

Remodeling Tips

Courtesy of **HUB Remodeling** Custom Design - Professional Remodeling  AUTUMN 2002



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Innovation and Inspiration: Trademarks of Fu-Tung Cheng

You may never have heard of Fu-Tung Cheng. His isn't exactly an American household name yet. However, most people involved in home design and construction today have read about him, if not actually seen his work. Cheng's designs are having a major influence on current trends in home design throughout the country, especially in kitchens and baths. You can see that influence when you thumb through the pages of magazines like *House Beautiful*, *Woman's Day* and *Fine Homebuilding*. He is setting the stan-

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Photo: Courtesy of Cheng Design. Photography by Matthew Millman

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Out-of-the-Ordinary Kitchen



Our clients came to us with the objective of updating their 25-year-old kitchen and adding a spacious family room. This is a fairly typical request, and one that HUB Remodeling handles with ease. However, the resulting transformation in this home is anything but ordinary.

Our clients are professionals with very demanding schedules. Having a household of seven, the husband and wife needed a highly functional kitchen. Keeping that in mind, their desire was for the space to be designed with a simple elegance.

"Simple elegance?" you say, "That sounds like an oxymoron." However, just like yin and yang, male

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Photo: Courtesy of Cheng Design. Photography by Matthew Millman

Fu-Tung Cheng

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standard for simple elegance and the creative use of natural materials.

Cheng graduated from the University of California, Berkeley, with a bachelor's degree in fine arts in 1971. By his own admission, he thinks of himself as an artist who gravitated from fine arts to designing large-scale "sculpture" in the form of homes in order to make a living. Today he is principal of Cheng Design and Cheng Design Products, Inc.

His artsy version of modern design is not cold and sterile, but rather warm and witty. Some examples from the kitchen—Cheng's cabinets often feature light-colored woods with a fine grain. He might add a surprising touch by running the grain horizontally across the cabinet doors, instead of vertically. Sunlight may stream in from the ceiling through skylights and

drench soft bamboo floors below. He designs stainless steel kitchen hoods in unique, imaginative shapes. The hood finishes, such as the "hand-burnished ribbon finish," or the "plaster finish" add an organic warmth to the sleek, contemporary design.

Cheng Design is perhaps best known for its landscape-like, luminous cast-concrete countertops. Cheng says he treats each of his creations as functional sculptures. Integral cutting boards and trivets are placed at the point of use. Water may be flowing merrily into the sink from one end of the countertop to the other, confined in a central trough he has fashioned in the concrete. But what fun! The concrete is embedded here and there with swirling shapes of shells and other unexpected "found" objects. Unapologetically, Cheng places recycled materials side by side with the new, infusing the space with life and historical significance.

Perhaps the photos included here will provide a bit of inspiration for your next dream project.



Photo: Courtesy of Cheng Design. Photography by Matthew Millman

Sink Savvy

They are stylish, they are trendy, and they are oh, so sophisticated. Vessel lavatories are attracting attention and making heads turn in today's bathrooms and powder rooms.

A lavatory is considered a "vessel" when the basin is designed and finished to be free standing and exposed on all sides. It can be installed above the counter of a bathroom vanity. In this case, the vessel may have a look reminiscent of bygone days when a pitcher and washbasin were permanent fixtures on the bedside table. A vessel lavatory can also appear to be floating in mid-air, supported by an open decorative frame with all the

Photo: Courtesy of Stone Forest (www.stoneforest.com)



Photo: Courtesy of Stone Forest (www.stoneforest.com)



plumbing in full view below. These types of sinks are usually installed with designer wall-mounted faucets for a striking ensemble.

The sky is the limit in terms of materials from which vessel lavatories are fashioned—ceramic, metal, glass, stone, concrete or even wood. Since

all sides of the lav are exposed, this only increases design possibilities. Natural light shining all the way through a glass vessel, for example, lends a special brilliance to its color. A stone vessel is as smooth as silk on the inside, but may purposely be left with the irregular markings of the stone cutter's chisel on the exterior, giving the lav its unique character.

It is important, however, to consider your lifestyle as well as maintenance issues when making choices regarding sinks in your home. Because of their greater exposure, vessel lavs can be a more of a challenge to keep clean and free from fingerprints, and may be more easily broken than an undermounted sink. For this reason, if you have children, you may want a more practical sink for their bathrooms. A main hall powder room would be an excellent area in which to show off your design savvy.



Photo: Courtesy of Curvet USA, inc. (www.curvetusa.com)

Countertops: Concrete

Not long ago concrete was a drab, utilitarian material that was relegated to out-of-the-way areas of the home, such as the basement or the garage. All that has recently changed.

Concrete has come into the limelight as the material of choice for countertops in many kitchen and bath installations. It is not because it is inexpensive. The cost of a concrete countertop per square-foot is comparable to that of granite or quartz surfacing.

Homeowners, however, are choosing concrete for its warm, natural feel and its incredible versatility. Not only can it be shaped into complex forms, but it can also include various pigments, stains and aggregate colors to beautifully complement the color of any inte-

rior space. The surface can be made smooth and shiny, or gently textured and non-reflective. It is also possible to integrate items while the material is still malleable—such as metal strips that form a useful trivet, or an interesting decorative object that shows up on the surface, or perhaps glass chips worked into the background for textural interest.

Concrete countertops are sealed to make them water and stain resistant. It is important to handle the surface with care, so that the sealer is not damaged. For that reason, it is recommended that a cutting board always be used. Sometimes a cutting board is even made an integral part of the countertop. Also, hot pans should

not be placed directly on the countertop, but rather on a trivet or a hot pad. Use a mild, non-abrasive soap and warm water for daily cleaning.

Concrete countertops are not for everyone, as their handmade quality may make the surface somewhat unpredictable. Each countertop is uniquely fashioned and usually changes over time. With regular use, it develops a warm surface patina, and hairline cracks may appear. None of this affects its durability or structural integrity. It is what makes a concrete countertop have a special character all of its own, and is part of what attracts homeowners to the material.



Kitchen/Family Room

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and female—when you combine simplicity and elegance, that is when you achieve greatness. And this is one awesome kitchen!

Some of you may recognize the model as our own Lynne Stephenson. She likes to test-drive each kitchen HUB designs before turning it over to the happy homeowner. In this photo, Lynne is rushing off to her next design challenge.

One of HUB’s criteria with every addition is that it blends with the existing home. You can see here that we achieved this beautifully.

