



Photos by BRANDON STENDEL

BACK VIEW It's clear what's old and what's new in the Shelter Architecture-designed modern addition to the back of a Dutch Colonial. It features a polycarbonate panel of clerestory windows that, when lights are lit, make the house glow at night. The fiber-cement siding creates a pattern reminiscent of the foundation's brick design.

Opposites attract

While blending remains the norm, more architects and homeowners are attaching thoroughly modern additions onto traditional older homes.

By LYNN UNDERWOOD
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Jennifer and Thomas Bohmbach would live in Walker Art Center if they could. That's what the Minneapolis couple told designer Kurt Gough from Shelter Architecture as they began to explore building an addition to their home in the Bryn Mawr neighborhood.

"We wanted it to be modern and have walls to show my photographs and our art," said Jennifer. "That statement solidified the direction we ended up going."

And they didn't let their home's architectural style — an early 1900s Dutch Colonial — stop them.

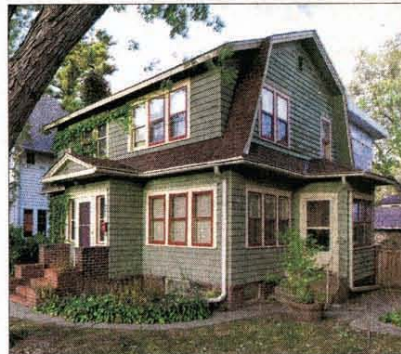
"We attached our version of the Walker Art Center to the back of their house," said

Gough. The street view is classic Dutch Colonial. But in the back, the home morphs into a two-story flat-roofed box.

The Bohmbachs call it "the mullet house" because of its conventional facade in front and its edgy style in back. Their neighbors like it, too. At a recent neighborhood garage sale, "We got nothing but compliments," Jennifer said. "Tons of people said it was stunning."

Emerging trend

A new modern addition attached to an older traditional home is clearly not for everyone. Most homeowners simply extend the original architectural style with similar materials, form and design to create a seamless blend of old and new.



FRONT VIEW The Bohmbachs' early 1900s Dutch Colonial.



VIEW PHOTOS of contrasting additions at startribune.com/homegarden.

« LET THE NEW PART LOOK MODERN AND THE OLD PART LOOK ORIGINAL; THAT'S THE WAVE OF THE FUTURE. »

Architect Rosemary McMonigal



ABOVE The rambler before the expansion. **RIGHT** An Asian-inspired addition by McMonigal Architects combines elements matching the existing home with its own distinct style.



PHILLIP MUELLEF

OPPOSITES ATTRACT

MODERN FROM HI

But architects are detecting a gradual wave of clients inquiring about creative, out-of-the-box ideas for home additions inside and out. They attribute it to more exposure of projects that successfully fuse traditional and modern design on TV shows, the Internet and in their neighborhoods, as well as influences from European architecture, where modern structures are added to buildings hundreds of years old. Architects say that a focus on sustainability, functionality and green materials and products also contributes to more modern design solutions.

"There's more of an openness to modern architecture," said architect Michael Roehr, who made over his own 1920s bungalow into a sustainable steel and glass dwelling. "With a Google search, people can see a wide variety of approaches."

Clients have different tastes, and their neighborhood housing makeup can determine how far they want to push the modern envelope, said Marc Swackhamer, associate professor at the University of Minnesota School of Architecture. "There's no right or wrong style. But more people are appreciating the simplicity, clarity and clean lines of modern architecture."

Architect John Barbour, principal at Shelter, recently received a call from a homeowner inquiring about a modern addition to his 1880s Queen Anne. "Twenty years ago no one would have taken this risk," he said. "There's a movement in that direction toward the acceptance of the stark contrast between old and new."

"It takes a very particular kind of client, who's willing to take the risk," said Jackie Millea, a designer at Shelter. She decided to be daring with her own home by inserting four simple boxes within her small 1920s Minneapolis bungalow to add more living space. The most striking component is a two-story glass-walled tower clad in fiber-cement siding on the back. It's clear where the new and old parts begin and end, yet she preserved the form and scale of the street view of the home.

"Our goal was to add a modern flair to our home," she said. "It allowed us to stay in the neighborhood but have some modern elements."

The Bohmbachs' addition looks strikingly different from the original house, but it shares some elements. The gray fiber-cement siding on the addition creates a pattern reminiscent of the original brick pattern from the home's foundation.

