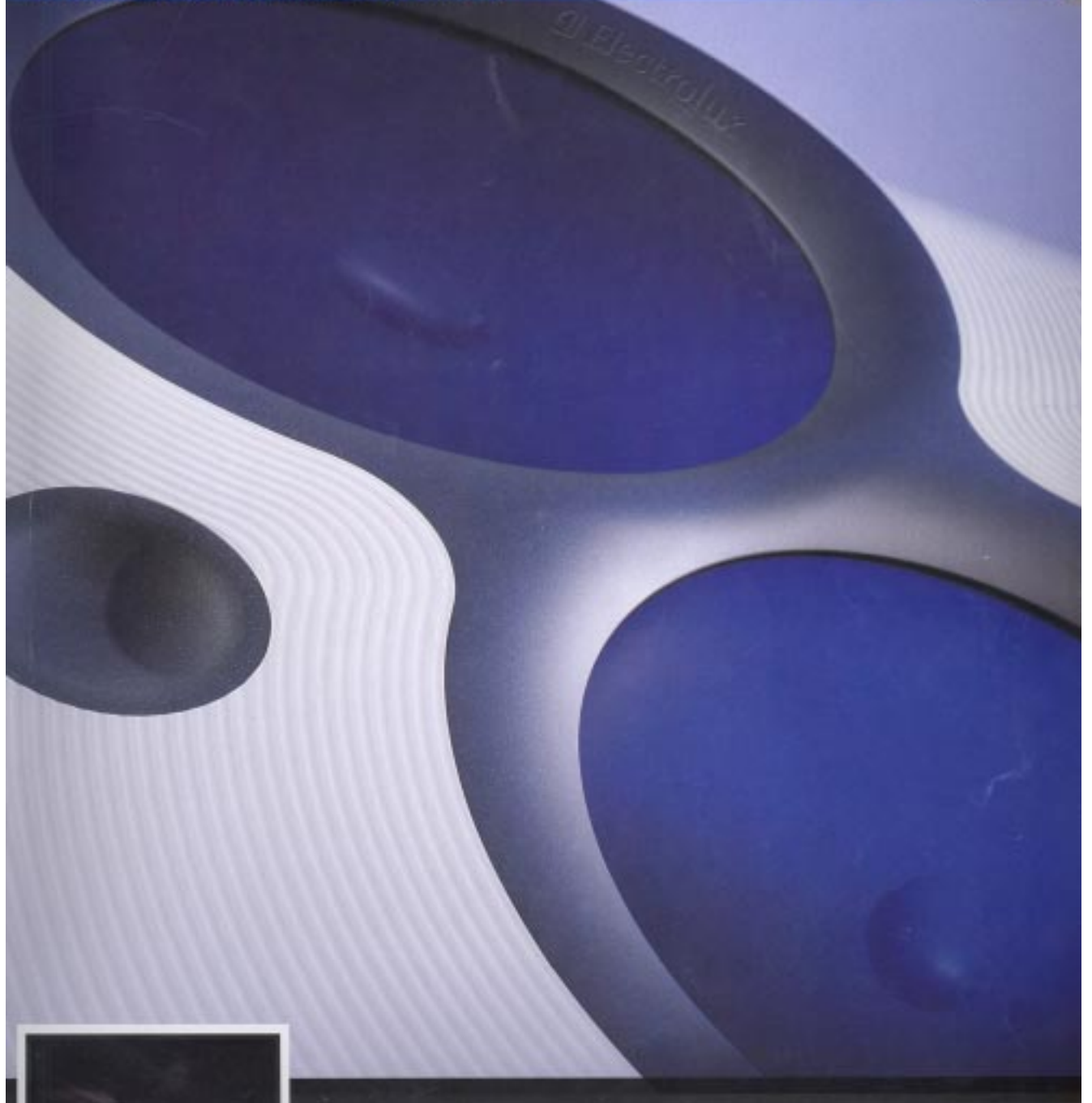


the kitchen ■ bath

# designer

Design inspiration for interiors specialists

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## CASE STUDY

Gioi Tran treats space design as art and fills the rooms of a San Francisco remodel with intriguing juxtapositions of color, line and texture

The kitchen, previously enclosed, now opens into the dining area. Lighting elements include ceiling-recessed downlights, adjustable spotlights focused on the art collection and decorative pendants above the eating bar.



# Sculpting

## Space



**W**hen the homeowners—a couple with two daughters—relocated from Hawaii to San Francisco, they wanted the renovation of their California 1960s-built home

Gioi Tran, principal in Applegate Tran Interiors, San Francisco, CA, who was contacted by the clients to design the new spaces.

*"We worked on this project for about*



**Above:** The vertical-grained eucalyptus cabinetry is juxtaposed against the horizontal slabs of black granite countertops. The island includes a support column.

so they revamped one room at a time.

"The owners also wanted art in all the rooms. They didn't have a lot of it when the design process began, but they started to collect more serious art when we began the renovation," Gioi says. "The clients at times looked at art and made recommendations to us as to what to select, or they would go to galleries, get a feeling for the artist's work, and after they told us which artists they preferred, we selected pieces based on the relationship of color and scale to the spaces in which they were to be displayed. And we had artists do commissioned pieces as well."

