



NKBA | KBIS

The Essence of Luxury
Stories of Exceptional Design

OCTOBER 2025



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The Essence of Luxury: Stories of Exceptional Design is the culmination of NKBA's luxury research initiative—an ambitious exploration into what truly defines luxury in residential design. By engaging with leading interior and kitchen and bath designers, the project uncovers the nuanced artistry that transcends mere opulence. It delves into how these professionals craft bespoke experiences for their clients, balancing aesthetic refinement with functionality and personal expression.

Through a series of meticulously curated case studies, the research highlights the innovation behind standout projects, offering insight into how designers navigate client relationships, budgets, and materials to create spaces that are as distinctive as they are inspiring.

At its heart, *The Essence of Luxury* is a celebration of stories, techniques, and boundless creativity. Each interview reveals not only the challenges faced but also the transformative thinking and craftsmanship that bring visionary designs to life. From sourcing rare materials to achieving harmony between the home and its surroundings, these narratives illuminate the dedication and ingenuity that define modern luxury.

Serving as both an educational resource and a source of inspiration, this compendium invites designers to rethink the meaning of luxury and embrace new ways to elevate their craft—creating spaces that resonate deeply with individuality, beauty, and sophistication.



Meet The Designers



Alena Capra, CMKBD

<https://www.alenacapradesigns.com>

Alena Capra, CMKBD, is the principal of Alena Capra Designs, an award-winning design firm based in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. With over two decades of experience in interior design, Alena is a Certified Master Kitchen & Bath Designer (CMKBD) and a proud graduate of both the University of Miami and the Metropolitan Institute of Design.

Alena Capra Designs



Alicia Dakteris

<https://www.dakterisdesign.com/index.html>

Alicia Dakteris is a designer from California, known for designing amazing houses in Newport Beach and beyond. Alicia and her husband, respected Architect Karl Dakteris, work as complementing forces to create unique and sustainable custom homes with a holistic approach. This powerful partnership has allowed them to collaborate on wonderful projects and provide clients with complementing forces that work together to create a well-rounded proposal.

Dakteris Designs



Alisha Taylor

<https://www.alishataylor.com/>

Alisha has been running Alisha Taylor Interiors design studio in Arizona for over 20 years and has been recognized for her award-winning designs locally and nationally. With a B.A. in Interior Design and extensive CAD training, Alisha enjoys combining the technical aspect of construction with the creative side of interior design to create stunning luxury homes incorporating everything from tile designs to gorgeous furniture.

Alisha Taylor
Interiors



Anastasia Harrison

<https://ahdandco.com/>

Anastasia Harrison is a rarity in the design world – she is a trained architect and an award-winning designer. Her enthusiasm for both can be seen from concept to installation, and this energy fills each of her projects. As Owner and Principal Architect at AHD&Co, Anastasia leads a creative team best known for unconventional thinking and expertise, thus providing effortless designs.

AHD & Co



Andi Wheelband

<https://www.twobirdsdesign.ca/>

Andi Wheelband is a Toronto-based interior designer specializing in residential design. Since co-founding her firm in 2013 with fellow designer Renee Frostick, she has become known for creating warm, livable spaces that balance timeless design with modern function. Her work has been featured in House & Home, including Kitchen of the Year in 2022, among many other outlets.

Two Birds Design



Ashley de Boer

<https://ashleydeboerinteriors.com/>

Infusing functionality, design, and comfort, Ashley creates transitional residential spaces that align with her clients' vision and lifestyle. Ashley's design acumen, impeccable taste and sharp attention to detail have afforded her the opportunity to work alongside renowned Canadian interior designer, Sarah Richardson. Ashley is featured as a design assistant to Sarah on the new HGTV series, Sarah's Mountain Escape on HGTV Canada.

Ashley de Boer
Interiors



Ashley Sheaffer

<https://www.kbfdesigngallery.com/>

Ashley Sheaffer leads one of Central Florida's premier design-build remodeling firms. A second-generation owner, she has transformed her family business into an enterprise known for turnkey, luxury renovations that marry form, function, and unmistakable warmth. Ashley's signature four-phase client journey has become a model for clarity and collaboration, empowering homeowners while safeguarding design intent.

KBF Design Gallery



Crystal Hackl, CKBD

<https://eagleandvine.com>

Owner, founder and principal designer Crystal Hackl, CKBD, credits her 30+ years of industry experience, including interior design, kitchen & bath design, project management, showroom management, for equipping her with a unique skill set to successfully design, plan and deliver beautiful home transformations. She blends her signature aesthetic with organization and heart to bring projects from concept to completion.

Eagle & Vine Interiors



Garrison Hullinger

<https://www.studiogarrison.com/>

Garrison Hullinger is the founder and Principal Designer of Studio Garrison, a luxury design firm that creates stunning spaces for residential, hospitality, and commercial clients. From a one-man studio to a nationally recognized firm, Garrison has scaled his business without compromising on quality and attention to detail.

Studio Garrison



Gina D'Amore Bauerle

<https://damoreinteriors.com/>

Joining the D'Amore Interiors team 20 years ago, as a teen, Gina fell in love with interior design and has been a force to reckon with. Being raised in a family business in the home furnishings industry first in Ft. Lauderdale and now in Denver, she has been surrounded by all things design her entire life, and her passion has always been interior design.

D'Amore Interiors



Hallie Mullen

<https://www.mullen-bergstrom.com>

Established in 2011, Mullen & Bergstrom is an interior design and model home merchandising firm, servicing the building and development community throughout the San Francisco Bay Area. Hallie Mullen brings a unique perspective to the merchandising community. Before founding Mullen & Bergstrom, Mullen spent over a decade as Vice President for Centex Homes, overseeing the design studio and many other functions.

Mullen & Bergstrom



Jeanne Chung

<https://www.cozystylishchic.com/>

Based in Southern California, interior designer and retailer Jeanne Chung is celebrated for her unique blend of classic design principles and modern flair. Jeanne's diverse portfolio showcases her ability to craft a variety of classic and contemporary styles that are influenced by the architecture and her clients' needs and aesthetic.

Cozy Stylish Chic



Jennifer Sullivan

<https://www.kbfdesigngallery.com/>

Jennifer Sullivan is a seasoned interior designer with over 20 years of experience in the industry. She has worked on a diverse range of projects, including new construction, residential remodel, and model home design. Jennifer is known for her expertise in all aspects of design, collaborating closely with clients, contractors, project managers, and brokers to ensure seamless project execution.

KBF Design Gallery



Joan Ravasy

<https://joanravasydesign.com/>

A creative designer brings much to the lifestyle of the client. Joan Ravasy ASID, NKBA, armed with extensive experience and vast resources of fine furnishings, art, materials and accessories from Paris to Santa Fe brings it all together creating bespoke individual spaces for her projects reflecting the owners' tastes and requirements.

Joan Ravasy Design



Joseph DeCasperis

<https://www.byjoseph.com/>

Joseph DeCasperis is the owner and designer at Joseph Decasperis Design. Joseph is enamored with the design industry, and was honored as a Thirty Under 30 by the NKBA in 2020. Joseph loves branding, building the business, and above all, connecting with each and every person that walks through the door.

Joseph DeCasperis
Design



Kristie Holloway

<https://www.kbfdesigngallery.com/>

Kristie Holloway graduated Cum Laude with a Bachelor's degree in Interior Design from the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga in 2006. She began her design journey focused on cabinetry layouts, but her creative curiosity soon led her beyond Tennessee's mountains to the elegance of Florida's Emerald Coast. There, she immersed herself in the world of custom high-end home building.

KBF Design Gallery



Mark Haddad, CMKBD

<https://interiology.com/>

Creative, knowledgeable, and passionate about details, Mark treasures guiding clients through the challenging and detail-oriented process of kitchen, bath and interior design. Mark excels in pushing your styles boundaries while using the most innovative products and techniques to enhance day-to-day living and provide creative solutions to seemingly inextricable challenges.

Interiology Design Co.



Mary Douglas Drysdale

<https://www.marydouglasdrysdaleinteriordesign.com/>

The signature style of Mary Douglas Drysdale is consistently recognized as both original and timeless, seamlessly bridging tradition with modern sensibilities. From farmhouse to townhouse, this designer provides architectural and decorative solutions crafted for the individual and appropriate to the project type. In 2014, 2019, and 2021 Drysdale was named one of the top 100 designers in the world.

Drysdale Design
Associates



Melissa Powell

<https://www.designshopdallas.com/>

The Design Shop's work is best described as a timeless take on modern, with enduring materials and functionality, complemented by distinctive style. Our team channels more than 15 years experience in the construction realm to design spaces that are equal parts form and function, never sacrificing one for the other.

The Design Shop



Melissa Sakell, CKBD

<https://anthonywilder.com/>

Since 2011, Melissa Sakell, CKBD has been designing residential kitchens and bathrooms in the DC Metro area. Now a designer at a luxury DC-area architecture firm Anthony Wilder Design/Build, Sakell has already been making her mark in the industry. Her promising career progress and leadership were recognized by the NKBA in 2019 when she was inducted into the Thirty Under 30 program.

Anthony Wilder
Design/Build, Inc



Rebecca Phillips

<https://www.alishataylor.com/>

As the Marketing & Operations Director at Alisha Taylor Interiors, Rebecca has elevated the brand's presence and appeal among luxury clients through strategic marketing and highlighting our personalized client experience.

Alisha Taylor
Interiors



Renee Frostick

<https://www.twobirdsdesign.ca/>

Renee is the co-founder of Two Birds Design, a Toronto-based interior design firm specializing in creating distinctive and welcoming residential spaces. Working alongside her partner Andi and a team of talented designers, Renee brings a fresh, innovative approach to every project. Commitment to exceptional quality, creative problem-solving, and meticulous attention to detail ensures that each space is thoughtfully designed and beautifully executed.

Two Birds Design



Sarah Robertson, AKBD

<https://studiodearborn.com>

As principal of Studio Dearborn, Sarah Robertson, AKBD, has made the mastery of kitchen storage and function an integral part of her design success. With back to back NKBA wins in 2019 and 2020 for Best Overall Kitchen Design, Sarah has emerged as a highly sought after source for kitchen design expertise, growing a global following for tailored, elegant spaces that are as functional as they are beautiful.

Studio Dearborn



Tani Nate, CKD

<https://dream-kitchens.com/>

Tani Nate is a Certified Kitchen Designer (CKD) based in Delafield, Wisconsin, specializing in the design of custom kitchens, bathrooms & full home remodels and new construction projects. Tani has a 5 year degree in Interior Designer & has been a designer for 35 years. With a focus on functionality & aesthetics, she collaborates closely with clients to create personalized spaces that blend style with practicality.

Dream Kitchens

Perspectives On Luxury



Technology



**Warmth &
Approachability**



Exclusivity



Functionality



Provenance



Personalization



Technology

- Luxury homeowners increasingly embrace sophisticated technology that dissolves seamlessly into daily life—from orchestrated lighting that dances with the rhythms of the day to smart systems that breathe life into distant vacation homes.
- While designers partner with integrators to weave these invisible conveniences into the fabric of modern living, a discerning minority of clients deliberately seek analog sanctuaries, choosing to escape the digital embrace that permeates their professional worlds or guard against privacy intrusions.