"Contrasting new and old complements both," said Barbour. "The contrast of placing a modern addition into a traditional setting makes the modern look more striking, and can create a nice backdrop to emphasize the traditional."

Softer approach

Traditional merging into modern doesn't have to be as hard-edged as the Bohmbach and Millea projects. Architect Rosemary McMonigal took a softer approach with a two-story addition, to the front of an older rambler, that reflects a simple clean-lined Asian aesthetic. The new part stands out, but the facade also matches the siding, color and roof pitch of the existing home.

"The whole idea of preserving our architecture and not tearing it down is valid," said McMonigal, who has been in the business 29 years. "But when you add or make changes, express it in a modern way. Let the new part look modern and the old part look original — that's the wave of the future."

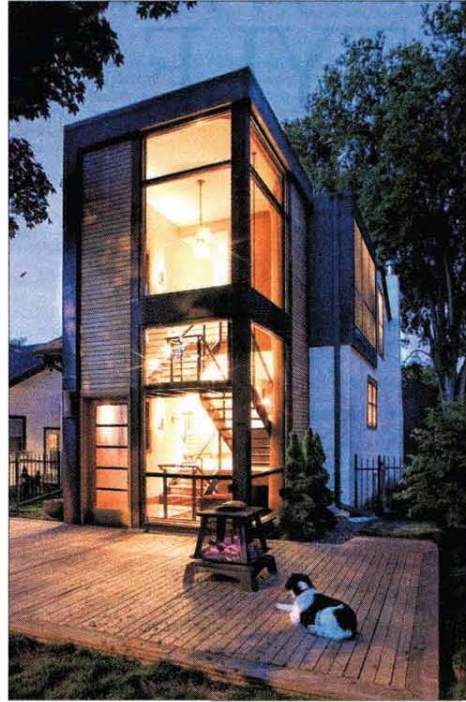


Photos by JILL GREER

ABOVE The new front entry of designer Jackie Millea's 1920s bungalow. BELOW The streamlined kitchen fits the modern addition.



RIGHT The project included a two-story stair tower on the back.



More clients are coming to meetings with the desire to do something more contemporary, agreed Gough. But they're still concerned about how the modified home will blend into the neighborhood.

Phil Rader is a strong proponent of blending. In 2007 the Minneapolis architect founded the BLEND awards (an acronym for Buildings and Landscapes Enhancing the Neighborhood Through Design), a program that recognizes homeowners, builders and architects whose projects respect the existing design, scale and proportion of homes in their surrounding blocks.

His reaction to the Bohmbach home was that the stark contrast between the existing Dutch Colonial style and the modern minimalist addition created an unexpected tension. "I applaud the homeowners' and architects' willingness to experiment with the juxtaposition of design styles," he said. "However, along with that willingness to be different should come an understanding that not everyone will appreciate it."

Architect Christian Dean of CityDeskStudio intentionally created tension in the design of his own home's addition. He attached two flat-roofed boxes to the back and side of his 1920s gabled Cape Cod.

"I didn't want the addition to compete with the simple Cape Cod form," said Dean. "There's a bit of tension there that keeps it vibrant. But it still looks familiar." Melding the old and new can be a challenge, he said. "The trick is to pull it off without the two parts feeling disjointed."

Today's home additions are a far cry from the tacky 1970s bump-outs that looked like they just didn't fit, according to architects. "There was a haste and cheapness in building techniques and shoddy construction," said Roehr. "Today there's a higher level of craftsmanship, better design, and people's expectations are higher."

Preserving the existing traditional aesthetic vs. modern enhancements



Provided by CityDeskStudio

Architect Christian Dean attached two modern boxes with shingle-size windows to his 1920s Cape Cod.

is an age-old argument in the architecture community, said Tom Fisher, dean of the College of Design at the University of Minnesota.

"Buildings should be a reflection of their time. We don't live in the Colonial era. We live in modern times," he said. "On the other hand, if you're living in a traditional house and want to add to it, you should reflect the original appearance of the home."

Where does he stand? "It's less about traditional or modern and more about whether the designer used good design principles, and it fits the scale and proportion of the existing house," he said. "I only find it objectionable when it's obnoxious."



Provided by Rich Laffin Architects

Most clients choose to have a new addition echo architectural elements of the existing home, such as this expansion of a 1946 Minnetonka house.