

The Bright Stuff

After a house fire, a Cambridge condo gets a colorful new kitchen. **BY MOLLY JANE QUINN**



PRIMARY COLORS
Yellow pendant lights (and a rainbow rug) complement the red, white, and blue.

Maureen Armstrong and Thomas Fritzsche had lived in their Cambridge condo for 10 years when it went up in flames just before the winter holidays in 2007. “Our son, Alexander, who was 2 at the time, came in and woke me up,” says Armstrong, an administrator at Harvard University. By the time she saw the smoke, called 911, and got her husband and son out of the house, the Fire Department had arrived.

The damage from the fire, which started next door and was ruled accidental, required taking the walls down to the studs and putting in all new electrical wiring, plumbing, and ventilation. After viewing his portfolio online and reading what other clients had posted about him on the website Angie’s List, the couple hired Boston architect Joseph Kennard. His portfolio of clean contemporary designs appealed especially to Fritzsche, a photo retoucher and 3-D artist.

Although Kennard redesigned the entire 1,300-square-foot condo, he took special care with the 240-square-foot kitchen, which Armstrong

and Fritzsche had been talking about renovating even before the fire. Connected to the dining room yet closed off by a wall, it had always felt cramped. Kennard’s solution was to move that doorway, and to exclude upper cabinets (except around the fridge) and use contemporary casement windows instead of double-hung ones. “I think that helps a lot with the feeling of expansiveness,” he says.

Fritzsche made a 3-D rendering of the kitchen based on Kennard’s floor plan and then filled it in with different colors. Brilliant blue conversion varnish – an extra-durable paint – made for dashing cabinets. Kennard suggested black heat-proof epoxy resin for the counters, extending the slab over the sides of the island for extra protection. Industrial-looking drawer pulls and a backsplash in crimson glass tiles from Ann Sacks complete the room’s bright, functional feel.

The renovation took a few years, thanks to condo association regulations and insurance issues. But the result was worth the wait. Says Armstrong: “Every room is our ‘favorite,’ but we really do love the kitchen. It’s a real gathering place.”

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