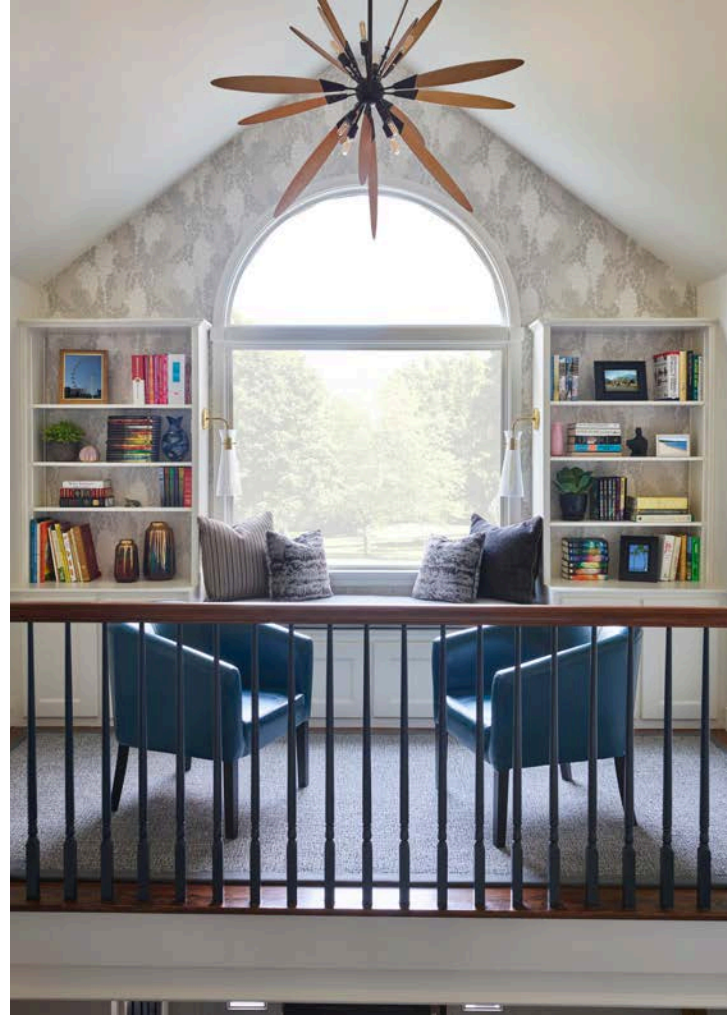


Exclusivity

- True exclusivity transcends rare materials—it lives in nature's unrepeatable artistry and interiors that mirror the essence of those within.
- A residence achieves distinction through bespoke details: surfaces at the perfect height, spaces devoted to personal passions, environments that tell your singular story.
- Custom furnishings and artisanal finishes create an atmosphere impossible to duplicate and impossible to forget.

Provenance

- Luxury homes showcase personal narratives through heirlooms, photographs, and travel mementos that tell their owners' stories.
- Designers trace each piece's provenance—its craftspeople and origins—helping clients make meaningful selections.
- Homes harmonize with surroundings using native materials and color palettes that mirror the natural landscape.



Warmth and Approachability

- Designers embrace relaxed luxury through layered textures, rich colors, and warm lighting that create effortlessly welcoming spaces.
- Vintage and weathered pieces instantly infuse rooms with heritage and warmth, lending new spaces a timeless, well-loved quality.
- "Intentional over excessive" defines modern luxury—clients prioritize comfort and livability above ostentatious displays.





Functionality

- Luxury design transforms function into art, where effortless living becomes the pinnacle of sophistication—each space composed to reflect how its inhabitants truly live.
- True luxury is bespoke design that mirrors individual lifestyles, creating unique environments for everything from lavish entertainment to cherished pets and after-school snacks.



Personalization

- Exceptional homes arise when clients embrace their designer's vision, allowing them to craft interiors that celebrate individual journeys—incorporating treasured destinations, preferred artworks, and signature styles.
- Every element receives meticulous attention, from bespoke furnishings and sculptural lighting to architectural millwork and curated commissions, creating residences that embody their owners' distinct sensibilities.



Making the Most of Space

Luxury Transcends Aesthetics to Create a Meaningful Experience



MELISSA POWELL

Powell's background bridges construction and design, showing luxury as a balance of comfort, functionality, and aesthetics. After starting a custom home building company 17 years ago and creating an in-house design studio called the Design Shop, she defines luxury as "the ultimate level of comfort meets aesthetic."

Luxury clients are increasingly sophisticated. They arrive design-aware, research-driven, and focused on how spaces will function for their specific lifestyles. "Luxury clients are more well-informed," Powell notes, with "access to resources that can help them do more specific things" -- such as requesting unique features like specialized wine rooms or fish tanks inside walls.

This evolution demands designers think beyond conventional luxury markers.

Powell's approach prioritizes:

- **Personalization over standardization**
- **Functionality integrated with aesthetics**
- **Specialized features addressing unique client desires**
- **Emotional connection to space**

Spec Homes Benefit from Decisive Design Vision Over Market Conformity

When faced with a challenging smaller lot for the Brookview spec home, Powell didn't default to safe, generic design. Instead, she saw an opportunity for bold creative expression.

"We designed it as if we were going to live there," she says— a philosophy that completely inverts traditional spec home thinking. Rather than trying to please everyone, she focused on creating a distinctly compelling space.

Her counterintuitive strategy demonstrated how bold, intentional design can resonate with clients and realtors alike. By prioritizing conviction in a buyer persona over trend-following, Powell demonstrated how targeted luxury appeal can be more powerful than broad but shallow appeal.

The Result:

A design that drew raves from realtors, potential clients, and neighbors who appreciated its intentional, thoughtful approach.



Spatial Constraints Become Design Opportunities Through Strategic Alignment

Powell transforms Brookview's limited lot size into a distinctive feature through innovative architectural orchestration.

Faced with significant spatial constraints, Powell implements a signature solution that creates perceived expansiveness beyond physical dimensions. "We tried to maximize the lot by helping everything to feel more open," she notes.

Her architectural strategy features:

- Parallel courtyards connected through central living spaces
- Complementary front and back courtyards
- Visual corridors extending perceived spatial boundaries
- Strategic indoor-outdoor connections at multiple points
- Continuous sight lines creating unified and expansive spatial experience

"The courtyard from the front matches perfectly with the courtyard in the back,"

Powell explains, with the main great room living area situated between these spaces to create a seamless flow.





Targeted Material Investment Maximizes Luxury Impact Within Budget

Powell's approach to materials is less about blanket luxury and more about strategic investment. She doesn't spread premium resources evenly, but concentrates them where they create maximum sensory impact.

For Brookview, this meant being pragmatic about smaller elements like plumbing fixtures while going all-in on architectural detailing. Calcutta marble counters with distinctive veining, custom cabinetry with intricate reeding details, and carefully chosen wood accents became her tools for creating perceived value.

"Wood trim helps people... it makes it feel more custom and cozy," she explains. It's a philosophy of creating depth through carefully chosen elements rather than overwhelming with uniform opulence.





Unexpected Design Elements Transform Daily Activities Into Memorable Experiences

Powell's strategic incorporation of revelatory moments demonstrates how everyday routines can become emotional anchors within luxury environments.

Beyond spatial planning and material selection, Powell deliberately creates unexpected moments that transform functional spaces into experiential environments. In the Brookview project, this was particularly evident in the primary suite:

- A reading nook with windows on all sides, overlooking the backyard
- A morning bar within the primary bedroom for convenient refreshments
- Unique design elements like LED-illuminated architectural features
- Statement wallpaper in unexpected spaces (like the powder bathroom)

The primary suite reading nook exemplifies her approach:

“ It brings different purposes to that room... a space to lounge and have a separate living area within the privacy of your primary bedroom.

These calculated elements of surprise represent luxury's ultimate expression—spaces that continually engage by transforming everyday activities into distinctive experiences that maintain impact beyond initial impression.

Balancing Glamour with Practicality

ASHLEY DE BOER

The Homer project clients wanted a home that felt "clean, organized, bright, with pockets of fancy and easy to clean"—a space that would look designed and luxurious while remaining family-friendly and durable.

Ashley's design process began with a detailed questionnaire and the creation of concept designs showing potential styles for each room. Through collaborative refinement, she developed a clear vision before selecting materials. Knowing durability was essential for the young family, she presented carefully curated options that delivered luxury aesthetics without sacrificing practicality.

The biggest challenge was working within the constraints of a townhome strata—concrete ceilings limited lighting options and layout changes were restricted. Despite these challenges, Ashley found creative solutions that transformed the space while honoring the clients' priorities.

Ribbed Millwork & Brass Elements

Custom ribbed millwork paired with brass accents became the defining signature elements throughout the Homer project, creating cohesion and luxury without overwhelming the space.

Ashley identified these two elements as "the two main pillars" around which other design choices were made. The ribbed detail in oak tones appears in the primary ensuite vanity and the bar area, while brass hardware and fixtures are consistently integrated throughout the home.



Both designer and clients appreciated how these elements created a timeless, elevated feel that still remained practical for family life. The continuity of these materials throughout the home generates a cohesive design language that feels purposeful and refined.



“The millwork was a really key thing for these clients.... everything else was selected around those those pieces.”



A Spa-Like Retreat in Limited Space

The transformation of the primary ensuite, particularly the conversion from a traditional tub and shower to a luxurious double walk-in shower, was one of the project's standout achievements.

The clients specifically requested this feature, wanting their bathroom to have "that hotel-esque feel" and function as "a spa retreat." Despite the constraints of working within a townhome strata with concrete ceilings that limited height, Ashley removed a non-load-bearing wall between the existing tub and shower to create the spacious double shower.

The execution featured a thoughtful material palette including marble pencil trim paired with subway tile and larger format porcelain. Custom ribbed drawer fronts for the vanity provided maximum storage while maintaining the elevated aesthetic established throughout the home.

Both clients were thrilled with the result, with the double shower becoming one of their favorite elements in the entire renovation. The space successfully balances luxury with practicality through its combination of high-end finishes and optimized storage solutions.

Kitchen Transformation: Elevating Existing Elements with Strategic Updates

The kitchen renovation demonstrates how **strategic changes can dramatically transform a space without complete replacement**, blending budget-consciousness with luxury aesthetics.

Ashley initially hesitated about keeping the existing cabinetry, concerned it would compromise the overall design vision. However, by focusing on high-impact changes - new hardware, countertops, sink, faucet, and backsplash— she completely revitalized the space while respecting budget constraints.

The execution featured brushed brass hardware replacing stainless steel, quartz countertops with a marble-like appearance for durability, and a ceramic backsplash installed in a contemporary straight-stacked pattern. These updates harmonized with the design language established throughout the home.

The result exceeded everyone's expectations, delivering a great aesthetic without the need to design in new, custom cabinetry. This experience taught her valuable lessons about working with existing elements and finding the balance between preservation and transformation.



Design that Provokes a Response

JOAN RAVASY

For Joan Ravasy, luxury means creating a space that evokes an immediate emotional response—where a client walks in and simply says "wow." In this Florida bathroom project, luxury wasn't about size but exceptional execution in a small footprint. Ravasy defines luxury as "the feeling of a space when you walk into it— a completed, professionally designed, professionally built space that feels luxurious."

When working with luxury clients, **Ravasy prioritizes trust and personalization**, interpreting clients' desires while elevating their vision beyond what they initially imagined. She respects her clients' investment, balancing high-end finishes with strategic value choices, recognizing that "luxury is one of a kind, specifically designed just for you."

“Luxury is one of a kind, specifically designed just for you.”





Maximizing Vertical Space with Dramatic Heights

The bathroom's 12-foot ceilings provided a unique opportunity to create vertical drama in a small footprint. Ravasy leveraged this height by suspending three starburst light fixtures from the ceiling, introducing a theatrical element that draws the eye upward and creates a sense of grandeur.

Rather than treating walls conventionally, Ravasy extended design elements floor-to-ceiling, visually expanding the space. She carried stone material and mirrors to the ceiling line, creating an illusion of greater volume while maintaining cohesion. The execution required meticulous attention to proportions and scale. Eight coats of sprayed white lacquer on the walls further enhanced height perception with their reflective quality, while emphasizing the luxurious feeling throughout the space.

The client was especially struck by how the room felt much larger than its actual dimensions, with the dramatic lighting creating an elegant atmosphere perfect for her private retreat.



Personal Treasures as Functional Art

The centerpiece of the vanity area is a custom glass display cabinet designed specifically to showcase the client's collection of perfumes, French handbags, and treasures from her travels. Rather than hiding these personal items away, Ravasy elevated them into a decorative statement.

Ravasy's goal was to create a personal connection between the bathroom and the client's identity. By positioning the tall glass-enclosed cabinet on the vanity counter, she created vertical interest while making everyday luxury items accessible.

The execution required careful consideration of sight lines and proportions. The cabinet was designed to complement the room's vertical emphasis while providing secure, visible storage for delicate items. The transparency of glass maintained the light, open feeling essential in a small space.

The client particularly loved seeing her most cherished personal items displayed as art, reinforcing the bathroom's function as her personal sanctuary and creating a seamless connection to her adjacent dressing room.

