

A natural bamboo floor in the kitchen and breakfast room provides a warm contrast to the stainless-steel sinks and precast concrete counters. The breakfast room's ample table, banquettes and benches are white oak.



W

hen contractor Judith Thompson and her partner, investment manager Cindy Brooks, came upon their dream home two years ago, a 3,300-square-foot house on a pine-shaded hillside, it was one step from a tear-down. Built in the 1950s as a classic California ranch with expansive views of the northern scoop of San Francisco Bay, it had suffered five remodelings. By the time

Thompson and Brooks saw it, the pretty-in-pink pastiche of country clichés was a candidate for a thorough modernization.

"We loved the privacy of the acre-and-a-half lot," recalls Thompson, "and we certainly knew we were facing a major renovation. We just didn't quite anticipate its extent." They planned to open the house to the views, add guest quarters, build a new kitchen and append a spacious bed-and-bath suite. After a 13-month renovation, the clean-lined, updated ranch-style house had doubled in size.

Thompson and Brooks are no novices in the world of home renovation. Thompson Brooks Inc., their remodeling and general construction company, was founded in 1990 and now specializes in projects in the over \$1 million budget range. Currently one of the fastest-growing companies in the United States, it's also among

# Concrete Solutions

For their own home on a Bay Area hillside,

the largest remodeling firms owned by women in the country. For the house they share with their daughter, Zoe, the women engaged Berkeley designer Fu-Tung Cheng to plan a spacious new kitchen and breakfast room. They had appreciated the cool, calm intelligence of his plans and admired the dramatic and sensual concrete countertops that have become his specialty.

two contractors called in designer Fu-Tung Cheng.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY GREY CRAWFORD. PRODUCED AND WRITTEN BY DIANE DORRANS SAEKS.



# Metropolitan Home

p.162

150 **FRENCH EVOLUTION** by Jean Bond Rafferty  
In Provence, designer Jean-Michel Wilmotte did for a 1,000-year-old abbey/château what he did for the Louvre with I. M. Pei: courted it into the 21st century.

158 **FABRICADABRA** by Sarah Lynch  
A pair of talented Manhattanites rebuilt their loft kitchen with the same art and flair as the textiles they design, proving contemporary doesn't need to be cold.

162 **CONCRETE SOLUTIONS** by Diane Dorrans Saeks  
When it came time to design their own home, a pair of professional contractors looked to Fu-Tung Cheng for a sleek kitchen and baths fashioned of high-style cement.

## GARDEN

168 **A GARDENER'S OWN** by Jane Garmey  
This busy landscape architect designed his own garden with one objective: It would have to take care of itself.

## FOOD

174 **CLEARLY CANADIAN** by Stephen Wong  
Vancouver chef Stephen Wong whips up tantalizing dishes from the fresh foods he finds at the city's public market.



127 **JUST (Re) DO IT!**  
Hoist up your jeans and let the demolition roll.

128 **DESIGN HIGH** by Raul Barreneche  
**MET HOME OF THE MONTH**  
Using curved lines and rich, tactile fabrics, Shamir Shah softened the geometry of a Manhattan penthouse.

136 **BARN NOBLE** by Lucie Young  
D'Aquino Monaco shook the cobwebs out of an old barn with a restrained and sophisticated renovation.

144 **CAPITAL GAINS** by Michael Lassell  
A '60s suburban house was transformed into a singularly modern home by the Washington, D.C. firm of ColePrévost.

**ON THE COVER:** The Manhattan penthouse apartment of John Johnson, designed by Shamir Shah. Produced by Linda O'Keeffe. Photograph by Antoine Bootz. See page 128.

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**T**hompson and Brooks were so pleased with Cheng's superbly calibrated plan for the kitchen and breakfast room that they engaged him and Quandt to plan a series of guest bathrooms and a new bedroom/bathroom suite.

"We wanted to create a spalike feeling, free of clutter and confusion," notes Quandt. A narrow palette of materials and colors enhances the serene mood that carries from one bathroom to the others. Brushed-stainless-steel counters contrast with honey-colored hemlock cabinetry. In one guest bathroom, celadon glass wall tiles gleam as a backdrop to a handcrafted bronze washbasin.

Walls were washed with plaster and kept free of cabinets. The

bathrooms overlook a wooded hillside, so Cheng focused the Zen views with simple aluminum-framed windows. He installed luxurious custom-crafted, 24-inch-deep stainless-steel soaking tubs.

"The key to using steel in an interior," says Quandt, "is to balance it with other textures." She and Cheng added texture with benches of Brazilian hardwood and stone floors (with radiant heat).

"This is not the house we originally envisioned," says Thompson. "It's much more. We love modernism and the intellectual purity of its approach, but we've warmed the house with beautiful woods and handcrafted surfaces." **mh**

See *Resources*, last pages.