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Woman's Day Specials

Where the art is

THIS RADICALLY RECONCEIVED SPACE IS ALL ABOUT materials, atmosphere, and art. Before Gioi Tran and Vernon Applegate, of Applegate Tran Interiors in San Francisco, took on the job, though, the original space was large but inefficient. It needed to be renovated extensively to meet the homeowners' needs for a contemporary yet highly functional kitchen. By opening the space to the dining room and front entry, they created a more gracious layout and brought in more natural light, plus postcard views of San Francisco Bay and the striking coastal panorama of Marin County to the north.

The homeowners grew up in Hawaii and wanted a look that was clean and minimal, with an Asian feel but also warm and inviting. They wanted place for artwork, too. After extensive planning, which involved opening the kitchen to both the dining room and the entryway of the home, the focus shifted to creating a distinctive mix of natural and man-made materials within the kitchen.

Furniture-like custom cabinets of vertical-grain eucalyptus veneer create a light, neutral backdrop that contrasts with the richer, more variegated grain of the oiled African doussie wood floor, which continues into the dining and living rooms. The doussie will darken as it ages. Absolute-black granite countertops and a golden-toned backsplash round out the palette of natural materials. The stone surfaces have a honed rather than polished finish, giving them a matte appearance, not rustic but natural. One small but emphatically earthy accent is the roughly chiseled edge of a shelf cut of the same marble and set into the backsplash.

Complementing this tactile array of wood and stone are clear and frosted glass (in cabinet doors and on the raised eating counter), stainless steel, concrete (in the structural column), and even drywall, fashioned into the sculptural counter supports of

OPPOSITE: Ten canvases on a dark red wall form an alluring focal point for a nontraditional kitchen.

BELOW: The playful geometry of the room is clear in its mix of straight and arcing lines and forms. Pendant lights shaded with amber glass imbue the island and eating area with a soft glow.



the island and faux-painted to match the concrete. Using concrete here would have been prohibitively expensive to fabricate and engineer.

Lighting is unobtrusive, consisting of recessed ceiling spots and a trio of tiny amber glass–shaded pendant lamps over the island. To further minimize visual clutter, a television, easily viewable from seats at the island, hides in the cabinet over the wall ovens, and a built-in coffee system occupies a niche in the display cabinet next to the refrigerator. The appliance stores and grinds the coffee bean and prepares each cup of brew to order.

Despite the care taken in selecting the materials, the design of the room doesn't immediately call attention to them, a quality that helped this project earn the National Kitchen & Bath Association's top prize for design excellence. The first thing one sees upon entering is an art wall—something the homeowners considered a must—that displays a suite of 10 paintings. Painted deep red to act as a focal point, the wall is anchored by a sleek, cantilevered buffet. The arrangement creates a sense of mystery, one of the designers says, because guests hardly realize they're entering a kitchen.

In the buffet, as in a number of the other cabinets, the designers adapted Asian-style hardware by giving it unique contemporary detailing. Recessed stainless steel drawer pulls have been set as far off-center as possible on the drawer fronts without compromising the ability of the drawers to open and close smoothly. The treatment of those pulls neatly embodies the philosophy

expressed in this kitchen. An architect friend of the owners suggested they add a second column for symmetry, but they didn't take the suggestion, even though architects know a thing or two about design. The thing is, this design isn't really about symmetry.

OPPOSITE: Boasting a sculptural granite counter, the island is a perfect place to perch while eating or just watching television; the TV is cleverly hidden in a cabinet above the ovens.

BELOW: A backsplash of golden marble flanks absolute-black granite countertops and custom cabinets finished in vertical-grain eucalyptus.

BELOW RIGHT: The designers revitalized this kitchen by opening it up to the dining room and front entry.





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

To overcome a potentially austere effect from the low 8-foot ceiling in the kitchen, the designer used angled and emphasized horizontal lines. 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 the blue banquette and the raspberry ottoman 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.