A modern bathroom interior featuring a stone vessel sink, a large round mirror, and a stack of folded towels. The background is a wall of light-colored tiles. The sink is a thick, rough-hewn stone bowl. Above it is a large, round mirror with a thin gold frame. The faucet and handles are made of polished brass. To the right of the sink, a stack of three folded white towels sits on a dark wooden shelf. The floor is made of large, light-colored rectangular tiles.

Homes that Reflect their Surroundings and History

Luxury is a lifestyle, more than brands or acknowledgment of affluence

GARRISON HULLINGER

Clients are getting more informed about what the possibilities are, and what they can ask for. People are getting more opportunities to see into the "lifestyles of the rich and famous" through social media. Rather than following trends or seeking status symbols alone, luxury clients are willing to take risks with unconventional design to truly fit their unique needs.



“ I still get photos from the client showing their parties and people gathering. She's still a little amazed that it is all unfolding the way we thought it would, how people circulate and come together in the space.



Kitchen is Designed to Entertain - Space to Cook and Gather

The "Rustic Elegance" project began with clients who had collected design inspiration for nearly two decades. Their relationship with Hullinger started at a "Made in America" show home and evolved into a ten-year journey from landscape planning to dream home completion.



Design centered around:

- Preserving the natural landscape while capturing strategic views
- Creating distinct kitchen zones allowing the couple to be "together but alone"
- Incorporating influences from their European travels
- Integrating collected items and natural elements from the property



Distinct Zones for Togetherness Without Compromise

The kitchen's dual island configuration brilliantly resolves the desire to be "together, but alone" through dedicated zones that maintain connection. One island serves the husband's culinary passion while the second features a raised bar where guests gather without disrupting food preparation.

The primary island is an architectural showpiece evoking European craftsmanship with open shelving that discreetly displays commercial-grade cookware while presenting beautiful hand-turned legs from other angles. Its execution required meticulous detailing and exceptional cabinetry craftsmanship.

The second island's raised element creates a subtle boundary directing traffic flow without explicit barriers—a sophisticated approach to space management that elevates social experiences.

The client regularly sends photos of gatherings to Hullinger, delighted that "people circulate and gather around" exactly as envisioned during the design process, confirming the success of this thoughtful configuration.







Nature as Privacy Screen: Bathroom with Floor-to-Ceiling Window

The master bathroom features a dramatic floor-to-ceiling window that transforms an ordinary space into something extraordinary. Rather than positioning the tub for a traditional view, **designers discovered "this amazing amount of privacy with this huge old oak tree"** and made nature itself the privacy screen.

This bold architectural choice required client trust but inspired the selection of a statement pedestal bathtub positioned to maximize the unique vista. The window is balanced with furniture-inspired vanities and an armoire deliberately scaled differently to create the impression of collected heirloom pieces.

Hullinger's philosophy shines through in this space: "If you're at the mirror and you're shaving, why shouldn't you have the best view in the house?" This innovative bathroom exemplifies how functional spaces deserve extraordinary design, becoming one of Hullinger's personal favorite elements in the entire project.



"Command Central" Kitchen Window Delights by Day, Showcases by Night

The oversized kitchen window serves as both the functional and conceptual heart of the home. Described as "command central," this feature became "the axis that we worked off of" for the entire design, creating a crucial view corridor from north to south through the home.

Its strategic placement ensures that daily tasks—washing vegetables, doing dishes, making coffee—are elevated by connection with nature and abundant light. To address the challenge that large windows become "a dark hole or mirror" at night, the window is flanked with illuminated China cabinets displaying the client's collections.

This thoughtful solution creates a dramatic transformation: "She just can't believe how she gets to have all the daylight during the day. And then at night it really becomes about her gatherings and collections." The window exemplifies the project's success in balancing contemporary features with traditional elements while ensuring beauty in all lighting conditions.

Elevating Details

MELISSA SAKELL, CKBD

Luxury in design manifests itself through carefully curated details that elevate everyday experiences.

In her client relationships, luxury is reflected through meticulous attention to client needs. Luxury clients often seek a designer who serves as their advocate and guide, someone who can translate their brief conversations into fully realized spaces.

Luxury means focusing on:

- Elevating materials and subtle details—textures on hardware, specialized countertop edges
- Creating spaces that feel intentionally curated rather than generic
- Selecting timeless, high-quality materials that will remain relevant for decades
- Investing in personalization rather than following fleeting trends



California Modern Meets East Coast Elegance

The Treetop Escape project transformed a small, closed-off kitchen into an expansive heart of the home for two busy doctors who purchased the property for its location.

This approach requires building trust through personal connections. Sakell often stays behind for coffee to understand clients' lifestyles and photographs cabinet contents to grasp organizational needs. These intimate details inform every design decision, ensuring spaces truly reflect how clients live.







Branch-Inspired Custom Island Lighting

The custom island light fixture serves as the kitchen's focal point, featuring a linear design with brass details. The fixture's unique branching form was designed to mirror the tree branches visible through the kitchen window, creating a seamless visual connection to the wooded riverside setting.

The designer worked with a specialized lighting fabricator to create a fully customizable fixture, developing CAD drawings with adjustable angles and details. When the client wasn't satisfied with initial sketches, Sakell worked with the client and carpenter to use a scaled physical model to help visualize and adjust the exact angles of the piece.

This lighting element epitomizes luxury through complete customization— not settling for an off-the-shelf fixture but crafting something unique to the space. The client loves it so much she admits to deliberately leaving it on when she leaves for work, just to enjoy seeing it gleaming through the windows upon her return home.

Concealed Office Space: Functionality Hidden in Plain Sight

Behind what appears to be simple wall paneling near the kitchen lies a fully functional office space with a computer desk and storage. When closed, it seamlessly blends with the room's clean lines, appearing as board and batten wall treatment; when opened, it provides a convenient workspace just steps from the coffee maker.



The design goal was to maintain the kitchen's clean aesthetic while providing a practical solution for a busy professional couple. The client emphasized the importance of being able to "hide the mess away" so frequently that Sakell recognized it as a priority design element rather than an afterthought.

The execution involved **a complex pocket door system** that allows the doors to disappear completely when open, ensuring they don't interrupt the kitchen's visual flow. This feature harmonizes perfectly with the clients' lifestyle—allowing them to quickly transition between work and home life without visual clutter, while positioning the workspace within the kitchen itself for convenience.

Mountain Harmony: Balancing Budget with Breathtaking Views

ALISHA TAYLOR

REBECCA PHILLIPS

The Modern Sunset project presented a unique challenge: creating a sophisticated second home on a mountain site while respecting budget parameters. The client's directive was clear—"absolutely not one lick of color" while still "simple but elegant." The team responded by focusing on diversity in textures rather than chromatic variety. Working collaboratively with architect Scott Carson, the design embraced the mountainside setting as inspiration rather than competition. The systematic six-month process involved dividing the home into sections for client presentations, allowing thorough consideration of each space before moving to the next. Budget-conscious decisions meant prioritizing spending in high-impact areas, particularly the spectacular great room with its 40-foot window overlooking the city.





The Stone That Defined a Home

The specific stone used throughout Modern Sunset became the project's defining element, winning awards for its implementation. This custom stone with specialized mortar wash required exacting precision— "it had to be just right," not blending too much with the mountain nor standing out obtrusively. Appearing on the exterior and strategically placed throughout interior spaces, including the dramatic great room wall and wrap-around hallway, the stone creates a cohesive indoor-outdoor connection.

The design team collaborated closely with the stone supplier to achieve the perfect coloration and texture. This architectural statement anchored the entire design concept, allowing other elements to complement rather than compete with its natural beauty while honoring the home's dramatic setting.

Framing the Horizon: Where Design Defers to Nature

The 40-foot window wall in the great room represents the heart of Modern Sunset's design philosophy— creating spaces that frame rather than compete with nature. This architectural feature dictated many of the home's other design choices, including material selection and furniture placement.

The team understood that this panoramic city view was the client's priority, allocating budget accordingly to maximize its impact. The great room, dining area, and kitchen flow together in an open concept that extends to an equally generous outdoor living space, creating seamless indoor-outdoor entertaining opportunities.

Large-format porcelain tile floors provide durability against Arizona's harsh sun while maintaining visual simplicity. Every material choice— from quartzite countertops to minimal accessories— was selected to complement rather than distract from the breathtaking vistas, honoring the client's desire for simplicity while still delivering undeniable luxury.



Intentional Balance

HALLIE MULLEN

Luxury, for Hallie Mullen of Mullen and Bergstrom, is defined by **high-quality finishes that support modern lifestyles while respecting architectural integrity.**

Her approach acknowledges the shift from ornate natural stone to cleaner, more maintenance-friendly materials like porcelain and quartz, recognizing that "the luxury of time" is valuable to today's homeowners. When working with builders, Mullen focuses on creating unique combinations of luxury elements that will appeal to prospective buyers while allowing them to envision their families living comfortably in the space.

“ The
luxury
of time





Bridging Two Worlds: The Art of Transitional Design

The 100-year-old Hillside Avenue home required a delicate balancing act between preserving architectural heritage and delivering modern functionality. Mullen maintained original elements like wainscoting, crown moldings, and hardwood flooring— **refinishing rather than replacing**— while incorporating cleaner, more contemporary finishes throughout. This approach honored the home's traditional skeleton while ensuring it didn't feel dated or heavy.

The goal was to create spaces that felt "light and bright" while ensuring they remained warm and inviting. By respecting the architectural envelope while updating finishes, Mullen created a home that felt authentic to its history yet perfectly suited for contemporary living. This balance was particularly important in a high-value property where authenticity and livability were equally valued by discerning buyers.

Stylistic Dialogue: Mixing Traditional and Modern Lighting

Light fixtures played a crucial role in bridging the traditional-contemporary divide at Hillside Avenue. Rather than selecting "down the middle" transitional fixtures that might feel bland, Mullen took a bolder approach by deliberately mixing distinctly traditional and clearly modern pieces throughout the home.

"Light fixtures are so style-dominant," Mullen explained, making them perfect vehicles for creating stylistic dialogue within the space. This strategic mixing of eras— some fixtures leaning traditional, others decidedly modern— created visual interest while reinforcing the home's transitional character. The result was a cohesive lighting scheme that acknowledged both the home's heritage and its contemporary update without feeling forced or contrived.

The carefully curated fixtures became statement pieces that anchored different spaces while maintaining a harmonious overall feel throughout the property.



A Designer's Journey from Fashion to Interior Spaces

JEANNE CHUNG

Jeanne Chung brings a distinctive perspective to luxury design, shaped by her 20-year career in fashion design before transitioning to interiors. This dual background has cultivated her understanding that true luxury isn't about brand names or obvious status markers, but about crafting multi-layered experiences that tell meaningful stories.

Her approach to luxury emerges from the intersection of artistry and precise technical knowledge. Rather than imposing design concepts, she focuses on elevating clients' existing ideas into more refined versions of themselves. As she notes, clients have told her "we take their ideas, but we make them better," a testament to her collaborative philosophy.

This storytelling-centered approach manifests in what Chung calls "quiet luxury"—sophisticated spaces that communicate quality through materials and craftsmanship rather than ostentatious displays. "Luxury doesn't mean labels and opulence," she emphasizes.

“Luxury is about the experience—about telling the story,” explains Chung. “There is so much product available online and already mainstream. But our clients don’t want that. They bring in a designer to help express their unique point of view— not just recreate what everyone else is doing.”

Visualization Technology Transforms Client Confidence in High-Stakes Design Decisions

Chung's firm integrates advanced visualization tools like VR and 3D modeling to reduce decision anxiety and enhance client confidence in luxury projects.

Since founding her firm 13 years ago, Chung has **prioritized 3D modeling as essential rather than optional**. Her fashion background taught her the value of seeing designs from multiple angles before execution. "In fashion design, we would drape our patterns on a mannequin allowing us to walk around it and manipulate the fabric. That's what we do with the 3D models," she explains.

