



## MODERN, BUT NO 'MUSEUM'

Remodel took traditional  
in a new direction

by Carol Blitzer / photos by Cherie Cordellos

**T**he Old Palo Alto home that architect Mary Maydan's client purchased in 2012 was handsomely built in the 1980s, but it didn't really reflect his modern tastes.

For starters, there were *moldings* on all the windows. And the living room and family room were separated by a gazebo-like space for eating breakfast.

But that's the house he found in the right neighborhood, at the right price.

Maydan's challenge was to turn it into something he could live with — and be happy in.

The first thing she did was eliminate the central room that broke up the lower floor, adding four steel beams across the ceiling to support the second floor. Next came new windows and doors — all with no moldings.

"With wood around the windows, the amount of glass is smaller, so it is much darker," Maydan says.

She also suggested lighter walls and recessed lights sprinkled across the ceiling, all to lighten and brighten the home.

Today, the great room features a kitchen in the middle of

The kitchen/great room sits in the middle of the first floor, with a long island housing stove, microwave and dishwasher, as well as seating. A wall of cabinets, which houses the refrigerator as well as storage, separates it from the living room.

the home, with a long island housing a Miele five-burner cooktop and oven, a Sharp microwave drawer and pull-out drawers for storage. Completing the appliances is a double-drawer Fisher Paykel dishwasher. The countertops are all white Corian, and the floor and backsplash are both Italian porcelain tile.

Along one wall are what appear to be tall, espresso-stained, white-oak cabinets: Pull one of the long aluminum handles and you'll open the refrigerator; tug on another and you'll reveal the pantry.

Many of Maydan's younger clients say they prefer the clean lines of modern design and express no desire for a formal living room. In this case, the living room is the last room to be furnished, with its ultimate purpose still undecided. The main thing she changed was to close off the wood-burning stove (leaving it accessible in the future, if ever wanted) and adding a new modern mid-wall fireplace on another wall.

Two doors lead out the front to a sitting area on a flagstone patio, an acknowledgment that there is very little



“yard” space on the lot.

At first Maydan’s client thought he would remodel the home in phases, but the contractor encouraged him to make the major changes before moving in. He had already committed the ultimate remodel no-no: deciding to change the doors and windows after the Sheetrock went on.

Maydan says, “With remodeling, you always end up doing more.”

Upstairs, Maydan continued the color scheme of white and shades of gray, with white Corian countertops in both the master and kids’ bathrooms. The floor, roomy shower and tub surround are tiled in dark gray porcelain of varying textures, with one wall devoted to narrow glass subway tiles.

For the second bathroom, wall niches are painted in bright green and blue, and knickknacks (tissue and toothbrush holders, soap dish) make a contrast with the basic white and gray color scheme.

For the kids’ bedrooms, wall murals add splashes of color (literally) in one and a tree with owls in the other. The guest bedroom boasts a square hanging fixture with a fluorescent ring inside.

At the top of the landing, Maydan replaced the more ornate moldings on the floor-to-ceiling bookcase with simple, straight lines. The wood floors were stained a deep gray, complementing the downstairs tile, while hiding flaws in the nailing.

In a modern home, the devil is truly in the details — or lack thereof. Even the electric outlet covers have hidden screws. And, with no moldings to hide any building mistakes, the walls must match exactly.

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All the moldings, top, were removed from the windows and sliding-glass doors to create a modern, sleek look. Light streams from recessed cans in the ceiling. The quiet color scheme, above, continues into the bathrooms, with white Corian countertops and dark gray porcelain on the floor, shower and tub.

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The end result is spacious rooms with little to break up the clean lines and mostly quiet colors.

“A lot of people say modern seems cold, less cluttered, less homey,” Maydan says. But, as her daughter reminds her, it’s more “messy in an organized way. ... You make it your own. It’s a house, not a museum.” **H&G**

**Resources:**

*Architect:* Mary Maydan, Maydan Architects, Inc., Palo Alto, [www.maydanarchitects.com](http://www.maydanarchitects.com)

*Building contractor:* Green Circle Construction, Palo Alto, [mail@gcircon.com](mailto:mail@gcircon.com), 650-644-9344, 650-703-4934

*Cabinets:* Yossi Ben, AB Cabinet, Pacheco, 510-385-5809

*Electrician:* Shawn Gordon, S-G-Electric, Inc., Hollister, [Shawn@s-g-electric.com](mailto:Shawn@s-g-electric.com)

*Furniture:* Bimma Loft, San Francisco, 415-243-8888

*Tile:* Geologica Store, San Francisco, 415-255-0680, [www.euowest.com](http://www.euowest.com)

**Goal of project:**

Make a traditional home more modern

**Unanticipated issues:**

Many walls were out of plumb; air return was located above stove

**Year house built:**

1984

**Size of home, lot:**

2,641-sq-ft home on 4,791-sq-ft lot

**Time to complete:**

About one year



Even the front door and exterior windows reflect the more-modern non-molding treatment.