

PORTLAND'S HOME GARDEN AND LIFESTYLE MAGAZINE

PORTRAIT OF PORTLAND

SPECIAL
GARDEN ISSUE

INSPIRATIONAL
DESIGNER KITCHENS!

At home with designer
KATHY NIEMI

CHIC COLOR TRENDS

76 pages of
STYLISH INTERIOR
DESIGN

RHYTHM BLUES

WRITTEN BY DONNA PIZZI PHOTOGRAPHY BY PAUL MURPHY

LIFE IN THE FAST LANE SLOWED TO A MEDITATIVE CRAWL WHEN THIS BUSY PROFESSIONAL COUPLE MOVED FROM A LARGE HOUSE IN PORTLAND TO A CONDO OVERLOOKING THE COLUMBIA RIVER. HERE, SWANS GATHERED, GEESE WADED AND GOSLINGS PADDLED IN TRANQUIL TIDEWATERS AS A TALENTED DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION TEAM TOOK THE CONDO DOWN TO ITS STUDS TO CREATE A VISUALLY STUNNING ENVIRONMENT AS RESTFUL AS THE VIEW BEFORE THEM.



SEATED IN THEIR FAVORITE CHAIRS overlooking the wide southern-facing expanse of the Columbia River, the new owners of this completely remodeled Vancouver condo can barely remember the whirlwind of construction and design activity that preceded their quietude.

One of the homeowners is still amazed to discover how much she loves the new living space that uprooted her from her beloved Portland home, the proximity of their children's homes, and the kitchen she so loved. "I went kicking and screaming to Vancouver," she admits. "My husband said, 'I know you don't want to do this, so why don't we make this what you want. We'll redo the kitchen, and give you every opportunity to make this work.'"

Happily, it did work – in spades - thanks to the A-team she assembled to work with her: Interior designer Carole Jackson, of Carole Jackson Design, Inc., contractor Dave Wilson of DL Wilson Construction, artist and cabinet maker Mel Archer of Pacific Design, Inc., Ray Ahlgren of Fireart, and Chris Campbell of Campbell's Tile Concepts.

The process began with lightning speed: the couple's Portland home sold in three days, they purchased the condo the following week and moved in by August. For expedience sake, the couple lived in the space, borrowing the former owner's furnishings until construction began in January. During that period, they honed their ideas on how to ameliorate the original layout, and chose the flooring and stone in just six short weeks. An intense four-day trip to the San Francisco Design Center followed. "Our design concept just jelled in San Francisco," recalls Jackson. "We shopped long and hard, made lists, picked fabrics and furnishings, and then spent evenings at the hotel going over what we'd seen that day."

Jackson and the homeowners' goal was to create a look outside the box – a flow of glass, stone, wood and tile that would enhance the couple's extensive art

Ledger stones anchor one wall of the dining room, providing texture. The square wenge pedestal dining table is displayed on a custom rug whose turquoise circles reiterate the geometric theme inspired by the table. A commissioned oil painting by Colorado artist Eric K. Wallis hangs alongside a handwoven twine sculpture with ceramic face, "Nude with Red Flower," by Shirley Ruska Brown – a Valentine's gift from husband to wife. A terra cotta by French artist Christine Rémy adorns the table.



Three Chagal serigraphs – two from the Daphne & Chloe series and a third from the Circus Series – line the hallway turned art gallery. More ledger stone sets off Anacortes, Washington artist Alfred Currier’s Northwest landscape at left. The lighting design by Keylight & Shadow and Energy Plus Automation was complex. “Too much tract lighting would have ruined the view,” says Jackson, “but the ceiling joists created long, narrow triangles, which made it very difficult to light.” ➦ The kitchen bar at right features circular iridescent glass work ‘bubbles’ by Fireart that seem to float off each other. The flybridge also seems to fly past the bar cabinetry, leaving a jutting corner free to be admired.



collection. The serendipitous discovery of a 59” x 59” dark wenge wood pedestal table with a 48” onyx circle at its heart became the cornerstone for their geometric design theme of circles and squares. “We didn’t buy anything until we got home and talked to Mel Archer and Dave Wilson to make certain that the design concept could actually be utilized in the blueprint and that all the furniture would fit in the 3,000 sq. ft. space,” adds Jackson.

As a conscientious team player, Jackson often surprises contractors by delivering in a way that actually shaves costs from a contractor’s budget. “They have a contract with the homeowner,” says Jackson, “and my job is to honor their commitment to the client, as well as their bottom line.”