This approach has evolved to incorporate virtual reality technology, allowing clients to literally step inside their future spaces. "The client wants to actually be in the space, and be able to look around and understand how tall a certain cabinet is in relation to their own height," Chung notes. This immersive experience addresses practical concerns that traditional renderings cannot capture. "Sometimes they ask, 'I only have 42 inches between the edge of the island to the perimeter cabinetry. Is that enough?' Putting on that headset, they're like, 'Oh yeah, let's add a few inches.'"

By combining physical material samples with virtual spatial experiences, Chung creates a comprehensive decision-making environment that gives clients unprecedented confidence. "The goal is that they have confidence to proceed," she explains. "We give them all the tools so they can visualize their project. When they have all that information, it makes it really easy for them to say, 'I got it, I trust you. Let's go.'"





Research-Driven Historical Design Creates Modern Spaces with Authentic Period Character

For her showcase Tudor kitchen, Chung demonstrates how thorough historical research can inform designs that honor architectural heritage while incorporating contemporary functionality. This research-driven approach creates spaces that feel authentic rather than superficially "period-inspired."

The 1915 English Tudor kitchen project began with **extensive research into the era's design language**. "The idea was to really make the kitchen feel as though it was designed at the same time as when the house was built, but putting in those modern amenities," Chung explains. This required investigating beyond current trends to understand what materials and colors were genuinely appropriate for the period.

"Right now brass is trending and everything, but brass was not necessarily used then," she notes. "It was really doing the research on that era and figuring out what was popular at that time... but what still looks and feels current."

This commitment to architectural integrity influenced every design decision, from cabinetry style to hardware selection. The result is a space that feels authentically connected to the home's origins while accommodating contemporary lifestyle needs— a kitchen that appears to have evolved naturally rather than being imposed as a modern intervention.

Multi-Functional Design Transforms Utilitarian Spaces into Family-Centered Gathering Places

The Tudor Kitchen demonstrates how luxury design can fundamentally transform not just how a space looks, but how it functions within the family ecosystem. Her approach focuses on creating multi-purpose environments that serve diverse needs within a single footprint.

The kitchen began as a purely utilitarian staff space last updated in the 1950s, where "the family never entered the kitchen."

Chung's transformation reimagined it as the heart of family life. "We had to take that all out and really make it about a gathering place where people wanted to hang out," she explains. "Where the family entertained. So it was very multifunctional."

Additionally, Chung created innovative storage solutions that maximize functionality while maintaining aesthetic cohesion. For example, the transition space between kitchen and butler's

pantry conceals cleaning equipment behind push-to-open cabinetry with integrated electrical outlets for charging cordless vacuums.



Multiple activity zones within the limited space:

- A dedicated hearth oven using catalytic converter technology that doesn't require external venting and allows for specialty cooking away from the primary range.
- A custom workstation sink positioned next to a running knife slot accommodates serious food preparation.
- A beverage center with multiple refrigeration options separates drink service from cooking activities.

Creating an Experience that Matches the View

ALICIA DAKTERIS

The Harbor View project was inspired by worldly clients seeking a home that would serve as the heart of their vibrant, entertainment-focused lifestyle.

The design journey embraced the nuances of open-concept living and crafting spaces that flow effortlessly while maintaining individual character. Thoughtful material selection ensured cohesion across connected areas, with each finish complementing rather than competing. The challenge of blending formal elements into a modern layout was met with balance and refinement, all while addressing key functional priorities such as catering readiness and accessibility.



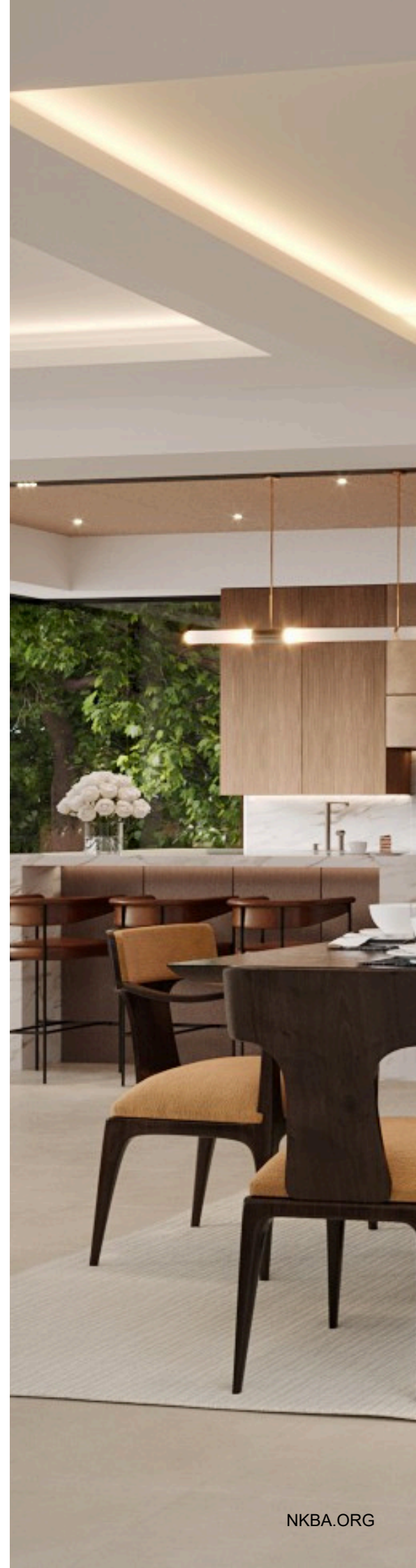
Orchestrating Mood Through Illumination

The comprehensive lighting design transforms the home's atmosphere based on occasion and activity. Alicia insisted on dimmable and indirect lighting to create distinct experiences throughout the open floor plan.

The system includes:

- Quarter-inch "whisper" lights with dimmer controls
- Cove lighting in key areas like the bar and entertainment spaces
- Illuminated stone features including the bar's quartzite and powder room's onyx
- Strategic bathroom lighting with mirrors featuring LED lights and ceiling placement that eliminates facial shadows
- Indirect lighting under cabinets/shelves reflecting off surfaces such as accent stone or to highlight art

Subtle yet sophisticated, indirect lighting was thoughtfully integrated beneath cabinets and shelves, casting a gentle glow across accent stone and curated artwork. Recessed indirect wall wash lighting gives the back wall a soft glow, creating a warm and inviting ambiance. Carefully selected direct lighting elements, like jewelry for the home, add the finishing touch, enhancing each space with intention and elegance.





Historic Preservation Meets Modern Living



ANASTASIA HARRISON

The Stoneleigh project began with a vision to honor the historic 1905 home while adapting it to contemporary living patterns.

Harrison approached the design by first studying the original architectural elements—the scale, proportion, and millwork—and then incorporating these details into the modern renovation. Combined with her background in architecture, **inspiration came from her collection of historical design books and antique pieces discovered while traveling.**

The primary challenge involved substantial structural work, including removing walls and a secondary staircase to create an open concept kitchen connecting to the dining and family rooms. This required installing four 22-inch deep beams spanning 20 feet to maintain the home's structural integrity without compromising the design vision.

Functional Elegance Behind the Scenes

The scullery represents a thoughtful solution to the modern challenge of maintaining a clean aesthetic in an open-concept kitchen.

Tucked into a corner of reclaimed space where a secondary staircase once stood, this vibrant green nook holds all daily small appliances—coffee maker, toaster, microwave—that would otherwise clutter countertops. Inspired by historic English kitchens, the scullery allows the main kitchen to remain visually minimal and elegant while still providing all modern conveniences.

The deliberate color choice sets it apart as a distinct functional zone while adding a playful element to the otherwise classic white kitchen. This feature brilliantly balances historic inspiration with modern functionality, creating what Harrison calls "found space" that enhances daily living.

Personal History Woven into Design

The antique peaked-top English barrister's seat represents the personal narrative thread woven throughout the home.

Acquired during the homeowners' years living in England, this piece has traveled with them for over 20 years through different homes, always finding its perfect place.

In the kitchen, it serves as both a beautiful focal point and functional catch-all for coats and jackets. The rich, warm tones of the old English pine create a striking contrast against the crisp white cabinetry and herringbone floors.

By repurposing this treasured antique with added hooks, Harrison demonstrates how incorporating meaningful, gently-used pieces adds depth, character, and a sense of history to even newly renovated spaces, preventing them from feeling "sparkly new" and instead giving them a lived-in elegance.





Reimagining Historic Elements for Modern Use

The original glass-front cabinet doors in the dining room represent Harrison's philosophy of honoring architectural history while reimagining functionality.

Originally designed to display fine china in a formal dining setting, these cabinets with solid lower panels and glass upper sections have been repurposed to hold everyday dishes and dining essentials.

This thoughtful adaptation transforms what was once a symbol of formality into an accessible, practical element of daily life. Harrison particularly values how the solid lower sections hide "all the ugly bits" while the glass uppers showcase beautiful items.

The preservation of these architectural elements maintains the home's historic character while the new casual use reflects contemporary living patterns.

During large family gatherings, the adjacent window seat serves as the head of the extended dining table, creating a natural flow between old and new.





Bold & Personalized



Luxury is Kindness: A Client-Focused Approach

JOSEPH DeCASPERIS

Joseph DeCasperis defines luxury as kindness— it's a guiding principle throughout his design practice.

For him, luxury extends beyond expensive products to encompass the entire client experience. Like a boutique hotel's concierge service, maintaining kindness from beginning to end is paramount, even when challenges arise.

This philosophy manifests in how he works with luxury clients, who often demonstrate greater trust and less micromanagement. They rely on his professional expertise, especially when working on second homes or new builds. This trust allows DeCasperis to be more creative while still incorporating client preferences. He notes that luxury clients are typically more detached from the process, **confident in the professionals they've hired to execute their vision.**



The Red Range: A Bold Statement Piece

The distinct red range became the striking centerpiece of the kitchen, driving many design decisions throughout the space. Initially, DeCasperis considered a red painted island or hood, but eventually the range itself became the focal point, contributing to the client's desire for a "dynamic and bold" aesthetic.

Obtaining this statement piece required extraordinary patience, as the range took 18 months to arrive. This necessitated creative solutions like temporary cooktops while maintaining client communication and trust throughout the extended timeline. The designer notes that this was the clients' first experience with professional-grade appliances, making it an even more significant addition to their home.

The long wait proved worthwhile, as the range's vibrant color became the foundation for an inspired color story throughout the kitchen, connecting with other red elements to create visual cohesion and dramatic impact.

Commissioned Artwork Brings Together Personalization and Sophistication

The commissioned artwork featuring lips with an ice cube became a critical element that tied the kitchen design together. DeCasperis originally included two options in the rendering—floating shelves or artwork—but noted the clients "have varied decor interests," making artwork the cleaner, more sophisticated solution.

Working with a local artist he knew through industry associations, DeCasperis shared specific details about the clients to inspire the piece. The artist incorporated the exact "reduction red" color of the range, and playfully included an ice cube in tribute to the husband's dedicated ice maker—one of his favorite kitchen features.

This personalized artwork not only reinforced the color scheme but added a custom element that reflected the personalities of both clients.

“DeCasperis notes that the "art and the lights really, really enhanced the overall space and connected all the dots together," elevating the entire design.



An Unconventional Refrigeration Setup Creates a Focal Point

DeCasperis separated the refrigerator and freezer into two 30-inch columns positioned on opposite sides of the wall, creating space for a striking lighted stone niche in between. This design choice served both aesthetic and practical purposes, with the refrigerator positioned for easy access by everyone without disturbing cooking activities.

The central lighted stone niche became a dramatic focal point while providing functional countertop space. Extra deep upper cabinets were incorporated above, maximizing storage despite the kitchen's limited square footage.

A microwave was strategically placed in the center, recognizing the common need to transfer items from refrigerator or freezer directly to the microwave.

This "not your typical setup" has become a signature element in DeCasperis's designs, one that his clients particularly appreciate. The designer notes, "We've done it quite a few times, and we're very conscious of where the refrigerator lands in relation to the freezer itself," demonstrating thoughtful consideration of both form and function.



Crafting Livable Luxury Through Material Mindfulness

ALENA CAPRA, CMKBD

Designer Alena Capra defines luxury as the harmonious balance between elegance and functionality. "Livable luxury is that sweet spot when it comes to home design. We don't want it to be so luxe that they don't feel like they could live in their home," she explains. This philosophy drives her approach to material selection, where beauty and performance coexist.

