

k + b studio

kitchen: concrete impressions



Few can resist the lure of smooth, wet concrete calling out for carved initials or a quick hand imprint while no one's looking. Designer, artist, and concrete fabricator Fu-Tung Cheng of Berkeley, Calif.-based Cheng Design has been yielding to such temptation since the early 1980s, and perfecting its artful application ever since. "Concrete is fundamentally earthier than granite or other stone," explains Cheng. "It's an earth matrix that nature sets up with a variety of aggregates that we select and mix up to create our own result."

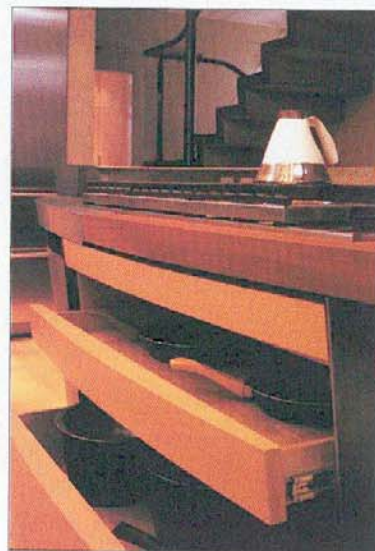
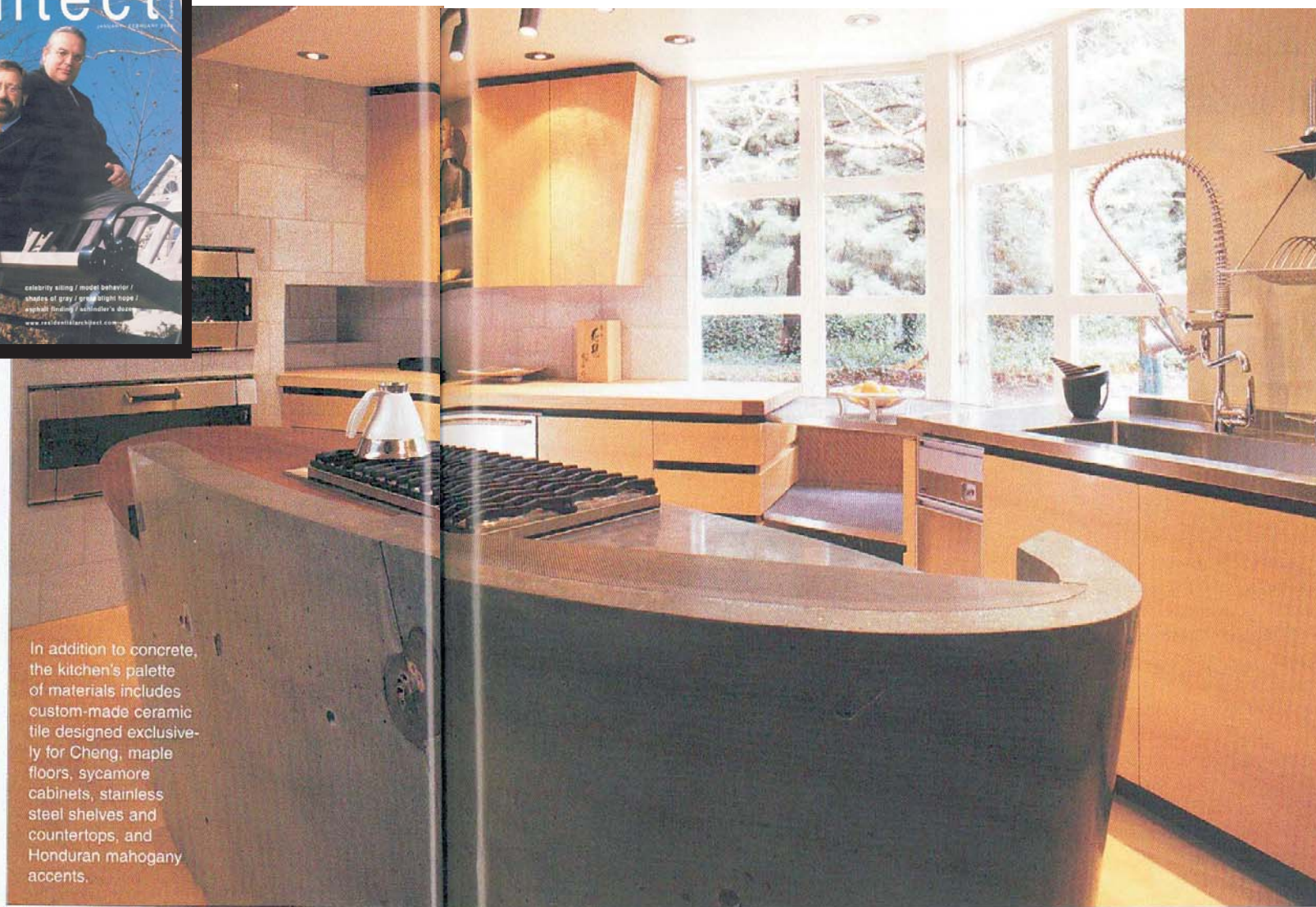
In this 24-by-18-foot kitchen, Cheng enhanced and softened the naturally rugged appearance of concrete with polished surfaces, integrated color, embedded gemstones, and his signature ammonite fossil imprints. The homeowner, says Cheng, is an artist who "wanted to live with art rather than display it."

The elliptical island holds a six-burner gas cooktop with slide-out storage for cookware below. Its sides slope gently inward to eliminate the need for a toekick, accentuating the material's monolithic character. Because concrete can stain, Cheng tucked a perforated stainless steel shelf into the corner curve to serve as a receptacle for hot pots and cold drinks.

