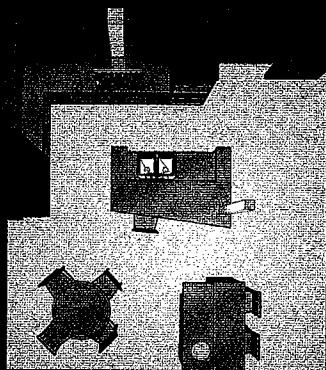


Joan DesCombes, CKD  
2008 Pinnacle of Design Award Winner  
By Diana Tuorto



Rendering by 20-20 Technologies



Photo by Stephen Allen Photography

Joan DesCombes, CKD took on this project knowing that it would be contemporary and challenging. A smaller home and limited area prevented her from opening up the space. By using her extensive architectural and kitchen interior design background, DesCombes has transformed this room into an airy and eye-catching design.

DesCombes' career can simply be described as multi-faceted. Prior to obtaining a degree in international business from Columbia University's Graduate School of Business, DesCombes received her bachelor's degree from New York University and studied interior design at Parsons School of Design in New York.

"I acquired years of experience as an international marketing and general management executive with Estee Lauder, Revlon and Young & Rubicam, working primarily in Europe," said DesCombes. "I still maintain a dual citizenship between the United States and Switzerland and have lived in Zurich. I also speak German."

Drawing on her experiences in design, fashion and international culture, DesCombes started her own business, Architectural Artworks Incorporated, over 20 years ago. The firm first opened in New York City, later moving to its current Florida location, and specializes in custom cabinetry, architectural detailing and furniture design.

DesCombes maintains a busy schedule as a national speaker and columnist. In addition, her work has appeared in numerous major consumer and trade publications. She has been a recurring designer on HGTV and has also designed showrooms for major corporations, such as Sub-Zero/Wolf and Viking Range. ▶▶

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After years of experience and dozens of award-winning designs, DesCombes understands the importance of designing living spaces that reflect each client's taste and lifestyle. "My strengths are balancing creativity and business," said DesCombes. "I am able to think functionally and aesthetically. It's very helpful to have had in-depth corporate knowledge and experience before starting this company. It taught me how to successfully work with clients and run a business."

CONTEMPORARY CREATIVITY

The client wanted a kitchen that was innovative in design and rare in elements. The small space needed to be reinvented to allow for ample storage and convenient access, while maintaining a unique appearance. The resulting kitchen is a blend of eclectic artfulness and contemporary style.

"To invent an original, but budget-conscious space, diverse pieces from our showroom displays were selected," DesCombes stated. "These pieces were then dismantled and reconstructed to create extraordinary accessories for the kitchen. A portion of the top system of a modular showpiece was used in the main part of the kitchen as the mounted amber maple display for various necessities. The bottom system of the showpiece was used for construction of the bar, with a sink incorporated into its countertop. Both items emphasized the goals of an inventive and resourceful space. The room is a great example of how to make a room original on a budget."

The cabinetry is a soothing basalt gray and a tranquil sterling gray laminate from SieMatic Corporation. Concealed behind their panels are a Sub-Zero fully-integrated refrigerator/freezer and a Miele dishwasher. The 36-inch gas cooktop is centered on the main wall with a carbon-finished Wolf oven and microwave nearby. The resourceful island complements the kitchen's overall uniqueness with its purple concrete countertop, created by Fu-Tung Cheng, which was also taken from a showroom display. Also, instead of using a variety of flooring material, the same floor was incorporated throughout the home. "It made the space cohesive and appear larger," DesCombes added. DesCombes further addressed the space issue by adding dish drawers and pull-out pantries for food storage.

Literally located in the center of the home, this kitchen allows for harmonious access from all primary living environments, including the pool. "It brings the outside in," said DesCombes. "There's a wonderful flow between the inside and outside, and the design draws you outdoors." The continuity and fluidity of space with connecting rooms perpetuates a feeling of Zen in an ingenious design. The stainless steel-look walls seamlessly draw the eyes upward to the slatted metal and rough wood beamed ceiling.

The ceiling was created by combining metal and raw wood. "It gave the room a loft effect," DesCombes said. "The ceiling didn't allow for traditional recessed lighting, so we utilized tracks for ambient, task and focal point lighting. These lighting choices best complemented the space."

A unique feature that was added to the room was several mannequin heads. "It allowed the client to incorporate more of his personal style into the kitchen," said DesCombes.

"The end result was a design that you don't normally see," DesCombes stated. "The marriage of eclectic and contemporary design brought to bear this uniquely progressive and personalized space. It's a room that's both incredibly useful and artfully functional in design." □