For Capra, **luxury is about transparent conversations with clients about maintenance needs**, allowing them to make informed choices. Whether discussing the patina of unlacquered brass or the care requirements of natural stone, she believes luxury lies in understanding the materials that surround us. This client-centered approach creates spaces that feel both exclusive and comfortable, reflecting regional influences while respecting client preferences formed in their other homes.



Transforming Existing Elements into a Personalized Waterfront Retreat

The Coastal Florida Home project began as a spec home renovation for clients who wanted to transform their waterfront property into a personalized space. Working within significant constraints—including existing marble flooring and kitchen cabinetry—Capra had to reimagine the home without complete demolition.

The process started with inspiration visits to stone yards, where an unexpected green quartzite became the design catalyst. "We found that green stone and they just fell in love with it," Capra recalls, noting how this single element drove the entire color palette. With clients who divided time between homes, Capra maximized their limited availability by focusing appointments on selecting key statement pieces.

She then developed comprehensive design packages that considered both aesthetics and the practical coastal lifestyle concerns of a South Florida home.





Bold Stone Becomes Design Cornerstone

The kitchen's striking green quartzite countertop and backsplash became the unexpected heart of the design. Selected in summer 2022 before green surfaces were trending, this bold choice provided a jumping-off point for the entire home's palette.

Capra's goal was to introduce drama while maintaining functionality—crucial for clients who entertain frequently and need a durable surface. The green quartzite offered both visual impact and practical durability. "The picture doesn't do it justice," Capra notes, explaining how the stone's veining contains rust, gold, and cream tones that unified surrounding spaces.

The execution balanced luxury with practicality by pairing the natural stone island with engineered quartz perimeters, creating a material hierarchy based on use patterns and maintenance needs. This innovative integration became a conversation piece, with clients reporting that "everyone who comes in comments on that stone." The designer's risk of suggesting an unexpected element transformed into the home's defining feature.

Commissioned Art with Local Significance

A commissioned art piece above the fireplace became a meaningful bridge between the clients' emotional connection to the location and the home's design palette.

This artwork depicts a specific section of beach that holds special significance to the homeowners.

The designer coordinated with the clients' favorite artist, providing fabric and finish samples to ensure the artwork incorporated the home's blue-green color scheme while representing the local geography. "They wanted to brand that living space as where they're at," Capra explains.

The execution involved careful timing, with the commission planned from the beginning but executed after primary design elements were selected. The result was a focal point that not only enhanced the aesthetic cohesion but also embedded personal meaning into the space. This integration of personal narrative with design demonstrates how luxury manifests through customization that transcends aesthetics to celebrate connection to place.





Comfort Meets Refinement

RENEE FROSTICK

For designer Renee Frostick, **luxury has evolved beyond high budgets to become about creating custom experiences.** "It's about creating rooms that you just don't want to leave," she explains.

Luxury balances refined aesthetics with practical functionality—incorporating elevated finishes that require less maintenance while still looking beautiful. Her approach involves drawing out clients' wishes and creating unexpected designs that fulfill both their practical needs and aesthetic desires.

With luxury clients, who are often exposed to high-end details through travel and experiences, the focus is on creating spaces that are both sophisticated and comfortably livable— "a little less intimidating while still looking beautiful."



Transforming Without Expanding: Bringing Personality to Space

This project involved redesigning a home that clients had lived in for six years but never felt reflected their unique personality. The challenge: completely transform the kitchen and living spaces without adding square footage or relocating major features. The clients—a younger couple with eclectic taste and a love of art—wanted their home to be unique and contemporary while respecting the traditional architectural bones.



Balancing the husband's preference for traditional elements with the wife's desire for more dramatic, adventurous finishes became the central design challenge. Frostick's team expanded the original modest reface request into a major renovation that maintained the existing flooring and fixture locations.



Graphic Drama with Timeless Appeal

The high-contrast color palette combines crisp white, deep charcoal, and warm walnut tones to create a space with graphic visual impact. This color scheme was designed to complement the existing gray-toned hardwood floors while introducing warmth that was lacking in the previous design.

The dark charcoal on base cabinets paired with white upper cabinets creates dramatic contrast, with the walnut wood framing acting as the perfect transitional element between these extremes.

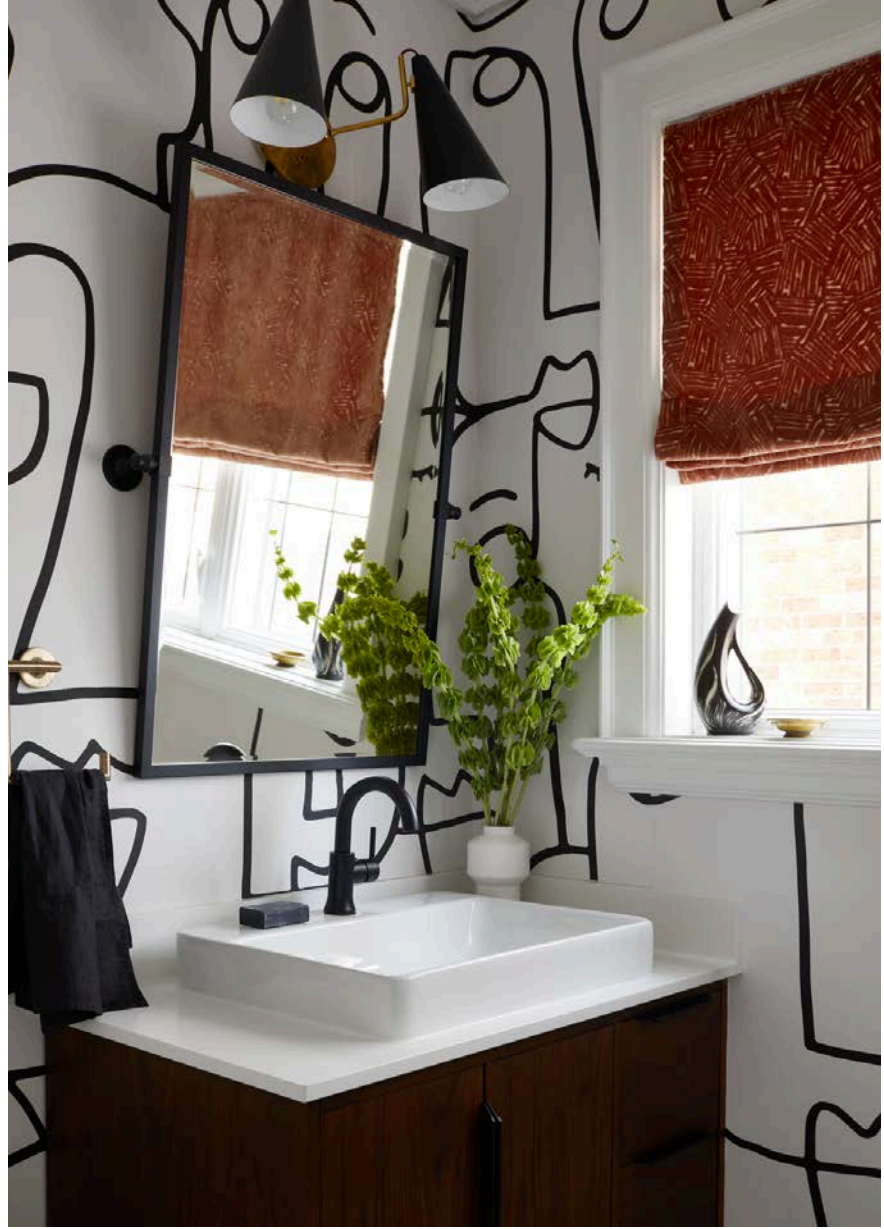
This balanced approach allowed the team to create a contemporary feel while honoring the traditional architecture of the home. The high-contrast palette serves another purpose too—creating a neutral backdrop that would allow the clients' art collection to remain the focal point of the home.

“According to Frostick, the colorway provides “traditional with a bit of edge,” striking the perfect balance between classic and contemporary.



Artistic Expression in an Unexpected Space

The powder room renovation wasn't initially part of the project scope but became an opportunity to further express the clients' artistic sensibilities. The graphic wallpaper provides dramatic visual impact while maintaining the neutral palette that allows the clients' art collection to remain prominent throughout the home. This bold design choice strikes the perfect balance—adventurous enough to satisfy the wife's desire for drama while remaining "safe enough" for the husband's more traditional preferences.



The team added an unexpected splash of color with a coral Roman shade—a design choice the husband was initially unsure about but ultimately embraced. This carefully curated space exemplifies the project's overall philosophy: creating spaces with enough personality to feel unique and custom-designed while maintaining a certain restraint that allows for future artistic expression.

The powder room transformation demonstrates how even small spaces can make a significant impact in a luxury home when approached with creativity and attention to the clients' aesthetic preferences.

Transforming Vision into Reality Through Collaboration



MARY DOUGLAS DRYSDALE

Mary's process begins by establishing a comfortable relationship where clients can reveal what truly resonates with them beyond trendy magazine features. For this client's narrow Washington DC townhouse, she identified the need for art and smart space planning to maximize the 10.5-foot ceilings and limited footprint.

Although initially resistant to kitchen renovations, the clients eventually embraced her vision through patient education. Mary balances creative development with fiscal transparency, creating parallel documents showing design development alongside realistic budgets. This collaborative approach helped transform a once-uninspiring space into one where the clients now proudly entertain guests who "can't stop telling us how cool our house is."

“Guests "can't stop telling us how cool our house is."



The Italian Designer Table

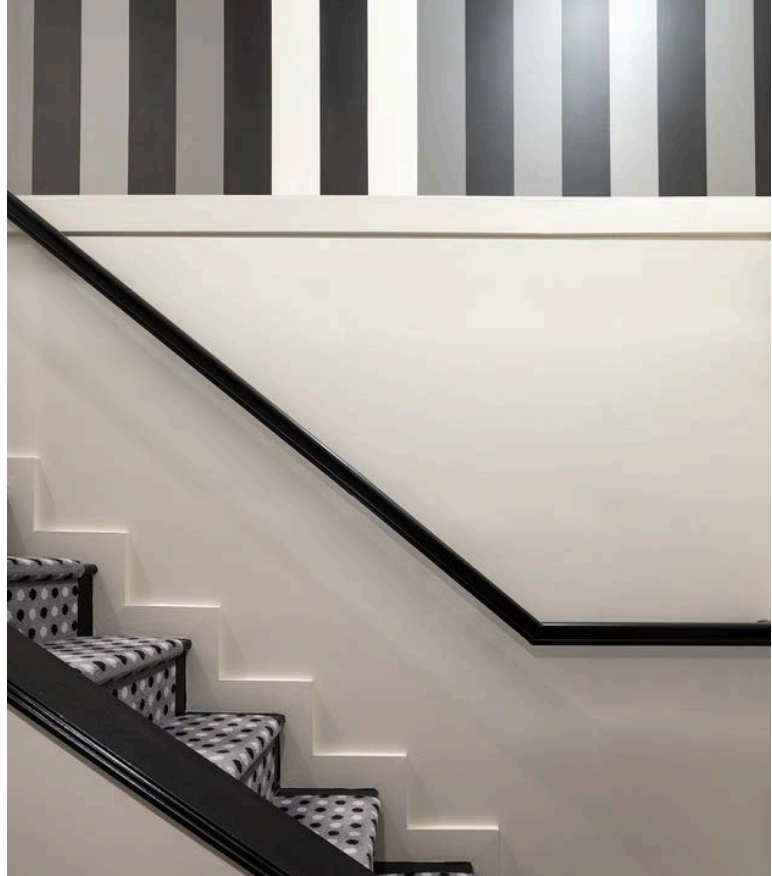
This high-end dining table demonstrates Mary's approach to achieving luxury through resourcefulness. Rather than purchasing a new designer table with a black top at retail price, she hunted for a base with damage that could be restored.

After finding one at a fraction of the original cost, she had it professionally refinished and added a custom black top, bringing the total to significantly less than a new purchase would have cost. The table perfectly suits the angled dining space while providing a statement piece that anchors the room.

