

San Francisco Chronicle Magazine

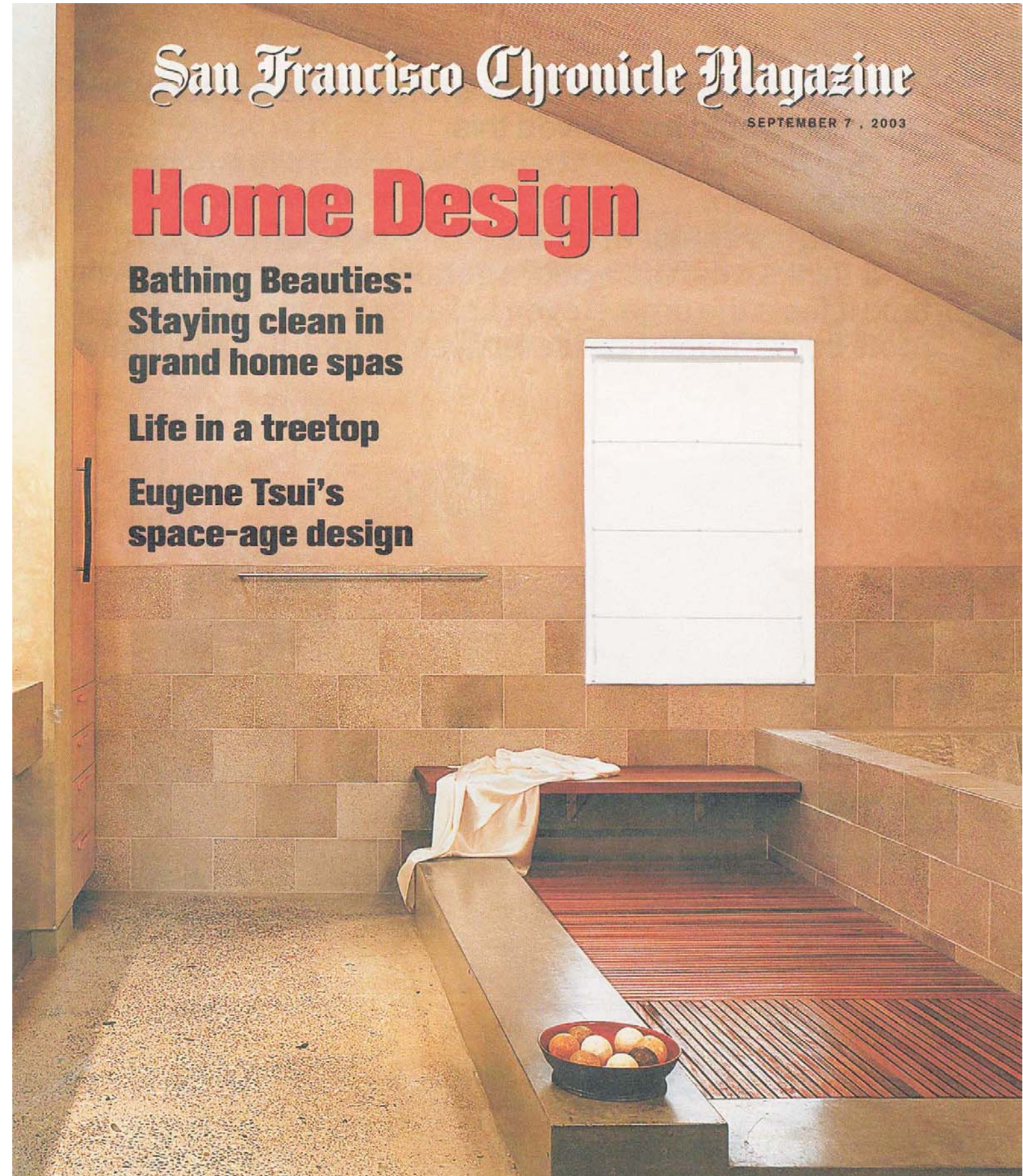
SEPTEMBER 7, 2003

Home Design

**Bathing Beauties:
Staying clean in
grand home spas**

Life in a treetop

**Eugene Tsui's
space-age design**



HOME DESIGN

BY ZAHID SARDAR

Zen Spa

Fu-Liang Cheng combines concrete, glass and bamboo in a fluid space

This page: Under a lighting soffit, a conversation pit. In the foreground, an architectural model by Wendy Roess; long-necked crimson glass vases by Ben and Kathy Edols from De Vera. Facing page: At the entrance, a canvas by Andy Enna; a 19th century Burmese pedestal bowl for temple offerings; bamboo, concrete, terrazzo, and steel draw the eye to the master bedroom in back.



PHOTOS BY J. D. PETERSON. STYLING BY FEDERICO DE VERA



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When San Francisco developer Wendy Roess first approached Emeryville author and designer Fu-Tung Cheng to complete the So.Ma penthouse loft she had begun with her former husband, he wasn't sure what to expect.

"I thought perhaps she needed just a few things done, but I saw raw studs," says Cheng. "The elevator went up to an open space. There simply were no rooms or windows, and there was barely a roof over it all."

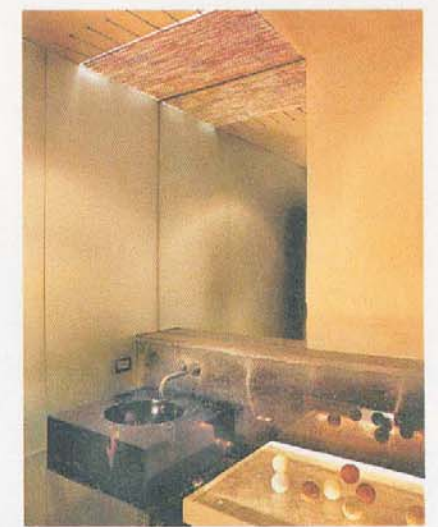
The four-story structure, originally designed by architect Jim Jennings, had been modified considerably by the builders.

"I loved the vaulted roof and wanted to keep as much of Jim's design intact as possible," says Cheng. "But I also wanted to create a level of intimacy in the 4,200-square-foot space."

