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Living for the city

This kitchen remodel reflects a journey of discovery for the owner – the designer won her over to a more contemporary sensibility

It can be limiting to describe someone's taste as traditional or contemporary. There are many shades of modern, for example.

This understated, tailored kitchen, by designer Talla Skogmo, replaces an earlier brighter, ultra-contemporary remodel. The existing kitchen included vibrant orange cabinetry and jet black countertops, with translucent fronts on the upper cabinets to lighten the appearance. The kitchen had a single, smallish island and could be separated from the living area by full-height sliding plastic doors.



Skogmo says the apartment owner was set on stripping the space, limestone floors included, and starting from scratch.

"Coming from a French Provincial-style home, she had first asked for a traditional design, as this was what she felt comfortable with," says the designer. "Instead, I suggested a refined, but contemporary kitchen, more appropriate to her new, busy city lifestyle. At the same time, I felt we should stay with the good bones of the original kitchen layout and keep the honed natural stone flooring."

The owner placed her trust in Skogmo, who created a calming two-tone design in cream and dark-stained walnut. While the look is sleek and clean-lined, the upper wall cabinets do have a simple reveal detail.

"This and the classic beveled subway tile backsplash close the gap between modern and traditional, acknowledging the original request," says Skogmo.

The new perimeter cabinets, including the integrated refrigerator, remained within the same footprint but the new central

Above left: Paneled cabinetry, a subway tile backsplash and simplified crown mouldings give this modern kitchen by designer Talla Skogmo a subtle traditional accent.

Top: The inside of the central island contains a wealth of storage, a request of the owner. The glittering canoe-shaped chandelier is made from hundreds of LED lights and can be dimmed to change the mood of the kitchen.

Above: Black soapstone countertops and stained walnut cabinets balance the limestone floors and white-painted perimeter cabinetry.



Top and above right: The custom walnut display cabinet is balanced by a fireplace surround of the same proportion on the opposite side of the living spaces. The large modular sofas and chairs in the living area contrast the breakfast table with its French legs and burl wood top – another example of the balance between the classic and modern styles.

Above: The two islands dictate pedestrian flow into the space. Side panels on the islands stop six inches short of the floor, defining baseboards that match those found in other areas of the home.

island is larger. A peninsula island was also introduced. This has a raised back that creates a visual buffer between the expansive living spaces and the kitchen – replacing the sliding doors.

The inner island presents a wealth of storage options on its working side and accommodates four A Rudin counter stools on the other. With the ovens set off to one side, a low-profile cooktop, and the paneled refrigerator, the kitchen's functionality is downplayed when viewed from the living spaces.

The building's solid-slab construction meant there was no in-ceiling space for services. To overcome this, the designer added a square soffit ceiling that conceals wiring and helps delineate the space. The refrigerator cabinet to the right also serves to define the kitchen and separate it from the breakfast area, says Skogmo.

"I designed a walnut display unit to stand in this space. This is matched by a fireplace surround in the same species and scale on the other side of the room. These pieces draw the large volume together."



The tall cabinet includes wine-cooling drawers and mirror-backed display niches for the owner's Lalique crystal collection.

"Venetian plaster wall finishes and the LED canoe chandelier are other touches of refinement. The owner fell in love with this balanced, modern space. It is the ideal vantage point from which to enjoy views of the city skyscrapers," Skogmo says.

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Interior and kitchen designer: Talla Skogmo ASID, NCIDO, Talla Skogmo Interior Design (Edina, MN)

Builder: Hanson Building and Remodeling

Cabinet company: Stevens Cabinets

Cabinetry: Natural walnut, painted in Benjamin Moore Cloud White

Countertops: Soapstone

Flooring: Limestone

Furniture: A Rudin Counter stools, A Rudin pedestal dining table and Patricia Edward dining chairs

Wallcoverings: Grasscloth

Lighting: Scangift Canoe chandelier

Blinds: Conrad shades

Backsplash: Vitra Metro bevel tile from Uson Design

Sink: Franke

Faucets: Dornbracht

Oven, cooktop, ventilation, microwave,

dishwasher: Miele

Refrigeration, wine cooler: Sub-Zero

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