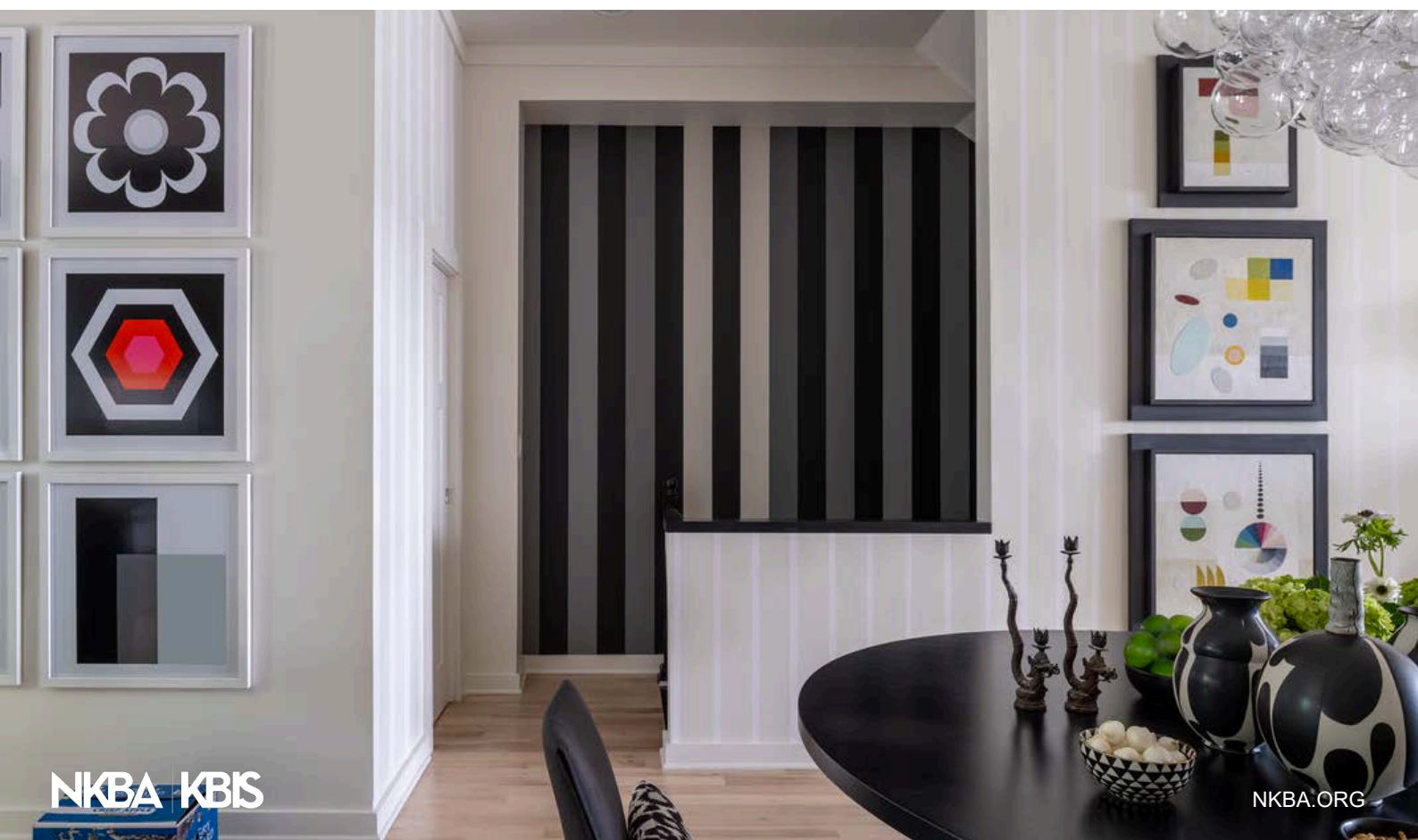
This solution delivered iconic Italian design at substantial savings, demonstrating Mary's philosophy that luxury can come from intelligent sourcing rather than extravagant spending.

The Gene Davis-Inspired Striped Wall: Artful Problem-Solving for Architectural Challenges

For a staircase wall unsuitable for traditional art placement, Mary created a custom solution inspired by Washington Color School painter Gene Davis. Rather than purchasing an original Davis painting (which could cost hundreds of thousands of dollars), she commissioned a decorative painter to create a striped wall in white, two grays, and black.



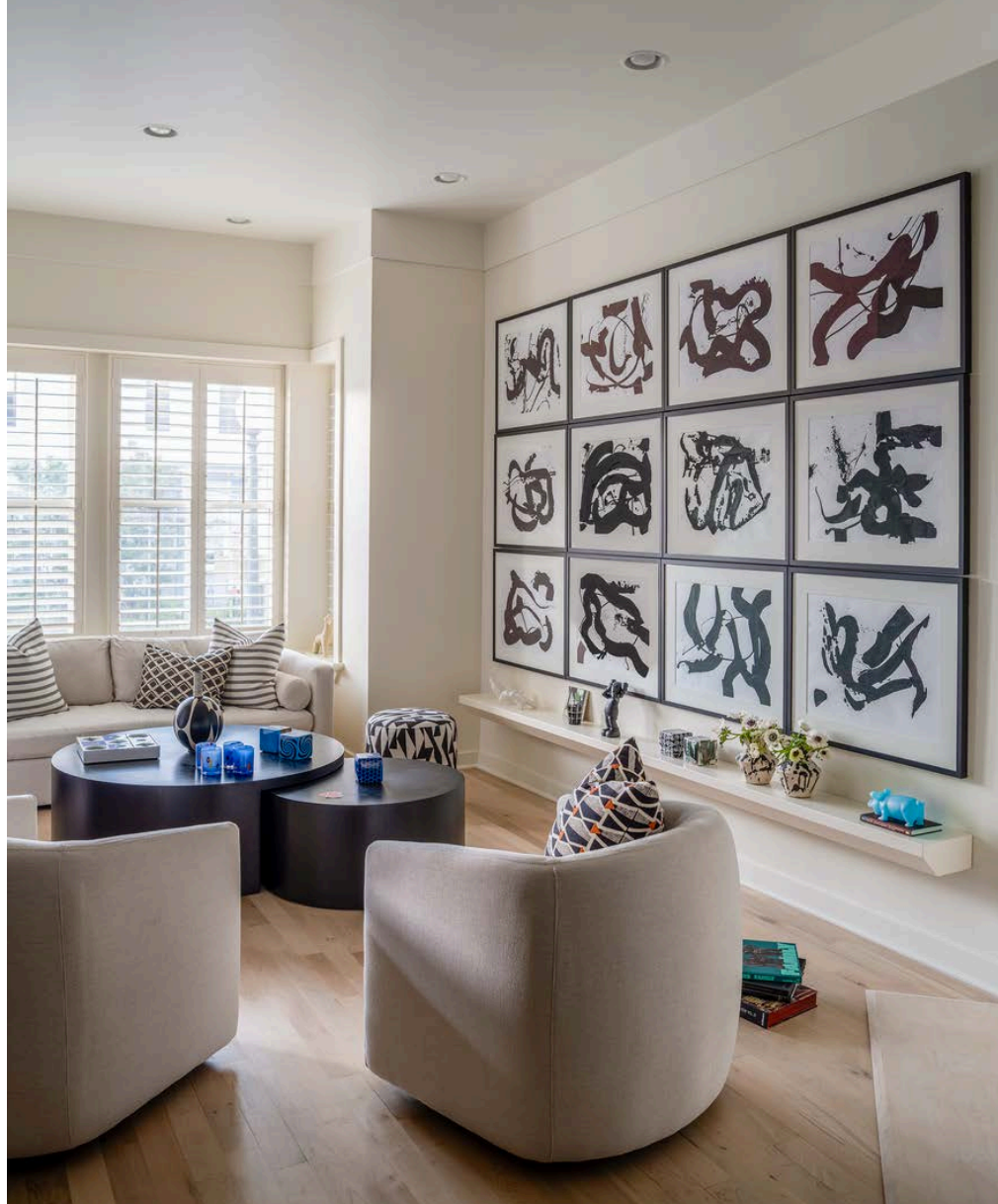
This dramatic feature resolved a challenging architectural space while adding museum-quality artfulness to the home. The solution demonstrates Mary's belief that "architectural luxury is alignment and symmetry and balance," creating dramatic impact without always relying on expensive materials or accessories.



Strategic Space Planning with Ledges and Swivel Chairs

Mary maximized the narrow townhouse footprint through thoughtful space planning. Thin architectural ledges along walls serve as both decorative elements and functional surfaces for drinks or plates during gatherings.

Two swivel chairs facing the sofa can rotate toward the television, creating flexible living arrangements in limited space.



A pair of circular nesting coffee tables can be pulled apart when entertaining larger groups, while lightweight upholstered stools provide additional seating that anyone can easily move. These solutions allowed the space to accommodate both daily living and entertaining without compromise, **embodying Mary's view that luxury means "efficiency of plan" that adapts to how people actually live.**

Transforming Limitations into Opportunities: The Hospitality-Inspired Kitchen

GINA D'AMORE BAUERLE

This Arizona kitchen project presented unique challenges: a large space with the only nearby windows across from the kitchen, unappealing 12-14ft ceilings cluttered with mechanical elements, and basic black cabinetry with no design interest— all in a multimillion-dollar home.

Instead of fighting these limitations, Gina embraced them by creating a hospitality-inspired "speakeasy" atmosphere. The client, a repeat customer who valued Gina's bold approach, wanted a kitchen befitting their luxury home. Rather than setting a specific budget, **they prioritized achieving the right design.**

Gina developed the entire design concept around transforming constraints into distinctive features that make this kitchen stand out.





Asymmetrical Suspended Ceiling Platform

Confronted with problematic 12-14ft ceilings marred by exposed vents, lighting cans, and smoke detectors, Gina created an innovative solution: an asymmetrical suspended platform resembling overlapping triangular shapes.

This design feature served multiple purposes— it concealed mechanical eyesores, reduced the overwhelming ceiling height, and bridged the visual gap between cabinetry and ceiling. The platform utilized contrasting finishes: one section in teal (the accent color) and the other in a pearlescent black metallic paint.

Carefully engineered for weight considerations, **this dramatic architectural element instantly transformed a design weakness into a distinctive feature** while adding a layer of visual interest that established the kitchen's luxurious, resort-inspired ambiance.

Layered Lighting for Hospitality Ambiance

With limited natural light, the kitchen required strategic illumination to achieve the desired hospitality-inspired atmosphere. Gina implemented multiple layers of lighting to serve both functional and atmospheric purposes. The lighting design created a moody, lounge-like environment reminiscent of a luxury resort or speakeasy— a space where clients enjoy entertaining.

“The lighting design created a moody, lounge-like environment reminiscent of a luxury resort or speakeasy.”

The asymmetrical ceiling platform incorporated LED lighting that provided ambient illumination, while task lighting ensured functionality. Additionally, LED lighting was integrated into built-in elements like the cookbook shelf, which doubled as a distinctive nightlight. This comprehensive approach transformed a limitation (lack of windows) into an advantage, creating a distinctive entertaining space with dramatic visual impact.





One-of-a-Kind Custom Elements



Creating Experiential Joy Through Attunement

CRYSTAL HACKL, CKBD

Crystal Hackl defines luxury as experiential rather than tangible, focusing on creating environments where users feel meticulously cared for. Her approach centers on attunement—deeply listening to each client's needs and then exceeding expectations in addressing them.

For Crystal, luxury means:

- Creating environments that reduce user burden
- Incorporating high-quality surfaces that evoke joy when touched
- Customizing functional elements that anticipate client needs
- Understanding that luxury clients often bring hotel experiences as reference points
- Balancing aesthetic preferences of multiple decision-makers
- Designing spaces that provide sensory relief from a noisy world



A Sculptural Focal Point with Engineering Finesse

The curved hood became the kitchen's defining architectural element, drawing the eye upward into the vaulted ceiling space. This standout feature was designed to be both a visual anchor and functional asset for cooking.

