





“ mountains don't  
grow back ”

**G**ranite countertops were the go-to choice for upscale kitchens in the last quarter of the last century. While we celebrated the new millennium, products were being developed that would offer alternatives. This excited kitchen designers everywhere because the choices expanded by as many colors and patterns that could be dreamed up. For the ecologically-minded, who understood that mountains don't grow back, the use of silica and resin to create tops that don't leave scars on the landscape greatly influenced their choice of this type of countertop. >>



*White Glass is ideal for the those seeking a modern, high-sheen countertop.*

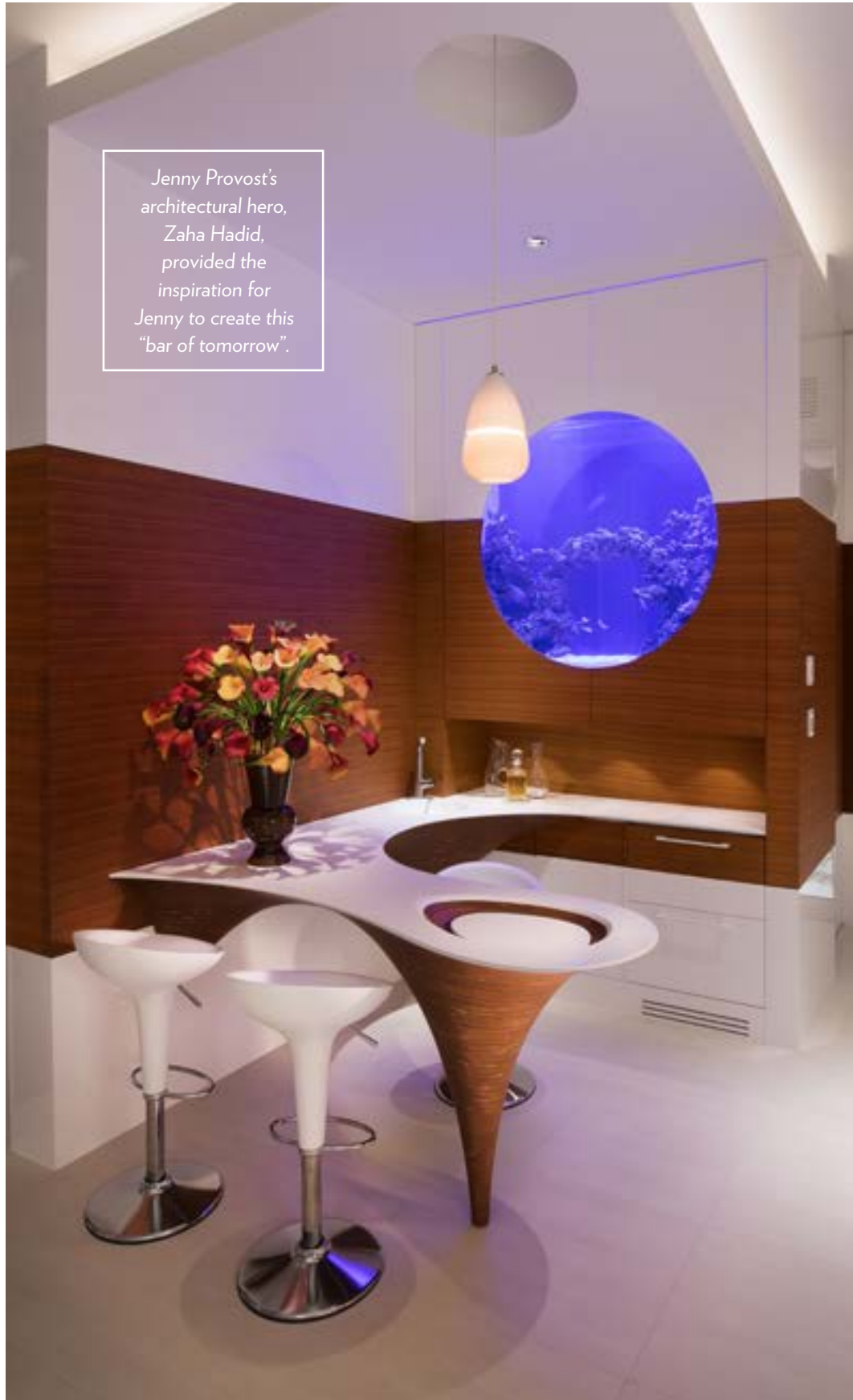


*Vetrazzo slabs, both durable and eco-friendly, are made up of recycled glass set in a cement binder.*

Marble has long been taboo for use in a kitchen environment. The soft nature of the material lends itself to staining, scratching, and etching. Kitchen designers are using marble as accessory countertops (such as baking stations where nothing works better than a good slab of Carrera marble) and backsplashes due to the natural beauty. More common use of this material type is in bathrooms although caution should still prevail due to the etching that can be caused by perfumes and cleaners.

