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Wood Sculpture: Freeing the Form

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Island Life

*Kitchen Islands at the Heart
of the Home's Heart*



ELEMENTS
by Joshua Bodwell
Photography Darren Setlow
Styling Tamara Savage

ELEMENTS



KENNEBUNK KITCHENS AND BATHS

KENNEBUNKPORT RESIDENCE
(previous page)

PINE RIDGE CARPENTRY and RICK KLEPFER DESIGN
CAMDEN RESIDENCE
(left)

DESIGN: **DENISE RUBIN**
CABINETS: **MAINE COAST BUILDERS**; FAUX PAINTING: **WEYERS PAINTING**;
ANTIQUE GUILDING: **CIDER HILL WOODWORKS**;
COUNTER TOP: **KENNEBUNK WATER AND STONE**
(right and above)



A large, wooden table was once a common fixture in the kitchens of our forebears. The tables provided much-needed room to spread out ingredients and cookware, and it was a gathering place within the warm thrum of kitchen activity. These well-worn tables were the precursors of today's ubiquitous kitchen island, which may just be *the* defining feature of modern kitchens.

Pamela Shangraw-Murdough of Kennebunk Kitchens and Baths loves how islands “redirect kitchen traffic” and separate those who are cooking or cleaning from those who are eating or gabbing. According to Shangraw-Murdough, space is often the most important consideration when selecting an appropriate design. An island, she says, must remain proportional to the size of the kitchen: too big, and there's no clearance; too small, and



KITCHEN CONCEPTS
YARMOUTH RESIDENCE
(left)

COOK AND COOK CABINETRY and
JEANNE RAPONE, CKD
FALMOUTH RESIDENCE
(right)



there's no space to prep, cook, or eat.

Once the size has been determined, Shangraw-Murdough often outfits her islands by first seeing what she can or cannot place in other areas of the kitchen. Some decisions are easier than others; if there is no window with an outside view, she says, the decision to put the sink in the island is an easy one.

In addition to the essentials, such as stools and extra space for storage, Shangraw-Murdough says kitchen islands are often best

suited for smaller, under-the-counter appliances like microwaves, warming draws, or wine refrigerators.

For Todd McIntosh of McIntosh & Tuttle Cabinetmakers, designing and building kitchen islands combines two passions. "I love cooking," he says. "If I'm not in the woodshop, I'm in the kitchen."

When it comes to selecting hardware for kitchen-island cabinetry, McIntosh offers pragmatic advice: "Keep it simple."



**NEW WORLD KITCHENS and
MORNINGSTAR MARBLE & GRANITE**
CUMBERLAND RESIDENCE
(left)

**OPUS ONE and
STONECRAFT ICONIC CONCRETE**
PORTLAND RESIDENCE
(right)



He usually steers people away from “gimmicky hardware with too many moving parts.” While the flashier hardware might be interesting to look at, McIntosh notes, it often has a shorter life-span than something simpler.

When it comes to kitchen islands, McIntosh also suggests letting the natural wood shine. Since kitchens are such high-traffic areas, he says, painted islands are easily scuffed and marred. Square corners are another feature best avoided: “I try

to use rounded or chamfered corners, or even columns. People just don’t move at right angles, so having some rounded parts can be important.”

When deciding what material to use atop your island, Morningstar Marble & Granite owner Nick Whatley makes a case for stone. “The longevity of it goes beyond anything any of us can imagine,” he says. Whatley also mentions a few key things to keep in mind when searching for the perfect piece of stone.





MCINTOSH AND TUTTLE CABINETMAKERS
and MORNINGSTAR MARBLE & GRANITE
POLAND RESIDENCE

Though stone is a strong and stable material, Whatley warns that marble or granite should overhang the island by no more than ten inches without adding supporting features such as brackets or legs. “I like people to understand how this fact will figure into the design and everyday use of their island,” says Whatley. He also warns that large or heavy kitchen islands may require floors to be reinforced from below. “If you have cabinetry, a range-top, and granite, you could be talking 700 pounds in the

middle of a room,” he says.

Beyond its longevity and practicality, Whatley also loves stone simply for its beauty. “A granite- or marble-topped island can be like a painting,” he says. “The size really gives stone a chance to shine.”

And who doesn’t want their kitchen island to shine—from layout to hardware to countertop—like a work of art? **MH+D**

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Anticipation

“Oh, give us pleasure in the orchard white, / Like nothing else by day, like ghosts by night”
from *A Prayer in Spring* by Robert Frost

ESSAY

by Joshua Bodwell

Winter is waiting. Winter is beds piled high with thick comforters and quiet nights under rooftops bowed by blankets of snow. It is reading a book by the fading light of a Sunday afternoon. It is staring out the window at unbroken plains of whiteness, before turning to the calendar on the refrigerator and checking off each day of February with a heavy black X.

Winter is waiting.

In Maine, the waning days of March grow tense as our bodies ache for sun and warmth. We have been hunkered down too long, winter-survivalists ever hopeful for the promise of mud and crocuses by the month's end.

When I was younger, winter always meant solitude in my world. During the coldest months of the year, my family would often be confined within the walls of our ancient farmhouse. Still, winter felt like a time when no one was around. We were together, but we were alone. We must have made our stands against the short, gray days in separate rooms of the house, or perhaps we were too stricken by the cold to bother interacting. I cannot recall now which it was. *Why is that?*

Too young to tag along with my older brother and his buddies, I spent days toiling in the featureless landscape for as long as I could stand the bitter temperatures. I would lose myself among the deepest snow banks I could find, constructing elaborate forts in which I would indulge my obsession with *Star Wars: The Empire Strikes Back*. The pristine swales of snow became canvases for my imagination. In a doomed ritual so hypnotically alluring that I was unable to resist, I reenacted the Rebel Alliance's defense of their snow base on the icy planet of Hoth. And every time, as in the film, the crushing blow of Darth Vader and his

Imperial snowtroopers defeated me. My intergalactic fantasies seem appropriate in hindsight, as there were days during my childhood when I felt as though I was from another planet.

If the winter had been particularly unrelenting and the snow became deep enough, I abandoned the snow banks lining the driveway and trudged across the field behind my house. There, in the middle of an expanse of white, I would dig a hole. I'd make a circle in the snow and build a wall broken only by a small opening wide enough for me to slip through.

Out in the field, I felt far away from my house and the things that happened within its flimsy walls. There were bright days, of course, when the snow around me was bleach-white and blinding, when the shadows of leafless trees seemed to stretch on without end. But mostly I remember the darker days, the stormy days when the snow looked blue or purplish in the muted light. In my hole, I could hear no sounds but those stirred up by the wind:

the occasional groan of a tree or the quiet chatter of ice skittering across the snow's crusty surface. I would lie there on my back and listen as the coldness of the ground pushed its way into my thin snowsuit and spread through my bony shoulder blades. I can remember closing my eyes and feeling the snow falling onto my face from the cloud-smudged sky above, baptizing me in hope.

And because I craved the messy warmth of companionship as much as I hungered for the pristine cold of solitude, I would close my eyes tighter and imagine that it was spring already: tiny birds scratching together tiny nests, slender green shoots breaking the damp, musty dirt.

I would let myself imagine that the waiting was over. **MH+D**



Cig Harvey in Rockport
by Darren Setlow Photography.