Crystal engineered this custom piece using stock cabinet components, partnering with a manufacturer that builds hood frameworks. The real

magic came through meticulous carpenter craftsmanship—using expert mitering techniques and strategic molding to create a seamless curved appearance.

For the client who wanted statement pieces within budget constraints, this solution delivered high visual impact without the cost of fully custom components. The designer took pride in this marriage of technical skill and aesthetic vision, transforming basic materials into a luxury focal point.



Statement Lighting and Plumbing Fixtures

The lighting and plumbing fixtures became crucial high-value pieces that unified the aesthetic direction of the space. With one partner preferring modern elements and the other drawn to more traditional styling, these statement pieces needed to bridge their preferences and create a unified look.

Crystal invested significant time selecting fixtures with clean, modern lines that still conveyed elegance and tradition. She leveraged her lighting supplier's expertise to source unique options beyond what's easily found online, allowing the budget to stretch further while achieving distinctive results.

As Crystal prioritized the budget, she chose these fixtures as a crucial splurge item, saying "vertical elements are the most visible and should get the best investment." The result was a balanced composition where statement pieces like the lighting created a harmonious design language throughout the space.





Beyond Trends: Creating Enduring Luxury Spaces

TANI NATE, CKD

Tani Nate defines luxury as achieving a high-end look that remains timeless while avoiding overly trendy designs that quickly become dated.

She emphasizes using premium materials, mixing textures, and incorporating unique statement pieces like distinctive light fixtures. The goal is creating spaces that elicit a "wow" reaction because they don't resemble typical kitchens people see elsewhere.

In client relationships, Tani provides full-color renderings so clients can truly visualize their space before making decisions. She also offers a unique post-installation service where she either helps clients personally unpack and organize their kitchen items or leaves detailed post-it notes indicating where everything should go, ensuring the space functions as designed.



Creating a Modern Family Haven with Unique Elements

The family approached Tani wanting a modern, light, and bright home with unique focal points and details that would draw attention. With three children, they needed a comfortable yet sophisticated space that would stand out when guests visited.

The design process began with Tani showing door styles and finishes, then creating multiple renderings showing different options—including flat, flush cabinet fronts versus shaker style, and black versus stainless hood options. This visualization helped the clients make informed decisions about the completely flat cabinet fronts, stainless appliances, and waterfall island ends that formed the foundation of the design.

No significant design limitations existed, allowing Tani to focus on incorporating dramatic statement elements while balancing the budget.



Lighting as the "Jewelry" of the Home

This home features dramatic LED lighting elements strategically placed to create focal points and visual interest. Most striking are the articulating black sconces over the kitchen window, the large circular LED pendant in the living room, and the multi-tiered fixture visible through the front windows when approaching the home.

Tani approached lighting as the “jewelry” that completes an outfit, choosing each piece to enhance the modern aesthetic while providing efficient, customizable illumination. All fixtures are energy-efficient LED, placed on dimmers for adjustable ambiance.

The lighting design considers both practicality and visual impact. Under-cabinet lighting in the kitchen and beneath the floating shelves beside the fireplace cast a soft glow that highlights architectural features while providing functional illumination. The homeowners particularly appreciate the dramatic statement made by these carefully curated fixtures.

Pantry Door: Distinctive Architectural Detail Adds Character

The pantry entrance features a statement door with horizontal mullions and glass panels that serves as both a functional element and an architectural focal point. This distinctive door provides access to a large walk-in pantry, offering abundant storage while maintaining the kitchen's clean aesthetic.

Rather than filling the kitchen with excessive upper cabinetry, Tani used this statement door as a design element that draws attention while concealing additional storage space. This strategic decision allowed for budget optimization — investing in less, but high-quality cabinetry for the visible kitchen while utilizing simpler shelving in the hidden pantry area.

The unique door design creates a talking point that visitors haven't typically seen in other homes, fulfilling the clients' desire for distinctive elements that would set their space apart without appearing overly trendy or destined to look dated.



Blending Classic and Contemporary

ANDI WHEELBAND

Working with a professional couple in their early 40s for their "forever home," Andi balanced timeless elements with modern touches to create spaces that would endure both structurally and aesthetically.

The design journey began with a client who arrived with clear vision and inspiration.

"My client had a lot of inspiration," notes Andi, referencing their PowerPoint presentation of ideas gathered from hotels, travel experiences, and Pinterest.

The design team served as collaborative partners, refining these concepts while navigating permitting challenges due to the ravine-backing property. European influences, particularly from the British homeowner, inspired classic elements like checkerboard floors and subway tiles, which were then elevated through precise execution and subtle customization to create a uniquely tailored environment.

Sculptural Range Hood with Microcement Finish

The sculptural range hood stands as a defining element of the kitchen, merging artistic expression with functionality through its distinctive curved form and bespoke finish.

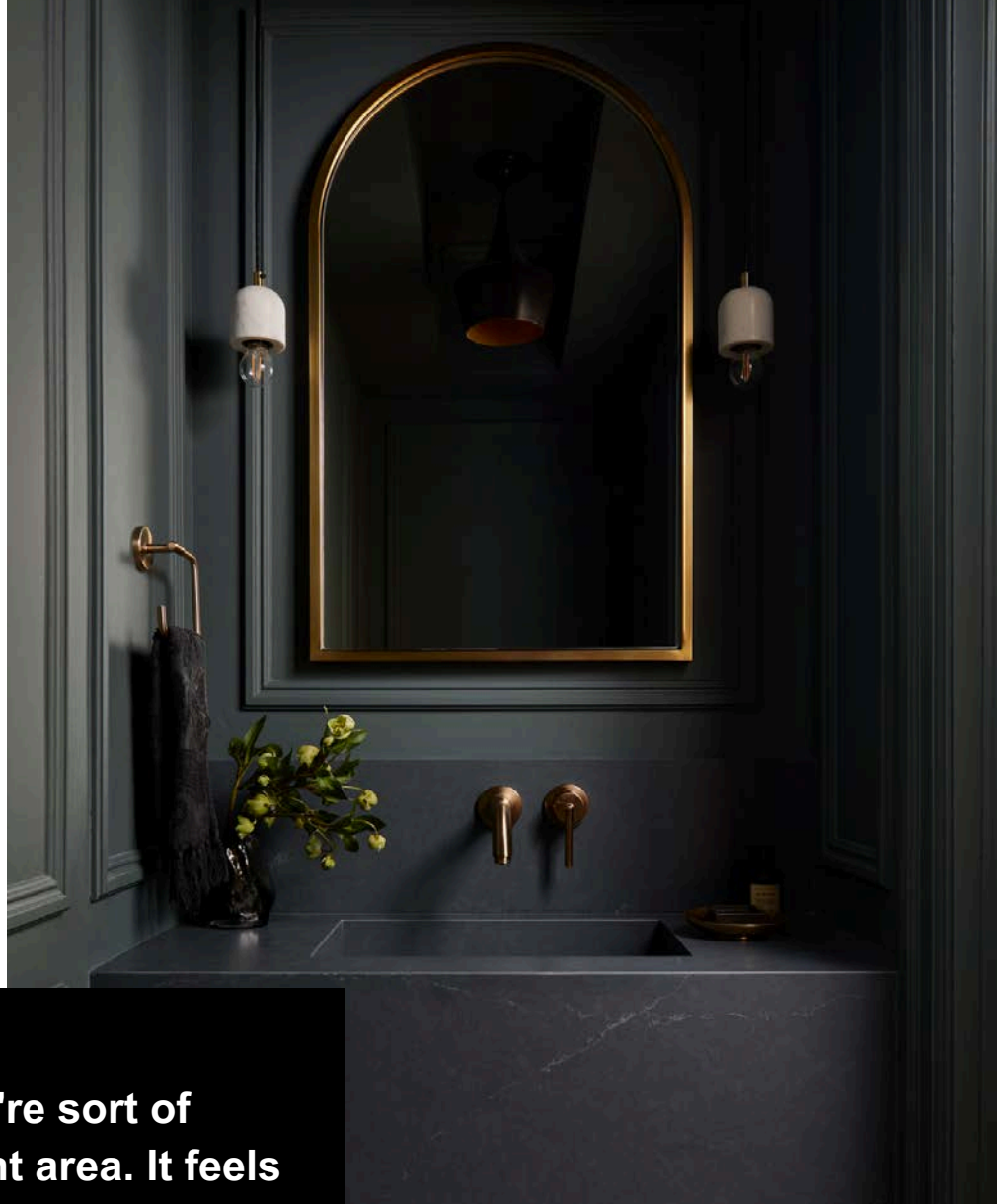
The designers embraced the challenge of creating a substantial statement piece in a moderately-sized kitchen, recognizing its visual importance to the homeowners. **"There's a bit of a sacrifice on space, but it's really beautiful and it's a big statement,"** explains Andi about prioritizing impact over maximizing storage.

Execution required specialized craftsmanship, with the millworker creating the sculptural form before a finishing expert applied a microcement coating to achieve a plaster-like appearance. This custom element perfectly complements the kitchen's black and white palette while creating a focal point that elevates the entire space, exemplifying how a single well-executed design element can transform the character of a room.



Dramatic Powder Room with Custom Integrated Quartz Sink

The dark, paneled powder room creates an intimate retreat that dramatically contrasts with the home's otherwise bright, airy aesthetic through its bold color palette and meticulous detailing.



“When you're in it, you're sort of immersed in a different area. It feels a little bit more intimate or private.”

The designers intentionally crafted this small space to feel like a distinct experience, using darkness to create intimacy and separation from the main living areas. "When you're in it, you're sort of immersed in a different area. It feels a little bit more intimate or private," notes Andi, explaining the psychological impact of this design choice.

The execution showcases true luxury through a custom-integrated quartz sink with a leather finish and carefully measured wall paneling. Meticulous planning ensured every element fit perfectly within the compact space. "That little space is lots of drawings and conversations," Andi reveals, highlighting how this room, though small, received extraordinary attention to detail — a hallmark of luxury design where even transitional spaces receive meticulous treatment.



Innovative Poolside Trough Sink with Customized Hardware

The distinctive basement sink represents creative problem-solving and unwavering commitment to aesthetic vision, transforming a functional necessity into a design feature.

The team aimed to create a practical yet stylish solution for children coming in from the pool area, drawing inspiration from institutional trough sinks but elevating the concept for residential use. "Andrew liked the idea of it being like when you're at school... but more stylized," explains Andi, referencing the client's vision.

Execution required ingenuity when facing a limitation: the perfect Kohler sink only came with chrome fixtures, unacceptable to the design

vision requiring brushed brass. Working with their plumber, the team created a custom solution by adapting Delta robe hooks as faucet handles paired with components from another collection. This resourceful approach to obtaining exactly the right look—regardless of challenges—exemplifies luxury design's commitment to realizing a vision without compromise, even in secondary spaces.

Functionality and Timeless Elegance



ASHLEY SHEAFFER KRISTIE HOLLOWAY JENNIFER SULLIVAN

For KBF Design Gallery, luxury extends beyond expensive materials to embrace thoughtful design that enhances daily living. The team defines luxury as creating spaces with ease of use, visual calm, and unique elements that make homes feel custom rather than cookie-cutter.

They focus on organizational solutions that eliminate visual clutter and incorporate details that reflect clients' personalities and travels. Their approach to luxury involves understanding how clients interact with spaces, then designing environments that blend functionality with refined aesthetics. This **client-centered philosophy transforms ordinary spaces into sanctuaries that feel luxurious** through both appearance and experience.

Transforming Mediterranean Architecture with California-Inspired Elegance

The Isleworth Primary project involved reimagining a dated Mediterranean-style primary suite for clients who split their time between Orlando and California. After the clients reached out through Instagram, the team embarked on a discovery process to understand their aesthetic preferences, researching their California home's design to inform their approach. The biggest challenge was completely reconfiguring the floor plan, moving the bathroom to the front of the space and combining two separate closets in the rear.

This dramatic transformation required working around a bearing wall and adding new windows to maintain natural light. The design goal was to create a timeless, light-filled space that honored the home's classic architectural features while bringing in California-inspired elements.





Bathtub Focal Point

The design team maintained and enhanced the original bathroom's focal point by creating a dramatic archway that frames the freestanding bathtub. This architectural feature allows the tub to be visible from the bedroom and golf course views beyond, creating a luxurious visual moment.

