

INTERIOR DESIGN

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HOW DOES A DESIGNER COMPETE WITH a jaw-dropping San Francisco view that sweeps all the way to the Golden Gate Bridge and beyond? Cass Calder Smith, principal of **CCS Architecture**, did it with a kitchen.

The vista from a 12th-floor unit in a 1970's high-rise, perched atop Russian Hill, was compelling enough for the client to overlook the condominium's interior, a 1,600-square-foot disaster when she purchased it. So she enlisted Smith to redress its shortcomings.

His trump card was to rethink the narrow, walled-in galley, flipping the kitchen to center stage and incorporating the living and

galley no more

dining areas. The resulting open space balances its glass-walled corner with a sleek, grounded environment of oak, granite, and stainless steel.

"What makes a great kitchen is that it functions as the user expects, catalyzes social interaction when people share it, and is an aesthetic asset to the home," says Smith. Indeed, not only does a quartet of translucent porcelain hanging lamps cast just the inviting spell the client requested for entertaining, but the renovated kitchen is also quite the head-turner on a day-to-day basis.

To make the kitchen an integral part of the apartment, Smith →

From top: In a San Francisco condominium, the entry hall's oak floor, rift-cut white-oak walls, and photography displays act as a preview for the central kitchen's major design elements. A dropped ceiling delineates the kitchen in the open-plan space, which also embraces living and dining areas.





Clockwise from top: Architect Cass Calder Smith chose polished granite for the counter and bar as well as stainless steel for the vent column and the customized range hood. The apartment is on the 12th floor of a 1970's tower. The kitchen's oak-paneled walls, oak-veneered cabinetry, and granite counter extend into the dining area, where Aluminum Group chairs by Charles and Ray Eames surround a stainless-steel table topped in granite.



used similar materials throughout the public spaces, from the entry hall to the dining area on the opposite end. The floor is oak. For walls, he chose white-oak flooring panels rift-cut to specification in order to bring out the cleanest, straightest grain. He then sanded, finished, and stained them on-site, to prevent the wood from darkening, and installed them horizontally.

The C-shape run of cabinetry enclosing the kitchen is veneered in white oak—grain running vertically here—and not an inch of space is wasted. Outward-facing shelves hold cookbooks; cabinets store glassware. On the interior side of the C, Smith squeezed in under-counter storage, a dishwasher, a sink, four gas burners, and one of two ovens. (A second is against the back wall, next to the refrigerator in the corner.)

Still not content with storage capacity, Smith carved out six open compartments under the bar that surmounts the 17 feet of outer countertop in hardworking polished granite. Also topped in granite, the bar stands 3 feet 10 inches tall. It's the "perfect height," says Smith, to hide clutter once guests sit down for dinner.

Although Smith had to talk his client into the 18-foot-long granite counter that tops the cabinetry running from the kitchen's back wall to the end of the dining area, the feature has turned out to be extremely useful. It starts as an additional prep surface, then becomes a buffet and display space for part of her collection of black-and-white and color photography.

The gleam of the granite enlivens Smith's kitchen-dining composition, complemented by the reflectivity of the stainless steel on a "floating" range hood and a squared-off vent column. But the trick to pulling off this minimalist, clean-lined design was the walk-in pantry. ("The real secret!" Smith calls it.) A pocket door glides back to reveal floor-to-ceiling shelves stocked with snacks, spices, and less aesthetically pleasing appliances, including the microwave oven. "It's hard to make a microwave look good," he says. Even in this panoramic kitchen, some views are better left unseen.

—Anne Bogart



RANGE HOOD: MIELE. REFRIGERATOR: SUB-ZERO FREEZER COMPANY. SINK FITTINGS: KWC FAUCETS. PENDANT FIXTURES: TOBIAS GRAU. DISHWASHER: BOSCH. TABLE (DINING AREA): FANTONI THROUGH LIMN SHOWROOM. CHAIRS: HERMAN MILLER. LIGHTING CONSULTANT: CAPRICE CARTER LIGHTING DESIGN. GENERAL CONTRACTOR: MURATORE CORPORATION.