

Southern Accents

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AOL Keyword: Southern Accents

Kitchen

first runner-up

Gloi Tran and Vernon Applegate of Applegate Tran Interiors in San Francisco boldly combined rich tones and sleek surfaces in this large kitchen, which was part of a total renovation of a '60s home in the San Francisco Bay area. The first thing to catch the judges' attention was the art wall—a long, aubergine-painted wall that displays 10 graphic paintings selected by the homeowner. "Using a dramatic color like this tempers the harshness of contemporary interiors and maintains a feeling of warmth and comfort," says Tran. The simple, clean design is surprisingly functional. For instance, on the art wall, an unobtrusive "floating buffet" provides a large serving area for entertaining and additional storage space.

Striking geometric shapes and angles were included in the design to cleverly disguise some of the more utilitarian components of the kitchen. At one end of the granite-topped island is a divider cast in concrete, which serves to block the view of the sink from the adjoining dining area. The divider also supports one end of a raised glass shelf that creates a bar area where guests can enjoy drinks while conversing with the cook. At the other end of the glass shelf stands a round support column that conveniently houses all of the electrical wiring for the island.



second runner-up



Steve Howard of Steve Howard Designs in Houston designed this long, galley-style kitchen to include the features his client had requested: storage space, accessibility to the patio just beyond the kitchen, and no upper cabinets—all on a modest budget. "Eliminating upper cabinets on the wall makes the kitchen appear wider and lighter," Howard says.

To achieve his own objective of designing a kitchen that would blend seamlessly with the adjoining rooms, Howard invested in quality appliances and distinctive materials, such as marble, Italian laminates, and oak accents, and chose a color palette of warm gray and tan for a softer ambience and easy maintenance. He installed generous counter space along the wall that would display the homeowners' art and on the opposite wall added a "Japanese kitchen." This hidden space, enclosed by sliding doors, conceals most of the utilitarian elements (refrigerator, microwave, small appliances) and includes a pantry and storage above for china.