

SEPTEMBER 2001 • \$7.00 U.S.

# KITCHEN & BATH

Business



**CALIFORNIA COUPLE'S POWDER ROOM  
PURPLE PASSION WILD WHIMSY**

**FIND OUT WHO'S PART OF THE  
INDUSTRY'S NEW BREED**

**FOREIGN APPLIANCE MAKERS'  
GLOBAL STRATEGIES**

vol. 48, no. 09 • Bill Communications, a VMU company • <http://www.kbbonline.com>



*Upon entering the powder room, one is struck by the cool, rich purple walls softened ever so slightly by warm terra-cotta tile. Seconds later the undulating ceiling and round ceramic sink that sits atop a pedestal, reminiscent of the costume of a Court Jester, grabs center stage.*

## Striking Balance

BY MARY BETH HINCHLIFFE

Color, texture and shape unite a Bay area home's  
three most utilitarian rooms.

On a cul-de-sac up on a hill in the San Francisco Bay area, there's an imposing home that truly illustrates the art of contrast. Its exterior, tailored after a contemporary Italian villa in deep gold and green, is the perfect appetizer for the design feast that beacons within where a symphony of colors, shapes and textures await.

Since the home is new construction, the homeowners put a major emphasis on the design of the most utilitarian rooms—the kitchen, bath and powder room. They wanted to be sure the hard lines and sur-

faces necessary in these rooms emanated a sleek mood in keeping with the home's contemporary décor without being too cool and impersonal. In meeting this challenge, the couple's different personalities played off of each other. A doctor by trade, he was concerned with the more functional or practical aspects while she works in theater and was drawn to the aesthetics.

With the assistance of Denna McLaughlin, ASID, designer, for San Francisco-based City Studios, the couple



*Clean contemporary design elements mix with the more dramatic for a kitchen that's architectural but, at the same time, doesn't take itself too seriously.*

was able to choreograph unique designs for each room that work in harmony from both an aesthetic and functional standpoint. "The impressive overall appearance," says McLaughlin, "was obtained by combining opposites—warm with cool, straight with wavy and angular with round. Touches of whimsy contribute to the uniqueness while making the contemporary space more livable."

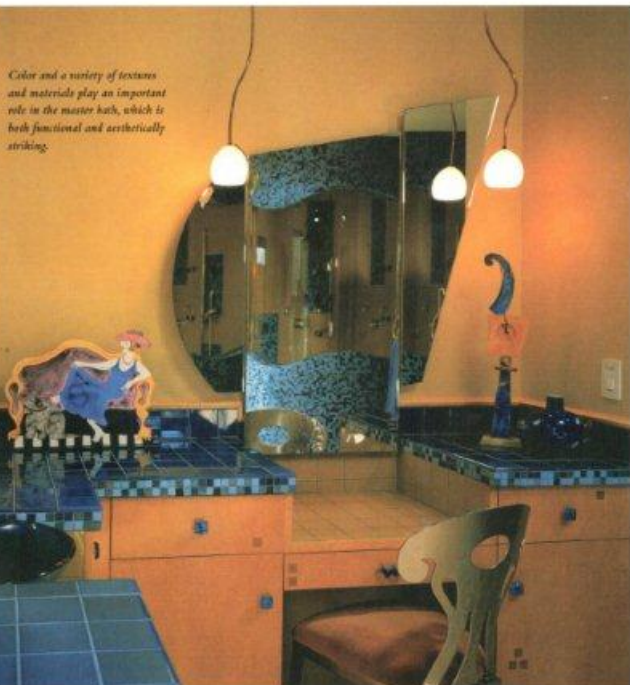
#### THE KITCHEN

The couple envisioned not just a work area, but an "experiential" kitchen to accommodate interaction with family as well as frequent socializing with friends. To this end, McLaughlin says they interpreted the space from a

mood and design standpoint as one that's "very architectural in feel without taking itself too seriously."

The architectural elements creating this sensibility include granite countertops colored in Lavender Ice, tiled beams and cast concrete columns inlaid with bits of glass, metal and tile. McLaughlin explains that small bits were added to the cast concrete columns to relieve the monochromatic color scheme and the tiled beams were installed to lend form and color to the ceiling area without closing it off or making it appear heavy.

Lighting was used to help unite the kitchen with its surrounding space. "We installed decorative ambient lighting over the island and peninsula because we wanted it to



look less kitchen like," explains McLaughlin. Pointing to translucent coniform cylinders and whimsical hand-blown triangular glass fixtures floating above, she notes that they're both in the gold family to complement the Aubergine-lacquered cabinets.

