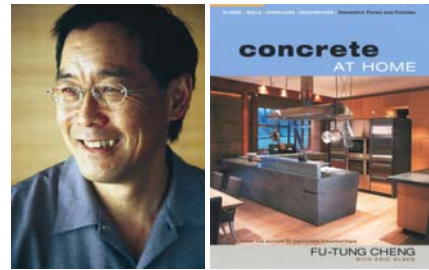


**FOR IMMEDIATE  
RELEASE:**



*Designer Fu-Tung Cheng, author of  
bestseller Concrete Countertops  
and Concrete at Home*

### **RENOVATION AND REBIRTH: Cheng Brings New Life to a Northern California Home**

LOS GATOS, CA—Home renovations allow you to improve upon elements of a house that don't reflect your personal style; it's an opportunity for rebirth of the home. When Jackie Seymour and John Gaffney, owners of a Spanish mission-style, stucco-clad house in Northern California needed to address a leaky roof, what was supposed to have been only the replacement of the entire roof soon became a major overhaul of the entire house—ultimately resulting in renewed life of their home.

However, their remodeling adventure took a bit of a detour; already in the process of demolition, Jackie and John had a change of mind. They came to realize that they were not quite *in love* with their initial architect's designs.

"I liked the architect's work, but I wanted a special house, one that more uniquely reflected my taste and style. His work is modern, but it tends to be a bit on the plain side of modern," said Jackie. "When the framing was done, I could see it was going to be the same old house, just a little bigger. I knew this was going to be my only chance to have 'my dream house'."

Shortly thereafter, they halted construction and upon the recommendation of their close friend and interior designer, Chadine Flood Gong, they called Berkeley designer Fu-Tung Cheng.

“I’ve always admired Fu-Tung’s work,” said Gong. “In fact, some years ago I recommended him to my client Sandra Slater, [for whom] he designed a beautiful concrete water piece for her living room.”

Cheng reviewed the drawings from the previous architect, and drew up new plans. Though not a studied architect, Cheng has designed six custom homes, including two made entirely of concrete; he is currently designing another home in Pennsylvania and has had extensive experience in large-scale home remodels. The scope of work for this home included redesigning nearly the entire house (with the exception of the baths and the basement): a new front façade with inset, copper clad bay windows at the living room and kitchen, a volume-enhanced, alcove ceiling with uplighting in the master bedroom suite, and a completely renovated kitchen.

“When I first decided to talk to Fu-Tung, we only planned to discuss the kitchen,” said Jackie. “Then he came to the house and had such creative ways of dealing with the space and the problem areas that I knew he was the one to make this house into something really special.”

Cheng’s unique aesthetic, a blend of custom touches, contemporary minimalism, and organic warmth with subtle Asian influence, complemented Gong’s interior design style—“design with a Japanese touch”—yet harmonizes with the home’s Spanish mission-style architecture.

“I didn’t want the home to feel like it had a split personality between the red-clay-tile-roof, adobe exterior and the clients’ preference for an Asian aesthetic,” says Cheng. “Like world music, I wanted to blend stylistic rhythms from the home’s classical Latin roots with a fusion of Asian modern.”

### **ENTRANCE TO A SERENE REFUGE**

One of the first things Jackie and John wanted to change was the entry way to the house. “Prior to the remodel, there wasn’t a welcoming area for guests. They would step from the outside [directly] into the middle of the living room,” said

Jackie. “First time visitors tended to stay outside, or once inside, they would stand close to the door. The space had a very uninviting and uncomfortable feel to it.”

Cheng designed an entrance that displays elements of art and spontaneity, while still remaining warm and inviting. Immediately upon approach of the house, the entry canopy made of glass, steel and delicately interwoven twigs that lace just beneath the glass surface, offers a visually textural welcome. A striking, zinc-clad pivot door is framed with a custom surround: shards of contrasting blue and green tiles create a brilliant mosaic that flank the base of the frame on both sides, while porcelain, crackle-glazed, hand-made tiles and olive-colored concrete frame the rest of the door.

The satin-finished, stainless steel, front door pull (by British sculptor Paul Mason) has the appearance of an ancient Egyptian spear. Possibly the most unique feature of the entry is an antique, Chinese woodcarving of a rising Phoenix—an apt metaphor for the renovation, or rebirth of the home—that punctuates the door, serving as a peep hole window.

Once inside, a soffit made of steel and translucent honeycomb Panelite hovers above the entry hall providing an inviting warm glow from recessed light fixtures. To finish off the material-rich entry, a zinc-clad column frames one side of the entrance and intersects a bank of mahogany and Plyboo bamboo cabinets.

### **PALETTE AND PATTERN**

Cheng uses splashes of vibrant color and varied woods to enrich and unify spaces throughout the home, yet balances this approach with Asian minimalism. “I love the restraint and simplicity of the Japanese aesthetic,” says Cheng.

A hand-troweled entry wall in plum-colored plaster immediately enlivens the space. Cheng counterbalances the bright plum wall with a soft, celadon green throughout the rest of the entryway, living and dining area, to offer a sense of quiet and calm. In the open kitchen, plaster walls of taupe and burnt sienna

harmonize to form a bright, engaging room with plenty of natural light pouring in from unadorned windows.

