



East meets West

In keeping with a traditional Japanese design ethos, minimalism, simplicity, space and order are the defining principles of this remodelled kitchen

Pared-back interiors with simple, sleek lines may spell contemporary design for many homeowners, but the concept has been part of Japanese home interiors for hundreds of years.

It's an aesthetic that is equally well suited to modern households, providing a calming influence that's the perfect antidote to the pressures of city living.

Darren James, the designer of this remodelled kitchen, says the owners wanted an interior design that would make a statement about who they are.



Above: Contrasting light and dark tones, and textured, organic shapes and surfaces versus the smooth and sterile provide a harmonious yin-and-yang composition for this Japanese-inspired kitchen designed by Darren James. A long slot window was incorporated into the design so the owners could keep an eye on children playing outside. The suspended ceiling element is defined by LED lighting around the perimeter.

Left: Other Japanese influences include the custom light pendants. A quartz stone bar top at one end of the island provides a casual dining area.



“For the young family of four, this meant creating a simple, relaxing and functional kitchen environment that paid respect to their Japanese heritage and also echoed their love of contemporary Japanese design,” James says.

“Minimalism, simplicity, space and order are the principles at the heart of Japanese design. Beauty lies in the way the separate simple, functional elements are combined to create an harmonious whole. Incorporating these principles into the kitchen design for this project was an

exercise in control and attention to detail.” James says imparting a sense of calm and providing freedom of movement meant there needed to be an unmistakable feeling of space.

“An open galley-style design ensures the interior is not overloaded. Recessed toe-kicks and an 80mm cantilevered stone benchtop on the island allow the cabinetry elements to breathe visually – the space surrounding these objects is just as important as the cabinets themselves.”

James says contrasting colours and

textures, which reference the yin and yang philosophy in Asian culture – were also a consideration. The island’s engineered stone benchtop has a textural surface, which forms a contrast with the sleek stainless steel of the perimeter bench and the Staron surface of the rest of the island.

“These workstation benchtops are highly practical, and being thin, they have a calming aesthetic. This is enhanced by flush doors and drawers, and recessed handles on the lacquered cabinets.”

To help keep the kitchen uncluttered,

the refrigerator and storage cabinets are concealed in a butler’s pantry behind sliding shoji-style doors featuring timber veneer and rice-paper glass. Horizontal strips of wood on the doors are another Japanese reference, echoed by the light pendants. These are suspended from a lowered ceiling element with LED lighting that helps define the kitchen within the overall living area.

See video and image gallery online at

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Architect: Darren James, Interiors by Darren James (Brisbane, Qld)

Kitchen manufacturer: Darren James Interiors

Cabinetry: Porters Donkey Grey high-gloss lacquer

Benchtops: Staron in Sanded Chestnut; stainless steel; Jaipur Vanilla granite from Stone Italia

Splashback: Mirromax

Sink: Abey Cubo

Taps: Franke

Lighting: Moxie Linear chandeliers from Custom Lighting

Oven and cooktop: Electrolux

Ventilation: Qasair

Dishwasher: Miele

Above left: The cantilevered stone benchtop appears to float above the island, enhancing the spacious feel of the kitchen. Recessed toe-kicks on the island and perimeter cabinets also add to the sense of space.

Top and above: Sliding shoji-style doors made from timber veneer and rice-paper glass open to reveal a butler’s pantry that accommodates the refrigerator. Because the owners like to entertain frequently, there are side-by-side Electrolux ovens.

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