To do that, Cheng created soffits for lighting and lowered entryways to open to the higher-vaulted spaces — a trick Frank Lloyd Wright had used to advantage before Cheng. He then added an Asian aesthetic using composite bamboo flooring and handmade ceramic tiles to sheath walls, and the custom concrete fireplaces and bathrooms for which he is justly famous. (His "Concrete Countertops," is a best-seller.)

"The Japanese aesthetic grew from the Sung and Yuan dynasties in China, and everything I do is influenced by that," Cheng says. A new geography of entrances and passages with evaporating walls creates a Zen landscape of forms. But lest there be any doubt about his real inspiration, Cheng has included a meditation platform in Roess' bedroom, where she does yoga every day. Yet another Cheng specialty awaits this New Age *yogin* just round the corner: a home spa with a sensuous tub to soak in.

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Left: a vaulted roofline links the interior to a deck with downtown views; an elevated fireplace was designed for casual cooking. Ceramic mantle tiles were handmade by artist Gary Holt; vase by Venetian ceramicist Massimo Micheluzzi. Top: Just off the living space, the master bedroom has a meditation alcove with a tatami mat; bronze tree trunk by Fu Tung Cheng; 18th century Japanese lacquered temple table from De Vera. Above: The guest bathroom has a rubbery polyurethane sink set against shattered glass.



This page: The master bathroom and home spa with Cheng's custom colored-cast concrete double sink, integrally colored plaster walls and handmade ceramic tile wainscoting. Built-in teak bench adjoins a roomy soaking tub surrounded by a teak drain pan and shower. Facing page: Detail of custom concrete fireplace mantle with tile inlay, 19th century gilded wood Burmese Buddha and a polished Calistoga Basalt sculpture by Masuo Nakajima, both from De Vera.

