and Connolly pooled their resources and stacks of old magazine clippings and recruited two design-obsessed friends, Janet Hall and Sarah Lonsdale. The site went live in 2007. Today Remodelista racks up some 2.8 million page views per month and Carlson, the editor in chief, now has a companion book, "Remodelista: A Manual for the Considered Home" (\$37.50, Artisan).

Just like the digital version, the book is filled with modern yet practical home tours, projects and resources. In the opening chapter, "Twelve Houses We Love (And Why They Work)," the particulars of each space are thoroughly detailed and polished off with features such as "Steal This Look," which tackle everything from doorknobs to pale wood floors and foraged bouquets.

For Carlson, the tangibility of the book has been an entirely different experience. "I like the fact that the book is sort of textbook-like, and it subtly references a manual that you can take with you to the paint store," she says.

"Even though you can look stuff up on your iPhone or bring a tablet to the store I think there's something about opening up the book and showing the guy behind the counter and saying, 'I want this paint.' I think there's something old-fashioned about it."

We chatted with Carlson about the book, website and her last-minute entertaining tips:

Q: All of the homes featured in the book have that clean, minimalist, utilitarian feel Remodelista is known for. Tell us more.

A: We wanted a geographic representation, so we were careful to do a mix of East Coast and West Coast (unfortunately we did not get to the middle of the country — next book) and then three in London. There's really a thread that connects the houses, which is a loose tribe of friends and acquaintances with the same design sensibility.



Essential ingredients

Art elevates a room, even when it's on the kitchen's open shelves. Keeping the objects pattern free and in a limited color range helps them harmonize with the painting.

Q: What exactly is that design sensibility?

A: We're very much about collecting things that you love over time and making your house very personal and using a mix of new and old and high and low and kind of an eclectic minimalism, I guess you would call it. All of us are constantly searching around our houses and adding and subtracting. I think a house feels alive when you are constantly paying attention to it.

Q: In the book you do a beautiful job of breaking down looks and listing resources.

A: That's an offshoot of the site where we really drill down and find the products that make up a room, and we wanted the book to reflect the big service orientation of the site. So we really wanted each project to have a very clear and replicable resource guide.

Q: There's a little something for everyone in the book. The chapter "Design Ideas" is a good example with all kinds of simple but effective do-it-yourself projects. Do you have any favorites?



A: The bedside table shelf that Corbin Bernsen did in one of the bedrooms in his house. It's just a teeny bedside shelf, just a place where you can put a book and glass of water and a pair of glasses. I love simple little thoughtful touches like that in interiors.

Q: "The Remodelista 100" chapter is total candy for design enthusiasts. Some items are as modest as a toilet brush but all practical, beautiful and

built to last. Many also happen to make great gifts. Do you have a favorite go-to gift item?

A: I love to give, believe it or not, dustpans and brushes. One year, I gave everyone at Remodelista a dustpan-brush combo set by Iris Hantverk. If you read the site, you know we love beautiful rustic, heritage household items.

Q: When you talk to readers about embarking on a home remodel, what's often their first question or biggest fear?

A: The biggest fear is the cost. For most of us, it's the most money we've ever spent, which makes the decision-making process all the more scary. My advice is always research, research, research. The more you hone your style, the better decisions you'll make.

Q: The chapter "Remodeling Reality" includes all kinds of insightful tips and interviews with designers, architects and builders. Did you learn anything?

A: One of my favorite quotes is from a designer in Los Angeles, Todd Nickley. He says, "Start big." This is not necessarily how I would have thought to approach a project but I think he's totally right. Start big and then cut down to what you can afford. But allowing yourself the opportunity to dream and going through that process helps you identify what's important to you.

Q: Christmas is just a few days away. We'd love to hear a quick tip from your entertaining arsenal.

A: You can never have enough candles. I put them everywhere, and to create little twinkly moments when you can't use real candles, I use those little battery-operated ones in frosted glass votives. I turn off all my overhead lights and just switch on a couple of table lamps. Everyone looks so much better by candlelight.

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6 household design faves

There is plenty to love about the book, but one section that might come in handy over the holidays is "The Remodelista 100," featuring the editors' most beloved, everyday household objects. Here are a handful of picks for last-minute gift givers.



Hudson's Bay blanket: "A contemporary-looking classic with ties to America's early history." www.woolrich.com.



Tivoli Audio: "A frugal Yankee design reminiscent of the Kennedy era." www.tivoliaudio.com.

Opinel knife: "Joseph Opinel was just 19 when he designed his eponymous pocket-knife in 1890. ... By 1897 there were 11 sizes of the Opinel knife and by the start of World War II, more than 20 million knives had been sold." www.opinel-usa.com.



Shaker pegs: "The Shakers were the greatest industrial designers never to have gone to art school." www.shakerworkshops.com



Swedish brush and dustpan: "The horsehair-and-beech brush is made by hand at Iris Hantverk, a foundation in Stockholm that has provided work for the visually impaired since the late 19th century." www.kioskiosk.com.



Heath Ceramics Coupe line: "A decidedly understated dinner collection, it was embraced by Frank Lloyd Wright for use in several architectural projects." www.heathceramics.com.