



Custom cabinetry of “character” ash—showing natural grain and color variations—takes center stage in this renovated kitchen. Smooth slate countertops contrast with the textured look of the cabinetry.

Three elements come together for a distinctive renovation

MORE THAN THE SUM OF ITS PARTS

larger than the sum of its parts.

“There’s a clean aesthetic to the kitchen but also a textural one, which is where the organic comes from,” says Grochowski, RA, NCARB, whose firm is Montclair-based RHG A+D. “Craftsman is not meant to refer to craftsman style but to craftsman in terms of handmade quality.” As for the modern aspect, that’s easily discernible in the kitchen’s sleek lines and unadorned yet warm look.

Grochowski says she took her cue from the home-



Architect and interior designer Rachael Grochowski calls the kitchen she renovated for Montclair homeowners “MODERN, ORGANIC, CRAFTSMAN.”

That may sound like an unexpected combination of elements, but dig deeper and you’ll discover that it perfectly describes a space whose stunning whole is

owners in coming up with her design concept. “They love well-crafted furniture and craftsmanship,” she says.

A SENSITIVE BALANCE

Key features represent a sensitive balance of materials, Grochowski says. The balance includes both texture and a lack of texture. The kitchen’s black slate countertops, for instance, have a consistent color and texture—what Grochowski likens to “black butter”—while the graining of the peninsula’s walnut butcher block counter has a patterned and textured look.

The slate countertops along with the matte finish of the backsplash—a creamy white honed ceramic tile with an interlocking pattern—also serve to create a balance with the show-stopping cabinetry.

The cabinetry is solid wood “character” ash (char-

Designer Rachael Grochowski removed a wall separating the kitchen from the dining room to open up the space. In its place are a peninsula with a counter and stools facing the dining area. On what had been an empty kitchen wall at left, she added a floor-to-ceiling unit with shallow shelves to display decorative accessories. The unit is the same walnut butcher block as the peninsula.

acter woods retain natural characteristics such as distinctive graining and variations in color) with a water-based, clear polyurethane finish. Its horizontal grain imparts interest and movement to the space.

INCREASED FUNCTIONALITY

In addition to aesthetics, Grochowski made other changes that boosted the kitchen's functionality. "My objective is to give people a space that will change the way they live," she says. In this case that meant removing a wall between the kitchen and the dining room to open up the space.

While hesitant at first, the homeowners realized the change did, in fact, reflect their lifestyle, Grochowski says. Where the wall

had been, she placed a butcher-block-topped peninsula and, backing up to the peninsula, a counter with stools facing the dining area. The peninsula provides much needed additional storage while the counter and stools provide eating and seating space.

The pendants above the peninsula are part of the handcrafted concept. Grochowski says it's not that they look handcrafted, rather that they harken back to a time when craftsmen might have had fixtures like these in their workshop: a wood handle with a steel cage at its end containing a single light bulb.

To increase the natural light in the kitchen and dining area, Grochowski transformed what had been a small window over the kitchen sink into a garden win-

dow that extends to the height of the ceiling. "It makes the kitchen feel bigger and more dynamic," she says. ■

Robin Amster is a Madison-based writer and editor.

SOURCES design, RHG A+D in Montclair; cabinetry and butcher-block countertop, custom by Kenzer Furniture in Putney, Vermont; slate countertops, Peter Brooks Stone Works in Wood-Ridge; backsplash, Ann Sacks Tile & Stone; flooring, Wayne Tile in Wayne; pendant lights, Rejuvenation Lighting & House Parts in Portland, Oregon; counter stools, Horchow in Dallas; appliances and plumbing fixtures, Bertazzoni range; Frigidaire hood and microwave, Miele dishwasher, LG refrigerator, Kraus sink, Kohler faucet.

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