Nowhere was this more apparent than in the condo kitchen, which had limited workspace and a dropped 8’ ceiling that caused the 6’2” husband and his wife to duck whenever they entered it. By ripping out the original maple production cabinetry, kicking back one wall four feet, and enlarging the island to five feet across, the team provided more storage, a larger workspace and breathtaking countertops and cabinetry.





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In the master bath, leftover marble from the countertops was used for the shower disc. Pratt and Larson's Steelworks Sterling tile inset with Anthracite Piedra Del Sol dots from United Tile forms the floor. The backsplash and shower accent tile is also from United Tile. Accessories are hidden in Robern glass cabinets with electricity and mirrors inside. + Archer and Jackson turned the small powder room (opposite) into a more usable space by adding an in-wall toilet, cladding the wall in wood, and running Pratt and Larson's Oceanside "Elevations" basketweave tile vertically. Three centimeter Amber Pearl Ice Stone from Pratt and Larson tops the counter. A Paul Rouwette painting looks dashing against the pistachio walls painted in High Chief from Miller Paint.



When the team realized the two kitchen pillars were structural, they incorporated them into the design by wrapping them in metal by Trovo Design, which specializes in architectural metal work. DL Wilson had to do some fancy engineering to angle the wall so the pillars would be viewed diagonally instead of at 90 degrees. All the audio video wiring – which is accessible through the media room found behind the kitchen – is stashed in a lost triangle created by installing the Chang hood at an angle.



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“Four feet doesn’t look like a significant amount of space,” says the homeowner, “but it made a huge difference, enabling us to add a 36” Subzero refrigerator, commercial range, recycling bin, roller racks in the pantry, and storage beneath the island.” The kitchen cabinetry, crafted from a pair of African woods – Mozambique and wenge - features a unique overlay of circular bronze iridescent glass tile, and a reflective glass bar countertop by Fireart and Pacific Design. The island countertop is fashioned from granite. “We enjoyed getting Fireart involved in the job,” says Archer, “to create these little ‘Oh, Wow!’ moments such as the slash angles in the kitchen bar, where the cabinet top is revealed beneath the glass countertop.”

Jackson and Archer worked seamlessly together with the homeowner. Together they turned technical issues into creative aesthetic issues that were easily resolved. When the basket weave tile, originally slated for the kitchen, seemed better suited for the powder room, the change was made forthwith. The basket weave tile was installed vertically to add height and volume when juxtaposed against Archer’s handcrafted wooden tiles and Jackson’s half-mirror design.



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Kitchen & Bath Tile & Stone Fabricator: Campbell’s Tile Concepts; Master Bath Floor, Shower & Backsplash: United Tile, Pratt & Larson Tile; Greatroom-Bar Area: Glass Countertop & Discs: Pacific Design, Inc, Fireart; Greatroom-Bar Area Tile: Pratt & Larson Tile; Kitchen Glass Bar: Pacific Design, Inc, Fireart; Metal Bar Columns: Pacific Design, Inc, Trovo; Powder Bath Tile & Countertop: Pratt & Larson Tile; Shared Bath Tile: United Tile; Shared Bath Floors & Countertop: Pratt & Larson Tile; Paint: Miller Paint; Platform Bed: Pacific Design, Inc.

To ensure privacy in the Jack and Jill bath, Jackson obscured the toilet behind a wall of glass in which a piece of the same fabric found in the shower curtain is laminated between two sheets of glass, and then sandblasted. Jackson has nothing but praise for the tile work done by Campbell's Tile Concepts, especially the day she discovered more purple tiles were needed in the Jack and Jill shower. Campbell's tile installer, Nick, simply told her to put blue tape up wherever she wanted it added and he'd take care of it. "That type of professionalism," adds Jackson, "starts from the top." Pratt and Larson's Oceanside Tessera Blend iridescent modular mosaics add a glamorous touch.



"The switch worked out perfectly," says Jackson, "because we used these small 1" x 2" green mosaic tiles set off by brown ceramic bolt liner tiles (Listellos) at the center for the kitchen backsplash, which, in turned, played beautifully off the glass countertops." The team continued to work its magic by removing the soffit in the living room to reiterate a sense of height, then butted the Mozambique wood up to the ledger stone in the dining room, which gave the visual impression that the kitchen cabinetry actually reached across to this space.