While the different light sources were layered to make the design come alive, purely functional task lighting was also used. According to McLaughlin, this recessed lighting was blended into the design and hidden in areas such as under cabinets and on the edges of tiled beams.

Since the homeowners were concerned that the appliances might detract from the kitchen's overall design, McLaughlin made sure they blended in. Those models chosen had clean, contemporary looks, which made integration into the room's decor easier. "We integrated panels from the cabinetry," says McLaughlin, who illustrates by pointing to the refrigerator with a maple front and the oven with surrounding maple panels to match the walls.

#### THE MASTER BATH

The homeowners wanted their master bathroom to be a striking study in contrasts. To make this intention a reality, they used the same design strategy as in the kitchen—one that incorporated a diverse mix of colors, textures and shapes.

Blue, the most dominant hue, colors the mosaic tile that flows around the shower area. McLaughlin explains that to offset it and to keep the space from becoming too cool, they chose warm maple for the cabinets, soft gold for the limestone floors, and yellow for the walls. To play up the richness and subtlety of the hues, a variety of hexuses from glass tile, glass mosaic and ceramic tile was incorporated. "We wanted to keep the eye interested, but we didn't want to overwhelm it," says McLaughlin, who notes that they also mixed in interesting shapes to complement.

The sink and vanity areas have a geometric look with lots of strong lines and sharp angles. To soften them, an above-counter round sink was installed. Above it, the mirror mixes two strong angular shapes with a rounded one. In this mirror, there's a view of a large wave-shaped shower surround in blue mosaic, which coordinates with the counter edge detail around the vanity and sink. Also complementing the mosaic pattern in the shower are square inlay patterns on the maple cabinetry.

Other cabinet details include custom-made glass pulls done in cobalt blue with a fine black line running through them. "Adding cobalt blue served as a unifying element," says McLaughlin, who explains that it brings the blue color of the countertops and shower surround onto the front of the cabinets.

While all these details were pleasing to the client, McLaughlin says it all would have been in vain if she wasn't

able to provide a functional everyday design. Since a bath that could accommodate both homeowners at the same time was a big consideration, two vanity areas were created. And since the couple requested ample elbow room between their area, the vanities were placed on either side of a large picture window overlooking the landscaped backyard pool area. In addition, to make the bathroom fully functional for two, a "no-wait" shower was installed. "The shower was built with two separate controls, showerheads and hand-held showers," says McLaughlin.

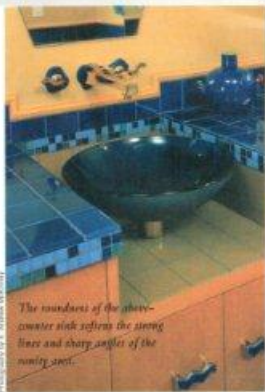
#### THE POWDER ROOM

The powder room is literally the "show" room of the home. Designed with guests in mind, its aesthetic beauty was a priority over function. "The client wanted to create something very unique, unpredictable and memorable," says McLaughlin, whose design does not disappoint.

Upon entering, the cool, rich purple walls strike you as dramatic. This drama is toned down slightly by warm terra-cotta tiles that are purely decorative and used sparingly. The tiles feature a triangle and a spiral shape. "We took the spiral shape and brought its curve up into the ceiling," says McLaughlin, pointing to the undulating ceiling that adds a surprising shape to a normally flat surface. "The ceiling is usually the last surface touched—we took advantage of its power to soften the room and draw the eye up."

Drawing the eye up to the ceramic sink is a pedestal that's in Mardi Gras colors and reminiscent of a Court Jester's costume. The unique pedestal serves to enhance the sink's roundness and echoes the triangle shapes in the decorative tiles above the sink's rim. The tiles also mirror the wavy ceiling above. Enhancing the entire sink area is maple cabinetry finished in Sienna. A final touch of sparkle is created with custom copper fittings and an unusual drawer pull shaped like a human stick figure.

The ambient lighting is funky, with the most unusual being the cylindrical sots that sit up high, highlighting the room's rich hues and architectural elements, from floor to ceiling. Moving down to the purple concrete surround of the shower, McLaughlin states, "The flooring was designed to ground the total and unique look."



*The roundness of the above-counter sink softens the strong lines and sharp angles of the vanity area.*

PHOTOGRAPH BY K. KAPLAN/STUDIO