The tub is flanked by custom cabinetry that provides essential storage without compromising aesthetics. Antique mirror detailing behind the tub functions as a substitute for the window that was lost in the redesign, adding reflective qualities that amplify light throughout the space.

This deliberate design choice became the clients' favorite element, transforming a functional necessity into an artistic statement that anchors the entire space with timeless elegance.

Elevating Storage into a Luxury Experience

The redesigned closet space transformed utilitarian storage into a true dressing room experience. The team created custom cabinetry with dual islands that serve multiple functions— providing additional storage, offering surfaces for packing suitcases (essential for these frequent travelers), and creating a luxurious centerpiece with dramatic chandeliers overhead.

A custom banquette beneath a window provides comfortable seating for putting on shoes, while a mirror allows for full outfit viewing in natural light. The designers carefully cataloged the clients' storage needs to ensure appropriate space for hanging clothes, drawers, and specialized storage.



What was once a dark, angular space became an airy, highly functional dressing room with "dancing room" that anticipates and accommodates the clients' lifestyle needs with style.

Spatial Storytelling: How Room Reassignment Created a New Narrative Without Moving Walls

MARK HADDAD, CMKBD

The Luxe Redux home initially told a disconnected story— a dining room separated from the kitchen, bedrooms interrupting flow to common areas, and spaces that functioned poorly despite adequate square footage. Rather than recommending extensive structural changes, Haddad's team rewrote the home's narrative through strategic room reassignment.

By boldly swapping the dining and family rooms, they resolved the fundamental disconnect in the original floor plan. This single decision created a cascade of improvements: the repositioned dining room enabled seamless bar integration, while the relocated family room gained natural connection to the study for overflow seating during gatherings.



The second-floor transformation continued this layout revision. An inaccessible library loft gained proper hallway access, flooding the home with natural light. An oversized guest room— rarely used but occupying prime square footage — was downsized to create a properly-scaled children's bedroom and elegant connecting walkway.

"It's very easy to design a big house. It's a lot harder to design something that gives you limitations," Haddad notes. This constraint-embracing philosophy allowed his team to create a more cohesive spatial story without moving a single structural wall.



Client Heritage and Art Collections Drive Architectural Decisions

As the project's spatial story took shape, Haddad's team inverted the conventional design sequence by making the clients' growing art collection drive architectural decisions rather than following them.

The family's artwork dictated lighting placement throughout the house, with ceiling fixtures specifically positioned to highlight each piece. "We knew where the art was going. So we designed all of the lighting and the lighting controls around the art," explains Haddad. This approach transformed decorative elements from afterthoughts into foundational design drivers.



Three-dimensional glass pieces with personal significance inspired the creation of custom architectural elements. The homeowners wanted to display these pieces of art prominently in their dining room, so Haddad and the team developed a solution that would give these treasured objects the attention they deserved— illuminated walnut niches specifically designed to showcase them.

The entire color story emerged from this art-first approach. A striking three-dimensional painting in the family room dictated accent colors, while orange tones in the dark charcoal-walled study deliberately echoed artwork displayed in the dining room two spaces away. As renovation progressed, the clients actively acquired new pieces for specific spaces, creating a home where architecture and identity became inseparable elements of a unified visual narrative.

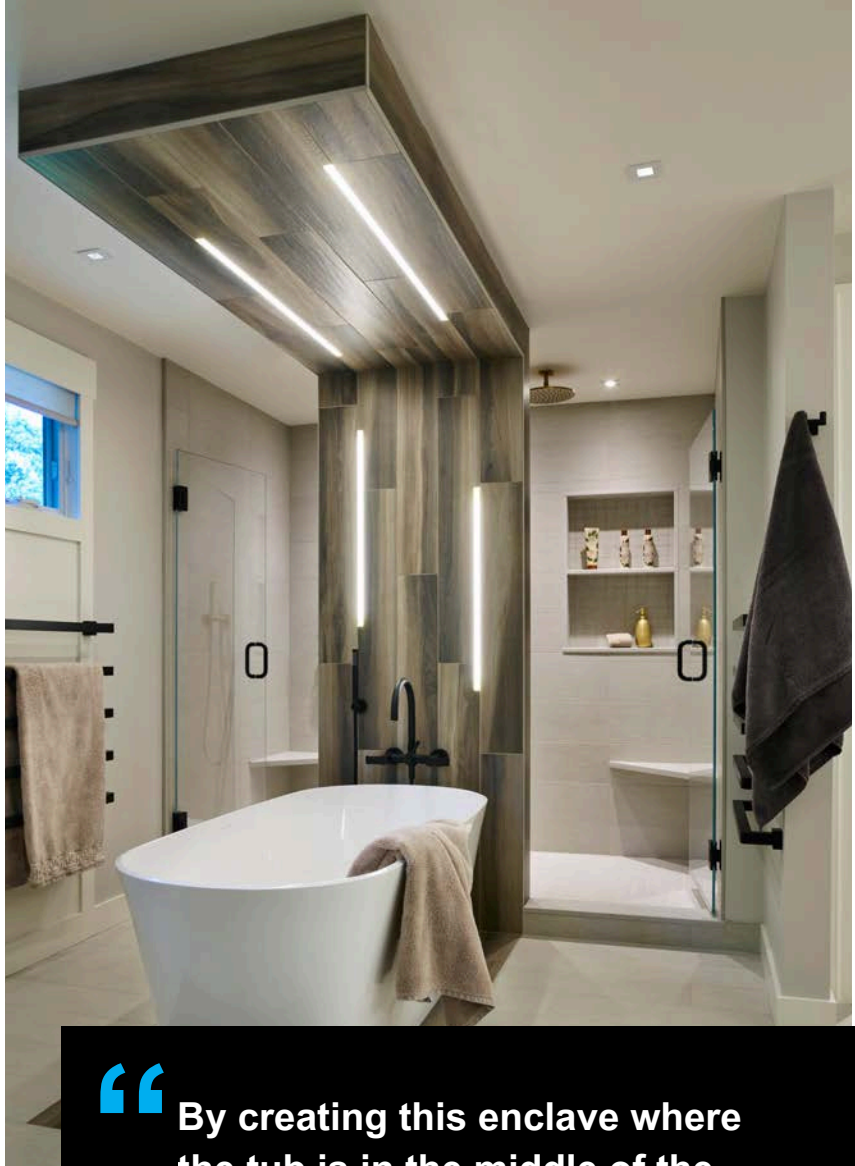
The Bathroom Revolution: From Morning Efficiency to Evening Sanctuary Within One Footprint

The Luxe Redux primary bathroom exemplifies a fundamental shift in luxury design thinking: bathrooms have evolved from places where we save time to sanctuaries where we invest time. This transformation requires spaces that adapt to different moments rather than serving single purposes.

Haddad's solution created distinct scenes within one footprint. The morning scene features practical double vanities flooded with natural light from strategically placed windows, supporting efficient preparation.

As day transitions to evening, the space transforms into a retreat centered around an innovative floating tub installation— wrapped with continuous wood tile on floor, wall and ceiling to create an intimate enclave within the larger space. His team further personalized the experience by designing his-and-hers vanities individually before unifying them into a cohesive concept, creating a space that honored both shared and individual preferences.

This dual-purpose approach— combining practical efficiency with a luxurious retreat within one thoughtfully designed footprint— demonstrates that luxury emerges from scene-setting and emotional intelligence rather than square footage alone.



“ By creating this enclave where the tub is in the middle of the floor, it didn't make the tub feel like it was floating.

The Kitchen Expresses Personal Identity Beyond Mere Function

The kitchen exemplifies how luxury emerges when functionality becomes inseparable from personal storytelling. What began as a dysfunctional space with activity concentrated in one area transformed into a multi-scene environment where each element carried meaning beyond its utilitarian purpose.



The center of this transformation was the British husband's heritage, expressed through custom cabinets in "British Racing Green"—a distinctive hue Haddad sourced through a Benjamin Moore color match. "We found a Benjamin Moore color that was his color. And we actually had the cabinets made in a custom fit color to meet his requests," Haddad explains. These green cabinets, balanced with complementary charcoal gray elements, transformed a purely functional space into one rich with personal significance.

Technological preferences received equal attention, with the design incorporating both induction and gas cooking surfaces positioned thoughtfully in front of a fixed window overlooking the garden. A dedicated beverage center with stainless steel cabinets addressed the family's entertaining needs, while a concealed message center beneath a champagne poster housed 16 charging stations- allowing the family to manage electronic clutter while maintaining visual harmony.

This meticulous attention to both functionality and personal narrative elevated the kitchen beyond conventional luxury into a space where cooking, entertaining, and daily family rituals became expressions of identity rather than mere household tasks.

Creating Timeless Spaces That Last

SARAH ROBERTSON, AKBD

Sarah Robertson defines luxury as **"great design that has timelessness to it,"** prioritizing longevity over lavish materials. For her, true luxury means not having to renovate every five years - it's doing it right the first time with quality elements that age beautifully.

Her luxury process extends beyond materials to personalization. Robertson invests significant time understanding how clients use their kitchens, ensuring every cabinet serves a specific function. This shift from "selling boxes" to creating tailored spaces reflects her belief that luxury lies in thoughtful customization.

The biggest challenge? Working within budget constraints while maintaining this vision. Robertson's approach: eliminate unnecessary elements like wall cabinets and reinvest those savings into custom details that truly matter





From Dark Center to Bright Bistro

Adam, Robertson's photographer, faced a kitchen trapped in his home's center - no windows, tight layout, constant traffic. Robertson's solution involved completely relocating the space to capture natural light through new floor-to-ceiling windows.

As an enthusiastic cook, Adam needed maximum storage despite the small footprint. His Italian heritage and wife Jenny's Swedish background became key design touchpoints. The couple wanted a European bistro feel that felt both sophisticated and functional.

Budget constraints required creative problem-solving. Robertson secured material sponsors and made strategic decisions like raising the ceiling early in the process. This structural change, though costly, transformed the space and allowed for distinctive architectural details that would define the kitchen's character.

An Island That Defies Convention

The kitchen's centerpiece challenges traditional island design by appearing to float like fine furniture while housing a sink, dishwasher, and extensive storage. Robertson faced a complex puzzle: maintain elegance while accommodating appliances that must reach the floor.

The solution featured curved legs to lighten visual weight, reflective metal cladding on the toe kick that makes the base "disappear," and a custom brass foot rail for bistro authenticity. Unable to find standard components for the unique height, Robertson worked with Palmer Industries to fabricate custom brass fittings.



Cost-conscious choices included selecting native American wood with carefully developed stain instead of exotic species. Every detail required precise engineering and custom fabrication, proving that accessible luxury comes from innovative design rather than expensive materials.



Timeless Bistro Walls That Tell a Story

Robertson defied trends by cladding the entire kitchen in Walker Zanger subway tiles featuring distinctive crackle glaze. This bold move transforms ordinary tile into something extraordinary, instantly aging the new space with authentic character.

The floor-to-ceiling application references both European bistros and American Gilded Age kitchens, where tiles served sanitary purposes while creating immersive environments. The crackle glaze was crucial - making new tiles appear historic and lending authenticity to the bistro concept.

While running tile throughout the room was a splurge, the material itself remained cost-effective. Adam embraced this total commitment to the aesthetic, recognizing that true timelessness comes from historical precedent rather than following trends. The result: a space that feels both fresh and centuries old.

A Heritage Piece in Brilliant Color

The striking green cabinet serves dual purposes - essential daily storage and cultural homage to Jenny's Swedish heritage. Its distinctive color, matched precisely to Robertson's studio walls, brings unexpected vibrancy while maintaining sophisticated restraint.

Robertson enhanced this custom piece with contrasting interior paint, detailed paneling, and aging effects that create authentic antique character. Positioned prominently for daily use, it exemplifies how personal heritage can inspire distinctive luxury features.

The upgrade to two-tone paint and custom paneling details represented a small splurge with major impact. Jenny declared it her favorite element in the kitchen, proving that meaningful luxury often comes from thoughtful personalization rather than expensive materials. The cabinet demonstrates Robertson's philosophy: invest in the details that bring daily joy.



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