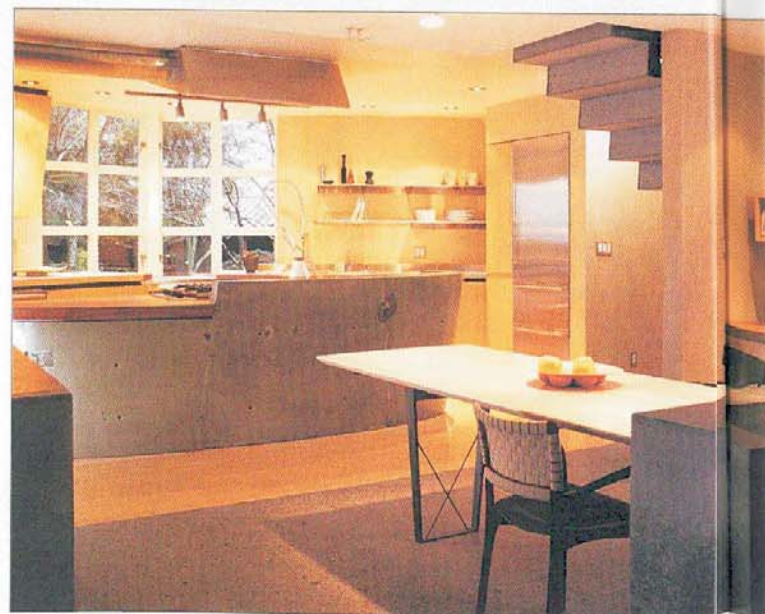
The floors of the informal eating area are also poured-in-place concrete, as is the half-wall that supports one end of the dining table and delineates the adjacent vaulted living room. The nearby floating stairs are cast concrete bolstered by steel zigurats tied into floor joists. Although delicately rendered, all this concrete is quite weighty and requires careful attention to structural engineering.

The accommodation is worth it, Cheng says, because substance and mass are a solid part of concrete's appeal.—*shelley d. hutchins*

In addition to concrete, the kitchen's palette of materials includes custom-made ceramic tile designed exclusively for Cheng, maple floors, sycamore cabinets, stainless steel shelves and countertops, and Honduran mahogany accents.

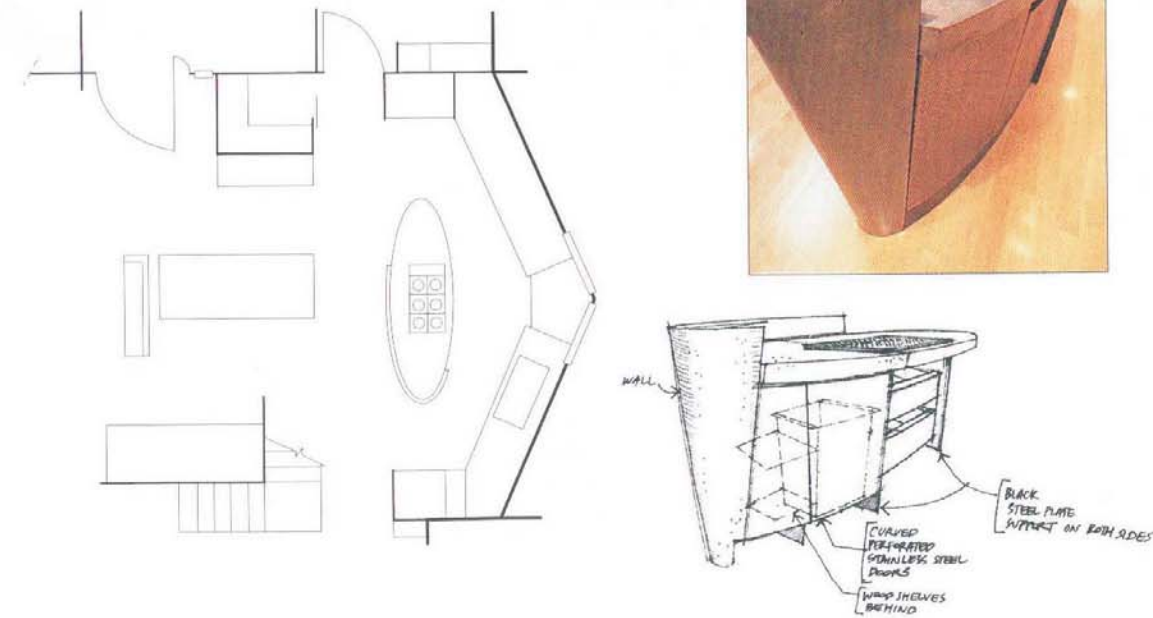


Not an inch of island space is wasted. Wide, roll-out drawers provide storage for pots and pans. Perforated stainless steel doors conceal a trash-bin cubby (opposite page, far right.)



Photos: Matthew Millman

The concept for the open, eat-in kitchen was "multiple island areas that were useful sculptures," says Cheng. Positioned around the main island are an informal dining table, a desk, and a small sitting nook.



designer: Cheng Design, Berkeley, Calif.

general contractor: Tom Heyenga Construction, San Jose, Calif.; **cabinet-maker:** Guba & Associates, Oakland, Calif.

resources: ceramic tile: Gary Holt Design; light fixtures: Halo; plumbing fixtures: KWC; range: Russell; range hood: Cheng Design; refrigerator: Sub-Zero; oven: Gaggenau

