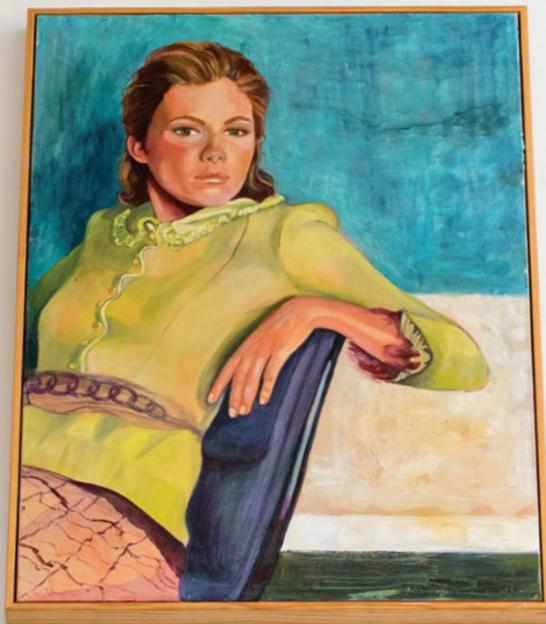


place



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# Keeping It Simple

With a focus on family, a new Sonoma resident trades grandeur for gratitude.

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**T**HE ORIGINAL ESSENCE OF Kim Schuh's home on the east side of Sonoma hasn't changed — a welcoming front porch, inviting window seats, mature trees. Yet this historic home, built in 1927, is vibrantly of the moment, newly energized with an open floor plan, a crisp white and gray palette, and furnishings that promise relaxed fun for Schuh's family and friends.

Schuh still treasures memories of the years she spent raising her family in Philadelphia in an 8,000-square-foot traditional Georgian manse full of antiques and the requisite crystal and silver. But these days she thrives on elegant simplicity and surroundings untethered to the past. Life bounced her forward, and she couldn't be more thrilled.

■ Kim Schuh found the large, gray swivel chairs bracketing the fireplace at Chateau Sonoma. The painting above the fireplace is by local artist Brigitte McReynolds. A dining table custom made for Schuh's previous home fit so well in her Sonoma house she decided to keep it.



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Schuh's notion of heading West was fueled when her daughter came to the Bay Area for law school and found true love, a fulfilling career, and the desire to stay forever. When her first grandchild was born nine years ago, Schuh could resist no longer, finding a home in the Oakland Hills not far from her daughter's family so she could help with the kids (there are now three) and be part of the daily swirl.

With time, she grew weary of the relatively urban environs, thinking how much she enjoyed daytrips to Wine Country. Wondering if it would work to be an hour away from her cherished grandkids, she decided to experiment — she would rent a house in Sonoma for one year, and if it suited her she would buy a permanent home. "I called it my four seasons in Sonoma, but it didn't take that long to know I loved Sonoma," Schuh recalls. After six months she started



■ Open shelving in the kitchen helps keep Schuh very organized. Her favorite part about the kitchen is its oversized island, which tends to be the gathering place during family get-togethers and holidays.



■ A round glass table and see-through acrylic chairs add to the airy feeling of the breakfast room, which was added as a bump-out into the home's backyard.

house-hunting and found this home six months later. She quickly set about renovating it.

The remodel, designed by architect Robert Baumann and constructed by Steve Burlington, both Sonoma-based, took a year, and Schuh has now been happily residing in the 2,450-square-foot home for two years. "I wanted to keep the cottage feel, but with a contemporary sensibility," she says. "As my life has evolved, so has my taste." Christine Curry was the interior designer, helping to choose tiles, faucets, finishes, and fabrics, but many of the furnishings were sought out by Schuh herself.

The original living and dining rooms and the kitchen were all separate small rooms, and are now completely open from the front of the house to the rear, including the addition of a bump-out into the back yard for a light-filled breakfast room with a banquette, a round glass table with acrylic chairs, and a built-in desk. The 9-by-4-foot white Caesarstone-topped island anchors the kitchen, "and is where everyone always ends up gathering round," she says.

The original fireplace is now gas, faced with white Caesarstone and flanked by white wood built-in shelving on either side. Four large, gray, square-shaped swivel chairs from Chateau Sonoma sit beside it, with a sofa facing a flat-screen TV on the opposite wall just beyond them. "I love that some guests can be sitting in front of the fire and others watching the football game and we can be all together without seeming like we are in the same room," Schuh says.

The master suite is completely redesigned, and includes a seating area and window seat. One of Schuh's favorite pieces of art, a floor-to-ceiling painting of ravens in a white sky by Chicago artist Francine Tuck, adorns one wall. She also collects portraits of women, which grace walls throughout the home. Her latest acquisition, by Sonoma artist Brigitte McReynolds, sits above the fireplace.



■ Clockwise from right: The 10-by-10-foot backyard soaking pool is the perfect spot for grandkids to splash. Sleek, black Adirondack chairs surround the fire pit. When both of her children and their families come to stay, Schuh happily moves to her newly added guesthouse by the pool.

A stairway that still has the home's original banister — now painted white to suit the new décor — leads to two bedrooms and a bath, with a small sitting area at the top of the stairs. There hangs a portrait painted by Sonoma artist Lia Bonagura-Transue, welcoming one to an upper level that almost feels like a private hotel suite.

When Schuh's son and his wife and their two toddlers visit from the East Coast they have the upstairs to themselves. Last Thanksgiving, when both of her children and their families stayed for the long weekend, her daughter's family took the downstairs bedrooms and Schuh used her own newly added guesthouse. It sits across the backyard and looks out on the black modern Adirondack chairs surrounding a fire pit and the small, 10-by-10-foot soaking pool that the grandkids use for splashing.





■ Schuh's grandkids like to hang out on the Roche Bobois leather sofa in the family room, where 16 black-and-white family portraits are proudly displayed.



Off the living room is a bedroom suite Schuh has repurposed as a family room, with a Roche Bobois leather sectional that stands up to kids eating popcorn and using crayons. Here are 16 black-and-white family photos that are updated annually.

In this room is the one antique from her past, a marble-topped console with a gold-gilt base that somehow seems to fit right in with a flat-screen TV hanging above it.

The console stepped into the contemporary and adapted perfectly to its new place in life. Just as Schuh has. 📍