The design firm couldn't expand beyond the existing footprint of the home, but working within it, they knocked down walls to create a more open, inviting environment that better accommodates the clients' casual lifestyle.

### The Kitchen

"The kitchen, for example, had been closed off from the rest of the home," says Gioi. With some walls eliminated, the kitchen now flows into the dining room and sunken living room.

"What is unique about our approach to design is that I treat the design of a space like a piece of art," says Gioi. His approach developed from his



background in fine arts and as a dancer. "I look at the room beyond the basic elements. I do the layout first with all the major components—the appliances and fixtures needed. Once the basic layout is done, I go back in and sculpt in elements of texture and color. That approach, I believe, led to this project turning out so well," he says.

Gioi's sculptural approach involves juxtaposing light against dark surfaces and combining vertical lines with horizontals, while building in angles to

**Above:** Since the clients love artworks, paintings have been brought into the kitchen as well. The horizontal lines of the island and wall-mounted credenza offset the loveliness of the ceiling. A glass eating bar appears to cut through concrete support slabs.

## STUDY

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### Kitchen

**Cabinetry:** Western Designs  
**Cooking Appliances:** Thermador  
**Custom Hood:** Mint-A-Hood  
**Refrigerator:** Sub-Zero  
**Dishwasher & Coffee System:** Miele  
**Sink & Faucet:** Franke  
**Lighting:** Polceoli Italian Lighting  
**Flooring:** Golden State Flooring  
**Barstools:** Dakota Jackson, available at Randolph and Heim  
**Art:** Meg Lucas of K. Kimpton Contemporary Art

### Master Bath

**Bathtub & Sinks:** Kohler  
**Toilet:** Toto  
**Faucets & Towel Bars:** Dornbracht  
**Countertop, Flooring & Shower Walls:** ASH Natural Stone  
**Lighting:** Polceoli Italian Lighting



**The entryway is distinguished by the long shelf, which accentuates the horizontal and takes attention away from the low volume of the space.**

create further interest in the space. The inspiration for the kitchen, Gioi says, was actually a picture of a kitchen designed by Fu-Lung Cheng brought to him by the clients. They liked the mix of materials in it.

So Gioi set about working in natural materials with simple lines that would provide an uncluttered, yet welcoming environment. "We chose elements to use in the house that are seen in the landscape outside, such as the eucalyptus cabinetry," says Gioi. "We wanted to include an amber color and could have used onyx, but it was good to give the clients a story to tell guests about the eucalyptus indigenous to



the area, which is now a part of their me—they like that.”

To overcome a potentially claustrophobic effect from the low 8-foot ceiling in the kitchen, the designer emphasized horizontal lines and angles. The range hood is a horizontal tangle of stainless steel. Honed absolute black granite counters top the vertical-grained eucalyptus cabinetry to emphasize the horizontal lines created by the long wall-mounted buffet and the angled island.

### Living & Dining Rooms

The living and dining rooms carry through the mix of light and dark colors. In the dining room, dark wood furniture stands out against white walls. In the living room, blue walls are mixed in with white. Blue and raspberry are also evident in the custom furnishings, from a blue banquette and the raspberry wing to the shag rug which blends the two colors.

### Master Bath

The client particularly had requested that the master bathroom be clean and minimalist in design, but not stark and cold. “So I used natural materials in a

Above: Clean lines and geometric shapes are combined with rich colors in the sunken living room



Right: The interplay of light and dark—of positive and negative space—continues from the living room into the dining room



"The clean line is carried through in the juxtaposition of light and dark elements. The bath is long and narrow. At the end wall we used a dark midnight blue, with light colors on the left and right walls to create a sense of more width," Gioi explains. The midnight blue painted wall includes a window that offers a view of eucalyptus trees outside. "We chose midnight blue so the eucalyptus trees would stand out," says Gioi.

The remaining walls are clad in limestone, flamed via water jetting. "Limestone is usually honed or polished, but we wanted a matte finish. We cut the limestone to have a linear line, but the flaming gives it texture. When you touch it, you can feel the indentations and imperfections, even though the line is clean and simple," says Gioi.

The other end of the bath includes a window that offers a view of the bay. A skylight adds to the abundance of daylight flooding the room.

"The bath has a sense of serenity with the cool tones and combined contrasts," says Gioi.

The blue niche containing the banquette and the adjacent blue walls interconnect with light-colored vertical surfaces and ceiling, creating a sculptural quality.



## CASE STUDY

then want to extend that into other rooms.

"It's also easier for us to promote ourselves as kitchen and bath designers, rather than as interior designers who do whole houses, because most clients don't have the budget to do the whole house at one time," he says.

Like many designers, Gioi asks his clients to bring him pictures from books and magazines to reflect what styles, colors and looks they are interested in before the design process begins. "In any project we undertake, our job is to ask the client what is it about the images that is important to them, whether it's the color, the texture, or something else."

Sometimes, Gioi says, the images are not consistent and it takes some probing to establish what exactly it is that is most important to the client. "But the images these clients brought us were consistent. They all had a sculptural quality," Gioi notes.

Though Gioi's clients run the gamut in their preference for particular styles—from Victorian and Tudor to contemporary—it's the client who prefers sculptural qualities, like those seen in this project, that peaks Gioi's interest the most. "I love the element of sculptural quality and we push the client's limit if that's what they want," says the artist in Gioi Tran. ■ **kbd**