Home Design

KANSAS CITY'S DEFINITIVE SOURCE FOR FINE ARCHITECTURE AND DESIGN
A kitchen system available from Portfolio Kitchen & Home, this sleek, bright white design demonstrates exactly how customized a home's central space can become. Appliances melt into the background as the seamless cabinets hide the functionality that still remains an integral part of kitchen design.

The kitchen space is one of work and play, of functionality and artistic expression. That's because today's luxury kitchens are more than just an assemblage of modern appliances. These spaces are about finding and presenting your individual essence while cultivating a room that works for you, not against you. Local design studios know exactly how to facilitate that relationship. Geri Higgins, owner and president of Portfolio Kitchen & Home; Randall Sisk, owner and president of Kitchens by Kleweno; and Bev Gilbert, owner of Regarding Kitchens, elaborate:

**KCHD: What is a luxury kitchen?**

**Geri Higgins:** Luxury kitchens, like anything luxury, come in different styles. They are truly an expression of the people who live in that house—usually a combination between functional design, styling and organization.

**KCHD: What is key to a luxury kitchen?**

**GH:** It is typical for there to be different workspaces and stations—specialty centers. For example, it's common to have a fabulous coffee center. (And) people who go the market frequently for fresh foods (may prefer) less space for refrigeration.
Randall Sisk: Refrigeration concealment (actually) plays a huge role in the kitchen because the refrigerator is the largest piece of machinery in (that room). Instead of minimizing the machine, (we) try to make it part of the kitchen. We work to create (structural) artwork and then apply it around the refrigeration. It’s a concept that is relatively new to most clients.

Bev Gilbert: LED lighting is king right now. It’s amazing. It’s cool. It lasts forever. With LEDs, you get a very even and very bright light (that can) accent pieces very specifically (or be used) above cabinets, below cabinets and above kick boards. But it is more of an investment (than incandescent or halogen lighting).

KCHD: How do you integrate art into your designs?

RS: The art is the kitchen itself (rather than) a piece that you display in the kitchen. It’s the art of the flooring, the art of the cabinets, the art of the backsplash, the art of concealment. That is really our forte, and it’s what we prefer.

GH: Ventilation as artwork is all the rage now in luxury kitchens. Hoods over professional ranges are made to look like chandeliers. We’re also seeing stone and hoods integrated into the wood cabinetry. It’s a beautiful and unique way to create a centerpiece.

KCHD: Randall, you mentioned “the art of the flooring.” What trends are you seeing there?

RS: Today everyone is talking about a green society. People are using flooring materials that replenish a lot more frequently—bamboo and recycled or cork flooring. We’re also seeing wood continue to be a huge favorite; it’s softer to stand on.
and you can refinish it. We've even had a few clients put in leather flooring. That works extremely well (when) we apply (special products) to keep it from staining or from weathering.

KCHD: What other luxury appliances are you seeing clients request?

RS: Luxury appliances include induction cook-tops, steamers and rotisserie built-ins. People have played with grilling in the kitchen forever. We've created something called a "vertical grill," charcoal briquettes in a vertical setup (that let you) grill both sides of a steak at the same time.

KCHD: How are you improving functionality for your clients?

BG: There are so many of us Baby Boomers, and we're pretty much used to getting what we want. We're getting into our 50s; we still want to be glamorous, but we want a little more ease in our lives. So we're (also) seeing a trend toward easy-to-use appliances (and) more built-ins. Gas is still king in the kitchen, but there's a move toward induction cooking, (which) functions a lot like gas but without a lot of the hassle. It's a trend toward simplicity but quality.
ahead of its time

Very soon everyone in Kansas City will know Moshe Safdie. The internationally renowned architect is the lead designer for the Kauffman Center for the Performing Arts. And while the Center will certainly attract national and even international attention to Kansas City, it is not Safdie’s first project here.

In 1978, the Massachusetts-based Safdie modeled a secluded residential enclave near the Country Club Plaza—the Atrium on the Plaza—after his concept of “humanized apartment living in the city.” Situated on three acres of terraced gardens, the Atrium’s 19 units are all eco-friendly.

Safdie was ahead of his time. “(His) plan used an exterior electric shade, a canopy of sorts, to buffer the summer sun, as all the solariums face south,” note the new residents of one of the units. “This concept preceded technology; there was no material truly suitable for the application. (But) the passive solar concept still works (because) we rarely use the furnace when the sun is out.”

Thanks to Safdie’s forward-thinking design and their own modern renovations, the couple’s light-filled condo blurs the borders between inside and out. Stunning.
On the preceding spread, a neutral sofa gets a zing of color from Joscelyn Himes pillows. Bleached, jungle vines imported from Thailand and purchased from Black Bamboo add architectural interest. The painting, “Lady with the Pearl Earrings,” is by local artist Joe Ray Kelley and was purchased during a showing at Café Trio.

The solarium (below) is a perfect place for a sun-drenched breakfast. When not in use, the table is adorned with antique, black lacquer Burmese offering vessels from Black Bamboo. Mismatched chairs add a touch of eclectic, chic style.

But the “salon” (opposite) is the owners’ favorite room. A mirrored wall visually expands the space, while the soothing, spa green palette and soft blue carpet are enhanced by the bright red of an antique Chinese armoire (visible in the mirror). Lucite chairs from Museo continue the airy theme.
The salon is characterized by a variety of textures and patterns—from the nap of an Area Rug Dimensions blue shag rug to the zebra stripe on the ottoman. The lighting, designed by Shirley Allen of The Light Shop, keeps the intimate area bright on cloudy days.
The homeowners describe their aesthetic as contemporary with an Asian flair. Nowhere is that design influence more apparent than it is in the kitchen. Stylish stools from Museo pop when pushed up next to the dark breakfast bar, and the walls’ spa green hue soothes the eye and mixes perfectly with the minimalist cabinetry’s sleek gray tones. David Zebley of Portfolio Kitchen & Home assisted the homeowners with the kitchen design; lighting was designed by Shirley Allen of The Light Shop.

Around the corner, local artist Eli Pupovac’s sculpture “Memorial to Paper Wars” (opposite) finds a niche next to the open stairway. The homeowners purchased the distinctive piece at Pi Gallery.
The upstairs hallway peeks into the master bedroom and offers an excellent view of the interior screening installed to control Safdie’s passive solar heating. Their home is a juxtaposition of new concepts and elegant antiques; repurposing is a theme, especially in the guest bathroom where a piece of art glass received as a gift 20 years ago does duty as a sink top. The vanity began life as a Qing Dynasty console.

As is the case in the rest of the home, the master bedroom is airy, emphasizing art as an integral part of the design. Purchased at Pi Gallery, “Hot Dog Vendor” is by Zac Eubank. “Zac does mostly figure work, but this acrylic is one of his early landscapes—a scene from his home near (the) Arkansas-Missouri border,” note the homeowners. The light-filled painting bridges the two windows to bring the outdoors in.