To create warmth and added texture, Cheng used various woods for cabinetry and flooring throughout. In the living and dining areas, flat-paneled Plyboo bamboo cabinetry with mahogany countertops add texture and dimension; the reddish dark tone of the mahogany calms the bright, natural-colored Plyboo bamboo. In the kitchen, custom Plyboo bamboo cabinetry brightens the already sun-filled room from floor to ceiling windows that outlook to lush greenery of the Los Gatos Mountains. Brazilian Cherry Wood flooring throughout (featuring a dark brown grain in contrast to a reddish-brown background) adds an elegant, rich look and feel to the space.

### **A BALANCE OF ELEMENTS**

The elements of nature—Fire, Water, Earth, Metal and Wood—are often incorporated into Cheng’s custom homes and interiors. In particular, Cheng is known for his signature “earth” element—concrete.

“I had seen Fu-Tung’s book *Concrete Countertops* before. At one time I had even fantasized about doing some concrete countertops myself—but it was just a fantasy,” said Jackie. “I love what Fu-Tung did with the use of concrete in our home.”

A custom-built, corner fireplace of concrete and plaster draws the eye into the living room. The stepped charcoal-colored, concrete hearth sits below an eggshell-colored plaster fireplace facade with geometric, steel-framed vents.

“I wanted to introduce a sense of richness without being extravagant. Concrete, stainless steel, plaster and other natural materials have been used to create an environment that’s tactile, earthy and sophisticated—all at the same time,” Cheng explains.

A custom Plyboo bamboo buffet with a celadon-colored Cheng Geocrete™ concrete countertop wraps around the wall from the dining area to the kitchen. In an unexpected turn into the kitchen-side of the adjoining wall, the countertop serves as a cook surface with an integrated Gaggenau cooktop and oven. Brass inlays function as trivets for hot pots on both sides of the cooktop. A wall of multicolor China Gold slate is both a backsplash and display of soft tones of gold, grey, blue and rust hues.

The formidable kitchen features a Cheng custom-plastered hood, which has a built-in utensil rod and custom steel shelving that keep spices close to the cook. Stainless steel counters merge with concrete countertops in a juxtaposition of materials. Custom bamboo cabinetry with stainless bar pulls or tab pulls offer plenty of concealed storage, while maintaining a clean, uncluttered look in the kitchen space.

The prep-island, one of Cheng's newest designs, supports a large three-inch thick mahogany food prep table cantilevered over a sculptural, freestanding terracotta-toned concrete pedestal with integral sink. The conical-shaped unit houses a container for compost, a garbage bin and a disposal. Directly below the mahogany top, a cast-iron steel grate forms a low platform for storage just above the floor.

"The scale of the concrete island was deliberately made large and thick to anchor the kitchen," explains Cheng.

"People really want differentiation, something personal, something custom," says Cheng, who artfully worked a sense of surprise into the concrete with an ammonite fossil inlay and tile fragments. "And concrete can do that for them."

### **BRINGING THE OUTSIDE IN**

Ensuring a seamlessness of design elements, Cheng was very conscious of maintaining a connection between the exterior and the interior with his selection of materials.

For instance, the woven matte substrate used for the front porch lights is the same material used as the gallery wall in the entry hall. Also, zinc details reoccur throughout the home as a link to the front door; it is used as an accent at the end of the stair cabinet and for the column in the entry hall.

In keeping with Japanese sensibilities, a decorative alcove, or *tokonoma*, that is typically reserved as a place to hang a picture or calligraphic poem, connects the kitchen and master bedroom suite. Inside the *tokonoma*, a floating steel shelf above a China Gold slate base echoes the steel used in the other living areas as well as the slate used in the kitchen.

Another Japanese reference includes the installation of sliding doors, traditionally used in Japanese homes to divide and conceal interiors. The sliding doors installed at the entry into the master bedroom suite and pantry doors are panel laminates that have the appearance of woven bear grass, duplicating the natural, earthy element of the woven twigs at the exterior canopy.

The most obvious visual connection throughout the remodel is Cheng's signature use of concrete and colorful hand-painted tile inlays. The concrete and tiles at the front entrance are reintroduced in the dining room and kitchen as concrete countertops and as inlays in the countertops and wood floor.

But the use of concrete isn't the singular, most significant feature of this redesign. Cheng explains, "Throughout the whole remodel, the craftsmanship and joinery of *all* materials, colors and textures have come together to transform this once typical Spanish mission-style home into home that exudes a sense of quiet, understated elegance."

"Not only did I get everything I wanted, I got so much more. It's beautiful, artistic and welcoming," said Jackie. "Like art, there is so much to see: captivating touches that don't yell at you, but wait patiently for your eye to engage."

Jackie is also excited to report: "I'm a quiet person by nature and I normally don't like parties. But, I enjoy my house so much, I find myself wanting to host parties now!"

## **COMPANY INFORMATION**

Based in Berkeley, CA, Cheng Design is a creative team of architects, artists, and designers, providing complete residential design services nationwide.

Fu-Tung Cheng, principal of Cheng Design, is an award-winning designer and author of the best-selling *Concrete Countertops* and *Concrete at Home*. He was recently recognized by the *Kitchen and Bath Business* (K+BB) magazine as one of the Top 50 industry leaders to influence the kitchen and bath industry over the past 50 years.

For information on Cheng Design services or products, please call (510) 849-3272 or visit [www.chengdesign.com](http://www.chengdesign.com) or [www.concreteexchange.com](http://www.concreteexchange.com).

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### **Media Contact:**

**Deborah Meyer**

**510 849.3272 x 201**

**[deborah@chengdesign.com](mailto:deborah@chengdesign.com)**