



# A LIGHT TOUCH

Honoring her clients’ desire to reuse materials and integrate locally-sourced products, interior designer Kate Jung of Noble Design Group uses a less-is-more approach to give a Park Hill kitchen a whole new look.

WORDS: Rachel Walker Youngblade  
IMAGES: Emily Minton Redfield

Sight lines in open-plan spaces, like this view from the kitchen into the dining room, create the opportunity to build cohesion between rooms. Designer Kate Jung chose a blue mohair fabric for the custom counter stools to echo the bright abstract artwork. “I take traditional design and make it feel modern and classic,” Jung says of her approach.

Just one week after putting the final touches on a lengthy home renovation in Englewood, interior designer Kate Jung’s clients called her with an unexpected update. “We found our dream home in Park Hill,” Jung remembers them sharing excitedly. “And we bought it.”

For two years the pair had worked with Jung to outfit their existing home with custom furniture and updated finishings. Now, they were hoping a lot of that hard work would translate to a new home with almost double the square footage.

“There’s a unique ethos behind everything we set out to do together,” Jung says of the deep relationship she’s built with these clients and their shared approach to interior design. “Let’s not just add things to add things. Every piece should serve a purpose and harmonize with the rest of the project.”

In this home, the clients’ goal was to replace only what was absolutely necessary and source as locally as possible. While the whole home received the benefit of Jung’s attention, the kitchen was a particularly tricky challenge to update while keeping major elements the same, including the flooring and layout.

It became clear very quickly that the kitchen cabinetry would remain. Although more traditional than her clients’ modern style, the cabinets were in perfect condition and made sense aesthetically with the home’s other elements.

“Let’s approach this as a positive design challenge, and make it feel more modern through the other finishes we can incorporate,” Jung said, revealing her eternally optimistic point of view. “There’s no way we can’t make this work for us.”

To achieve their design vision, Jung pushed her clients to prioritize ruthlessly, and educated them about the domino effect of making any one





Warm yellow backsplash tile brings a modern bent to more traditional cabinetry. While neutrals are a safe choice, Jung encourages clients to lean into their personal style to land on a design they won't get tired of. "Typically a favorite color isn't something that will change."

change. The off-center sink is a prime example. While centering the sink on the kitchen island would have added more symmetry to the space, it would have required plumbing work and new island cabinetry in different dimensions. After lengthy discussion, the sink and plumbing fixtures were updated in their original off-center location. A large vase for seasonal flowers acts as the perfect counterbalance.

"Symmetry is great, but it can be boring. Your eye expects it," Jung says of a spatial planning trick she uses to add interest. "There's enough symmetry already. The off-centered sink is like a visual karate chop. It feels more intentional now."

A benefit of keeping large elements of the existing kitchen in place was freeing up budget for high quality

American-made materials, like the honey-hued hexagonal backsplash tiles from Particular Tile. The Colorado company takes the meaning of eco-friendly to the next level. Their terra cotta clay is sourced exclusively from a local reservoir where the sediment needed to be removed to allow for water storage capacity. The would-be waste material is shaped into tiles and fired in kilns that run on captured methane from an abandoned coal mine.

Not only does the backsplash liven up the kitchen with color and texture, but it's also a great example of Jung's dedication to working in concert with her clients (they originally discovered Particular Tile) and taking the time to find the right thing. New fixtures from California Faucet are crafted by hand in California and produce no toxic or ozone-depleting chemicals.

The cabinet hardware is also made in California, by Emtek.

"She makes me a better designer because she will often not accept the first option," Jung says of the client's commitment to environmentally friendly design. "She pushes and encourages in very gentle ways, to see if there's a way we can find things more locally."

To create a timeless space that speaks more to personal tastes than it does an era or time-bound trend, Jung encourages people to lean into their favorite colors and go classic with hard finishes.

In this project yellow surfaced as a favorite color, but it wasn't the immediate choice for the backsplash tile. Jung and the clients considered blues and greens first as a way to

bring more vibrancy and contrast into the kitchen. But when samples arrived, the warm Dijon yellow—which is beautifully variegated and shows hints of terra cotta red around the organic edges—was an easy choice. The color and shape are reminiscent of another favorite of her clients: the beloved honeybee. The cornflower blue mohair counter stools by David Gaynor Design, another strategic reuse from the clients' previous home, is the perfect complementary color.

"Likes are often immediate," Jung says of trusting instincts and designing a home that is not only beautiful but personally meaningful. "You shouldn't have to talk yourself into something. It should just feel right to you."

Softly veined Carrara marble from The Stone Collection stretches across the countertops and up the range wall in another moment of considered

design. The previous wall tile felt too cold and the grout lines too busy when paired with the kitchen's brick perimeter walls. Without changing the range, hood, or placement of either, the marble adds lightness and modernity. The natural stone helps hide kitchen messes and will patina over time for a lived-in look and feel.

In the end, the kitchen reflects the warm, colorful style of its inhabitants and showcases the creative outcome of a slower, more restrained approach to interiors.

The challenge of deeply understanding her clients' needs and styles, and translating those into material choices, is one Jung relishes. "When you spend time looking for the right thing instead of the quickest thing, often you will find something that feels more curated and unique to you." ■

**"SYMMETRY IS GREAT, BUT IT CAN BE BORING. YOUR EYE EXPECTS IT. THERE'S ENOUGH SYMMETRY ALREADY. THE OFF-CENTERED SINK IS LIKE A VISUAL KARATE CHOP. IT FEELS MORE INTENTIONAL NOW."**

—Kate Jung



With the cabinetry and layout remaining the same, styling elements like a tattered runner rug had an outsized impact on the kitchen's transformation. "Why rip something out when we designers can style almost anything to make it work?" asks Jung. "That's the magic of accessories—you add just the right textures and colors and it will look all pulled together."