Few know about another type of countertop material known as White Glass. If a high sheen is on your criteria list when choosing countertops, nothing beats white glass. Crafted by mixing glass and silica, then firing the mix at a high temperature, these countertops are very high on the durability scale. Only available in white, this material can be the perfect choice for modern kitchen countertops. Seams can be obvious so the slab sizes should be carefully laid out in advance in the initial planning stages of the design. Some recommend this countertop for outdoor kitchens because it stays cooler than even granite and can weather the elements. >>

*Jenny Provost's architectural hero, Zaha Hadid, provided the inspiration for Jenny to create this "bar of tomorrow".*



So what exactly is this quartz stuff anyway? The slab products are comprised primarily of quartz crystalline silica, which is ground up quartz. This silica is typically 93% of the manufactured quartz countertop. Resin products used to bind the silica together makes up the other 7% or so (the percentages vary by manufacturer, but ever so slightly). This material is tough; it's hard to scratch, doesn't stain, and has enough structural integrity with which to create bar overhangs without additional support (with limitations of course!). For designers, the real upside is the consistency of the material and the color choices that are not always available in nature. There is a variety of thicknesses and formats of the slabs including jumbo sizes which have allowed designers to draw up huge but seamless island tops. If there is a downside to this amazing modern material, it's a doozy. Although very safe once installed in your home, there is a danger to fabricators who make your countertops because the dust emitted can cause lung disease. In fact, in February of 2015, OSHA (Occupational Safety and Health Administration) issued a Hazard Alert to warn fabricators and their workers of the dangers associated with inhaling the silica dust. However, if the fabrication company management institutes and follows good rules regarding the engineering of the equipment and workspace, combined with the wearing of protective gear, the danger to the workers can be mitigated.

Recently, there has been a great deal of confusion between the natural material known as quartzite and the man-made quartz products. The one thing the two different types have in common is quartz. However, quartzite is formed naturally from the compression of sand into metamorphic rocks that develop over time. This compression of light-colored sand produces rock, that when cut into slabs, create beautiful patterns and colors that have depth and a hardness factor that



It is possible to have it all by using a durable counter for the work areas, a contrasting textured stone as an accent and a porcelain panel for the backsplash.

even outperforms granite. Although some quartzite is domestic, many of these envy-worthy slabs are imported to the US from Brazil. Often the slabs are priced substantially higher than the man-made quartz product, but when trying to choose a durable and light-colored material of unmatched beauty, this product is hard to beat. >>



Paper countertops? Seriously? Believe it because producers of this product, also referred to as Paper Stone, have managed to compress 100% post-consumer recycled paper, petroleum-free resins and natural pigment into very unique countertop material. Looking for an environmentally sound countertop? Doesn't get much better than this. Although the surface is considered low maintenance, an initial sealant is a good idea to protect the color over time. Butcher block is not just for traditional kitchens! The rich look of end-cut walnut

butcher block in particular lends itself perfectly to the modern kitchen. Oiled butcher block is stunning, but requires more maintenance. Usually quite thick (2" to 4"), this material can be sanded and re-oiled many times over. It is recommended for bar and other accessory counters. Use with caution, but this a stunning material that enhances the modern kitchen with warmth. Porcelain slabs are being used more and more around the world, but the use of them in our country has lagged behind. The slabs are beautiful and are much

less expensive than other natural or synthetic options. However, specialized training and lower prices have delayed the interest of the fabricator community. Tile installers can be better suited to manipulate this material as it is the same porcelain used for most of the floor tile installed today. The size is the problem. Most tile installers are not equipped to deal with these giant formats. But stay tuned! This product type is not going to go away and some clever local fabricator will eventually find a way to own this market in Southwest Florida.



*Paper Stone made of 100% post-consumer recycled paper, petroleum-free resins and natural pigment.*

*Large-format porcelain slabs can be used for both counter tops and as wall panels.*



*PyroLave is made from, as the name suggests, volcanic lava. stone. It is resistant to high temperatures acids, but the best part is the endless glaze color and shape possibilities.*

The choices are abundant, which can also be a problem for those that have a hard time making up their minds on such a permanent purchase. Your K2 Kitchens designer will help you find your way through all the selections to find that which “speaks to you” the most. The K2 Kitchens showroom is full of material options and our designers know where all the best inventory of natural slabs are located. Call for an appointment today to get started on your counter quest! ■ - Jenny Provost



*The iconic table from Chef Virgilio Martínez Véliz's flagship restaurant CENTRAL in Lima, Peru. It is recognized by many as the best restaurant in the world.*