

Fu-Tung Cheng, award-winning designer and author of *Concrete Countertops*, is now offering five-day Advanced Countertop Design Trainings. Held in Berkeley, Calif., the trainings are limited to 12 participants and include hours of direct instruction by Cheng, demos and videos of techniques to execute Cheng-like designs, extensive question-and-answer sessions and the hands-on crafting of several Cheng countertop designs.

Cheng says he developed the Advanced Countertop Design Training because he believes that many countertop craftsmen could benefit from a crash course in the fundamental principles of good design, which will, in turn, help them to develop their own creativity. Cheng believes that this type of design training would give them a heads-up on competing for upscale countertop projects.

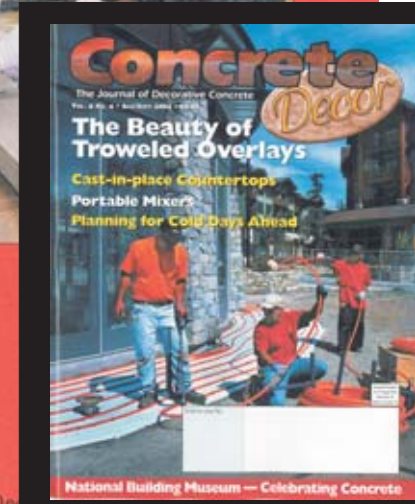
The skill required to build a mold and pour a concrete countertop is one thing, but developing the design sensitivity to craft the kind of countertop the high-end market is seeking is quite another, Cheng says. He is concerned that the use of concrete as a material of choice by designers and architects could be undermined by too many well-meaning contractors pouring what looks like "a sidewalk on top of a set of cabinets."

Design focus

The focus of Cheng's Advanced Countertop Design Training is design in all its manifestations. The first session, held the week of May 24, began with several hours of design instruction. Cheng sought to impart to the participants his overall approach to kitchen design, walking them through every step in his consideration of space, layout, lighting, materials and textures, and a myriad of other design elements. He then shifted from kitchen design to countertop design and the decisions he makes on form, edging, color, decorative inlays and special features.

Cheng assigned a kitchen plan to the participants, on which they were able to sketch out their own ideas and exercise their own creativity for a countertop design. He then individually worked with them to help develop their designs. The design portion of this intensive training was also structured to give contractors insights into the thought process and vocabulary necessary to effectively communicate with architects, kitchen designers, and homeowners. Cheng emphasized that this is the key to the high-end market in countertops, a market where they're not likely to be asked, "How much do you charge per square foot?"

FOCUS ON EDUCATION: Fu-Tung Cheng Now Offering Advanced Countertop Design Training



From design theory to hands-on craftsmanship

The training session moved from instruction and Q&A to a day of demos and videos that illustrated how Cheng creates various forms and features used in his countertops. The participants had the opportunity to watch Cheng blending colors to create subtle effects and then try their hand at it themselves. He also shared with the participants several trade secret processes associated with achieving the distinctive glass-like finish of the Cheng line of Geocrete countertops.

By the end of Day Two, Cheng was ready to assign the participants, working in groups of three, countertop projects he designed for the training curriculum. Each project included design features and techniques taught during the Advanced Countertop Design Training but left many of the design decisions respecting color, decorative inlays and other elements up to the participants.

On Day Three, the groups constructed their molds, built forms for knockouts, positioned and



secured their decorative inlays and poured their countertops. While countertops cured, the participants engaged in a Build Your Business forum that included subjects like Countertop Pricing and Marketing to Design Professionals.

Finally, on Day Five, participants de-molded and finished their countertop projects. Cheng spent several hours critiquing the countertops with respect to both design and technical execution.

In an effort to create an elite group of concrete craftsmen, Cheng is using the Advanced Countertop Design Training as the first step toward a certification process that will require the submission of several commercial or residential projects utilizing design principles and techniques taught at the training session. Cheng-certified concrete craftsmen will be eligible to work on Cheng's commissioned concrete projects nationwide.

For information on the Advanced Countertop Design Training, call (510) 849-3272 or visit www.concreteexchange.com.



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