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# 10 hot kitchen and bath design trends

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Kitchens with appliances carefully concealed from view, bathrooms that look like art galleries equipped with sinks that could be artwork -- these are among the alter-ego transformations of the two workhorse rooms that caught the eye of judges in the National Kitchen & Bath Association's 2010 design competition.

On these two points alone, many designers and remodelers WalletPop contacted across the nation beg to differ, although some do embrace the trends.

"Concealed appliances will continue to be popular as more houses are built and remodeled with open kitchens," says Jamie Goldberg, design and marketing director with **Italian kitchen Design and Distribution**.

"The 'un-kitchen' look, developed in Europe, will become even more widespread in the U.S. as we downsize our homes."

Varied counter heights, Goldberg adds, cater to aging and multi-generational households.

Interior designer Debbie Wiener agrees, adding some other practical reasons the trends may endure.

"Concealed appliances often make sense and, while I'm not a fan, multiple counter heights in a kitchen, for instance, keep little hands away from hot pots and stove tops," says Wiener of **Designing Solutions** in Washington, D.C., whose bathroom remodel is pictured in this post.

In a current project, Wiener adds, she concealed a washer and dryer "behind cabinetry so the traditional 'Laundry Room' looks and functions more as a pass-through to a family room."

Many more, though, said avoid the fads and keep it simple -- and in scale.

"Sometimes homeowners become HGTV'd about an idea and try to implement it, but the effect they're striving for simply doesn't translate to, say, a modest-sized older suburban home," says **Sam Jernigan**, an interior designer in the Sierra Nevada foothills of Northern California. Multiple countertop heights, Jernigan says, can look "crazy hodge-podgy."

Though clients are clamoring for hidden appliances, Sarah Soler of **Johnson/Soler** in Chicago, says she cautions them to consider that the appliances and cabinetry add significant expense to a kitchen remodel, both for materials and labor, integrated refrigerators tend to be shallower, and installation requires more attention to detail from your contractor or carpenter.

Eric Whitney of **Whitney Renovations** in Dallas tends to recommend spreading the remodeling budget throughout the home rather than blowing it all on a gourmet kitchen or spa bath.

Jill Valeri, president of **The Welcome Home**, recommends strongly against custom features that may not appeal to potential future buyers, and in favor of classic changes for any major work.

"If you want to inject more of your personality into your space, do it through paint color, hardware and lighting," Valeri says.

"Multiple heights and too many cute shapes, etc., are not a good idea," adds San Francisco Bay Area interior designer **Jennifer Duchene**. "Less is more. Simple always stays in style."

The one recommendation that most agreed belongs exclusively on the showroom floor is number 10 (below): artwork in bathrooms. Here, the not insignificant matter of steam intervened.

"In general I do not recommend putting any art of value in a bathroom," Soler says. "The repeated exposure to moisture and humidity over time will cause mildew. A powder room may be a better choice, but in all honesty, if you have art that is worth showing off, put it somewhere in your home as a showcase piece, not in the bathroom."

Here is the whole 10, synthesized from a recent ranking in **Builder Magazine**:

1. Kitchens integrated into surrounding living space, with appliances camouflaged by matching wood fronts and subdued color palettes that don't overpower other rooms to "allow the kitchen to enhance, rather than intrude, into other spaces."
2. Beverage stations, including wine fridges, coffee makers and storage room for cups and glassware.
3. Scale and focal points, ranging from varied textures to symmetrical placement of lights and other fixtures.
4. Color, particularly rich colors, blending "rich blues, purples, greens, and citric yellow" with earth tones.
5. Soft geometry, ranging from rounded counter edges to an arch or a curved light fixture, to counteract the angular appliances.
6. Creative use of space, enabled by more creative plumbing and electrical options, allows floating sinks and vanities, stacked appliances and other unusual options.
7. Framing, using structural elements such as thicker countertops or backsplashes that creep up the wall to surround a cabinet.
8. Varying heights of countertops: "For example, pairing a lower desk and prep area with a higher breakfast bar fosters a greater level of family interaction within the kitchen."
9. Asian influences continue, but now are more deeply incorporated into design, with perhaps a single piece of Asian-inspired artwork functioning as a Zen focal point on a bathroom wall.
10. Art integration, basically taking one piece of artwork -- perhaps one already owned by the homeowner -- and designing a room around it, from color schemes to fixtures and finishes.

Surprisingly enough, however, the winner of the **Watermark 2010 award** was a Victorian bathroom done nearly completely in white, with a few black accents. Classic.

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