The master bedroom was a logistical challenge. A door leading out to the patio, which could not be removed according to building code, hamstrung the layout entirely. "There was no place to put the bed!" says Jackson, "so I decided to sheet rock over the door, and design a platform bed on rollers with storage underneath. I told Mel I wanted to hide the sheet rock with different pieces of wood like shoe boxes, and two weeks later, he had the design." Spinning off the homeowner's desire for a headboard with a shelf on which to place a Katherine Wasco painting – one that took ten years to acquire - Archer joined the two challenges into a single look by creating a step-down Ziggaret pattern to the shelf done in wenge wood that reached nearly to the wall at left. "First, we mocked it up for



Q: WHAT IS YOUR TRADEMARK AS A DESIGNER?

CAROLE: I have a passion for creating delightful environments that reflect the client's taste and lifestyle. One of my priorities is for the design process to be enjoyable for all involved. I also rely on good relationships with colleagues developed over the years, which makes me a good and valuable member of a well-oiled team that runs smoothly.

Q: WHEN YOU SIT DOWN WITH HOMEOWNERS SEEKING A DESIGNER, WHAT INFORMATION DO YOU EXPECT THEM TO BRING TO THE TABLE?

CAROLE: At the initial consultation, I ask the clients to each provide pictures of concepts they like and dislike! I ask that they do this separately, so one does not influence the other. Sometimes, when viewing their homework, I wear the hat of both designer and counselor. During this process, I encourage them to be totally honest, so I can help them create the space they want for themselves and their guests.

Listening to the heart, as well as the words and pictures of the client, has become an integral part of getting the creative process flowing. I also ask clients to give me adjectives they want the new surroundings to elicit from guests, a fun exercise which helps to get us all working on the same page.

Q: WHAT CREATIVE INFLUENCES HELPED TO FORMULATE YOUR TALENT AS A DESIGNER?

CAROLE: The main influence for my design aesthetic is found in the unique resources I've developed in the local design community. We are so privileged to have so many diverse artists and craftsmen in our area. Often a simple visit to their showrooms can spark my creative process. What a pure joy it is to see the level of excellent design that is within my reach locally.

Q: DESCRIBE YOUR GREATEST "FIND" THIS YEAR.

CAROLE: The creative use of glass products of all types, from pendant lights to glass walls, countertops and tile, opens up so many solutions to challenging obstacles in interior design that I feel blessed to have them at my fingertips. Again, we have many interesting and unique opportunities in our area to influence the creative design process which translates to visually comfortable surroundings that are at the core of my interior design values.

Q: HOW DO YOU USE COLOR AND TEXTURE TO INFORM YOUR DESIGN?

CAROLE: Walls that are painted, wallpapered, faux-painted and covered in fabric offer fabulous possibilities to introduce color and texture in the design process. Floors, countertop, and ceilings continue this base of the design. Furnishings and accessories finish the process by acting as "icing" on the cake. Whether I'm working with a remodel or new construction, the color and texture provided by all surfaces are integral to the finished product. They offer the contrast in color and texture that produce the well-designed and furnished home or office.

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the client on the floor of our showroom,” says Archer, “and once it was okayed, we developed it further.”

There are three bedrooms in the layout, but the owners turned one into an office that is separated by a Jack and Jill bath from the guest bedroom on the other. To ensure privacy, Jackson obscured the toilet behind a wall of glass in which a piece of the same fabric found in the shower curtain is laminated between two sheets of glass, and then sandblasted.

“... Everyone did such a good job of using different materials and techniques.

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Jackson photographed the homeowners’ art collection in their former house in order to become familiar with each piece and its former placement. “When we first came into the condo, we hung everything for safety,” recalls the homeowner, “Once the condo construction was finally complete, a lot of the pieces went back to the same location. One piece in the entry – William Ware’s “The Lady with the Hat” – was in an elaborate frame, but we hung her up with no frame and she looks fabulous against the chocolate brown wall.”

“I’ve done a lot of houses,” says the homeowner, who has worked with Jackson since the early 90s, and at one point considered joining her design firm had life not dictated otherwise, “and this is my best job so far. Everyone did such a good job of using different materials and techniques. It’s not often you can try so many things and have them turn out successfully.”

Now, whenever she sinks down in her favorite chair to enjoy the view, she realizes just how very restful their home is. “I think the whole thing turned out great, it’s so gorgeous, so organic, and just so much fun!” she says.

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