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Creative Christians
are taking down
the walls between
faith and art

Artistic & Religious

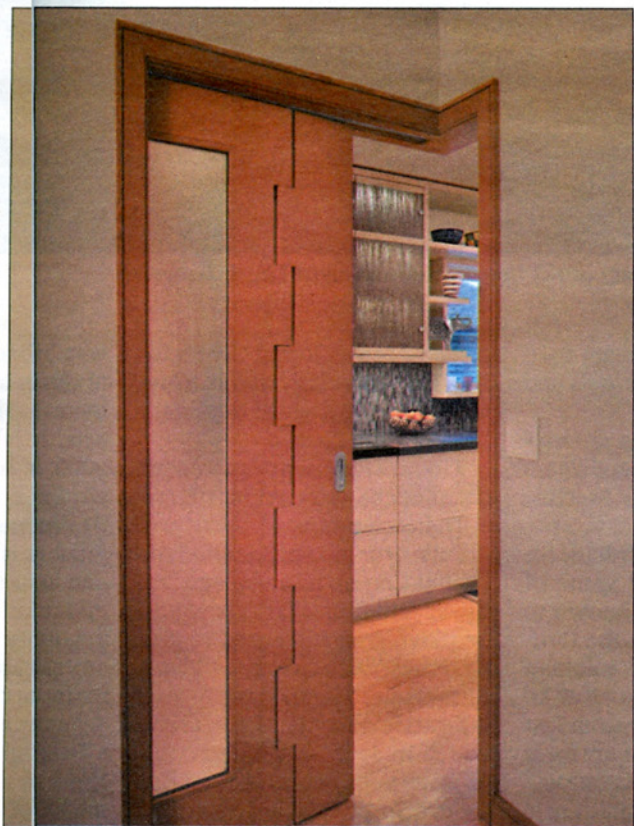


Home
A fresh spirit
Garden
New annuals
Dining
Best croissants



This is Nils Finne's favorite part of his new kitchen. "I'm a big believer in having a comfortable place to sit in the kitchen. And while barstools are OK, I don't think they're that comfortable." The cushions, fabric by Laura Lienhard (from Terris Draheim), were sewn by Lesley Petty Studio. www.finne.com.

Finne wanted both an open kitchen and separation. With no room to spare and because the closure had to turn a corner, Finne designed an L-shaped pocket door between kitchen and dining room. The door, vertical-grain fir, had been previously unattempted by Quantum Windows and Doors. It was dubbed the Zipper Door.



HAPPILY AFTER

BEHIND THE ZIPPER,
A NEW KITCHEN SHIMMERS
IN SLENDER TILES
AND WAVES OF CEDAR

YOU MIGHT imagine that architects' homes are the very pictures of perfection. That they could live no place else but in bright, light, open spaces with all the latest conveniences of modern living for cooking, laundry, lighting, bathing, lounging.

You would be dead wrong. Many are just like you and me. They live in old houses sorely in need of new-millennium attention.

Let's take Nils and Liv Finne's kitchen, for example. The "after" is steel and walnut and limestone and Alaskan yellow cedar and sea grass. But to truly appreciate the cozy, contemporary beauty of it you need to know about before. About the kitchen they lived with in their 1927 Queen Anne Tudor for 10 years.

Walls of white painted plain-wood cabinets over a chipped beige laminate counter, the cabinets so low and the counter so narrow that the mixer, battling it out with the coffee maker and the toaster, threatened to jump. The light fixture stuck into the ceiling was an early American, three-fingered, klieg-light deal. The lone window still opened, but not without a fight. Electrical cords snaked across the counter from yellowed plastic plate covers. A paper-towel holder sticky-glued to the cabinets looked more like plastic earflaps. The garbage can, also plastic, open for viewing. The floor, archaeological linoleum.

Sound familiar?

"It's really tough to work on your own place," Nils Finne says. But once he did, the gloves were off and Finne, also the contractor, brought in "the all-star list of all my favorite subcontractors."

"There's a lot of experimentation here. A lot of, 'Nils, you can't do that.' I pushed the envelope pretty hard."

This is easily seen in a large finger joint in the new counter, limestone holding hands with black walnut. ("The stone guy said to me, 'I'm going first!'") And in an L-shaped pocket door that opens kitchen to dining room in a feat previously unattempted by Everett's Quantum Windows and Doors.

"I wanted to open the kitchen as much as possible, but I also wanted a door," Finne says. "And we were fighting for every square inch." The challenge was that 1) the door had to be a pocket, and 2) it had to turn a corner.

"The head guy at Quantum took it on," Finne says. "They call it the Zipper Door. It was quite the talk up there."


Challenges met, the rest is all about communion and comfort. The space is simple, continuous, 25 feet long

The kitchen is one long space, 25 feet long. Cabinets, by Jim Sciscoe of Seaboard Cabinet Co., are Alaskan yellow cedar. The upper cabinets on the right are 3-Form resin panel with sea grass. The valance over the door, designed by Finne, is laser-cut steel. The countertop is Belgian Blue limestone and black walnut.



with glass doors at either end. A window seat with fat cushions by the French door. A small desk and computer nearby. Shelves for cookbooks. Computer-etched, yellow-cedar cabinets are like warm waves of wheat. The fossilized Belgian Blue limestone melts into the rich black walnut. Thin, custom backsplash tiles travel toward cabinets fronted with sea grass frozen in resin. Laser-cut steel appears in the bracket supporting the hanging pendants over the window seat and in the valence over the French doors.

"You kind of have to take these old homes and give them a fresh spirit," Finne says, talking about the marriage of then and now. "I'm not interested in making an old house old. But you take a 1927 house and update it, and it casts itself in a completely new, energetic way."

"That process of engagement; you need to do it with the same care and loving passion that these homes already have. And if you do something new, with that same passion and care, you have this conversation across time." 

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The Finne kitchen before its transformation. Enough said.

COURTESY OF NILS FINNE