

LUXURY KITCHENS

Qualitative Research Study | June 2021

NKBA



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PROJECT OVERVIEW

Project Overview

RESEARCH PURPOSE

NKBA explored the luxury kitchen design category to discover:

- + The difference between a luxury kitchen and a nice high-end kitchen
- + What the luxury client seeks that designers can provide
- + What helps equip designers to attract clients at this level

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

- + Showcase a range of kitchens considered to be luxury
- + Explore the client journey, looking for opportunities to drive trust and efficiency in the renovation process
- + Debrief designers to reveal tips and strategies for success in delivering luxury at any level

METHODOLOGY

NKBA recruited designers through referral who identified recent renovations at the luxury (\$150,000-\$600,000) investment level

Research Scope

- + 13 kitchens
- + 21 60-to-90-minute Zoom interviews (9 designers, 12 homeowners, conducted December 2020 through February 2021)

Executive Summary

THE LUXURY DIFFERENCE

Luxury is a differentiated renovation experience that provides an elevated living experience.

It's not the amount spent — two clients can make the same significant investment in a renovation, but one is lovely and expensive while the other exudes luxury.

Luxury happens when:

- + Proven designers navigate clients skillfully and efficiently
- + Numerous possibilities are optimized (needs, preferences, values, the art and the science, expertise, materials, products)
- + Options are intentionally curated and executed to deliver an elevated living experience, with less risk and regret

THE LUXURY KITCHEN

The ultimate confluence of authentic and original design, personal experience and flawless function.

A luxury kitchen is...

An experience: How it makes the homeowner feel and how it serves their family's needs

Personal: A clear reflection of the client's personality and lifestyle

Simplicity: Everything has its discreet place and there's no room for the extraneous

Beauty: A beautiful kitchen emerges from a layered design, a harmonious blend of color, materials and surfaces. Natural and organic elements combine to showcase artisan details, creating a unique and compelling space that is timeless.

LUXURY IS WITHIN REACH

Showcase participants provide valuable intelligence for achieving luxury and the luxe experience.

The interviews and experience behind the 2021 Luxury Showcase Kitchens:

- + Provide inspiration for enduring needs, design competencies and exciting areas of innovation
- + Sharpen designers' knowledge, tools and processes needed to drive better outcomes and to attract higher-end projects
- + Explore the mindset and motivations of luxury clients to accelerate trust in the relationship

Meet the Designers



ANNE-MARIE BRUNET, CMKBD, Sheridan Interiors, Cornwall, Ontario. Anne-Marie is the owner and principal designer of her firm, founded in 1997. An NKBA-Certified Master Kitchen & Bath Designer, she also holds certificates in lighting expertise and aging in place.



NAR BUSTAMANTE, Nar Design Group, Sacramento, Calif. After beginning his career in construction, Nar founded a design company informed by extensive travels throughout Europe, North Africa and North America, which influenced his appreciation of global art, culture and architecture.



BRENDAN FLANIGAN, Brendan Flanigan Interiors Inc., Saratoga Springs, N.Y. & Manhattan. Brendan's passion for K&B design was influenced by exposure to the hospitality industry at a young age. His design process focuses on listening to and drawing out the clients' style, with unexpected finishes, installations, and hands-on attention to every detail.



ALYSON O'HANLON, CKD, Clive Christian NJ LLC, Tenafly, N.J. Owner of this prestigious cabinetry showroom in Manhattan's A&D Building, Alyson collaborates with upscale architects and interior designers throughout the metropolitan area, bringing a high level of elegance and function to her projects.



CINDY MCCLURE, CKD, GrossMueller's Design, Washington, D.C. Cindy has designed award-winning residential and small commercial projects domestically and internationally. She's an adjunct professor of interior design at Virginia's Marymount University.



JAN NEIGES, CMKBD, Highlands Ranch, Colo. For more than two decades, Jan has emphasized meticulous attention to detail and best-in-class customer service to realize her clients' dream spaces. She serves as a member of the NKBA Board of Directors.



SARAH ROBERTSON, AKBD, Studio Dearborn, Mamaroneck, N.Y. Sarah pursued her design passion after a corporate career, and built her studio based on tailored, elegant spaces and intense attention to detail. She won consecutive Best Overall Kitchen honors from NKBA in 2019-2020.



PETER SALERNO, CMKBD, Peter Salerno Inc., Wyckoff, N.J. A lifelong student of architecture and design, Peter worked in his family's K&B business before starting his own in 1997. He has worked throughout the U.S., Canada and Europe, and he has been recognized with more than 35 national design awards.



VICKY SERANY, Southern Studio Interior Design, Cary, N.C. Using fresh combinations of texture, pattern and color, Vicky creates "livable luxury" for clients, specializing in vacation homes along the East Coast. She was named 2020 Designer of the Year by Southern Living magazine.

*WHAT IS
LUXURY IN THE
CONTEXT
OF KITCHENS?*

The Language of Luxury Kitchens

“Luxury” means many different things to designers and their clients ...



Designers Say Luxury is...

AN EXPERIENCE

“Luxury isn’t a look. It’s not a product, buyer, budget, appliance. Luxury is a feel, it’s an experience. It’s a process. It’s buying into a process that will deliver an outcome, with a client who is discerning, who knows it when they see it – someone who gets it.”

— Nar Bustamante

PERFORMANCE

“When you walk into your kitchen, it should ground you, nourish you, be intuitive, be brighter, there are palpable effects. Those things foster your performance and everyone’s performance in that space — they provide better quality of life.”

— Brendan Flanigan

CREATIVE COLLABORATION

“Luxury unites the designer and client pushing for something original, that hasn’t been done before, that speaks to how life will be lived in this space. Because it’s not following a rule book (stock cabinetry, stock sizes), it creates something fluid that flows with their life.”

— Brendan Flanigan

PERSONAL

“Luxury clients don’t chase trends. They have clearly defined what’s important to them, their likes and dislikes. We are designing for what they love.”

— Vicky Serany

Clients Say Luxury is...

PAMPERING

“Luxury is about pampering — getting all the high-end tools and placing them in the right spot. How it looks, how it feels, how it operates for you!”

SIMPLICITY

“When it’s as simple and streamlined as it can be. It’s not luxury unless you have every appliance that makes things easy. Functional appliances you can count on to bring a meal to life effortlessly, everything at your fingertips, even knives. It’s efficient, simplified, solid — it can be showy, but it doesn’t have to be. It can look ‘luxurious,’ but living luxuriously is making life easier and effortless.”

SERVICE

“White-glove level of service — we wanted American Express service not Holiday Inn — get the plumbers out here fast!”

BEAUTY/AUTHENTICITY

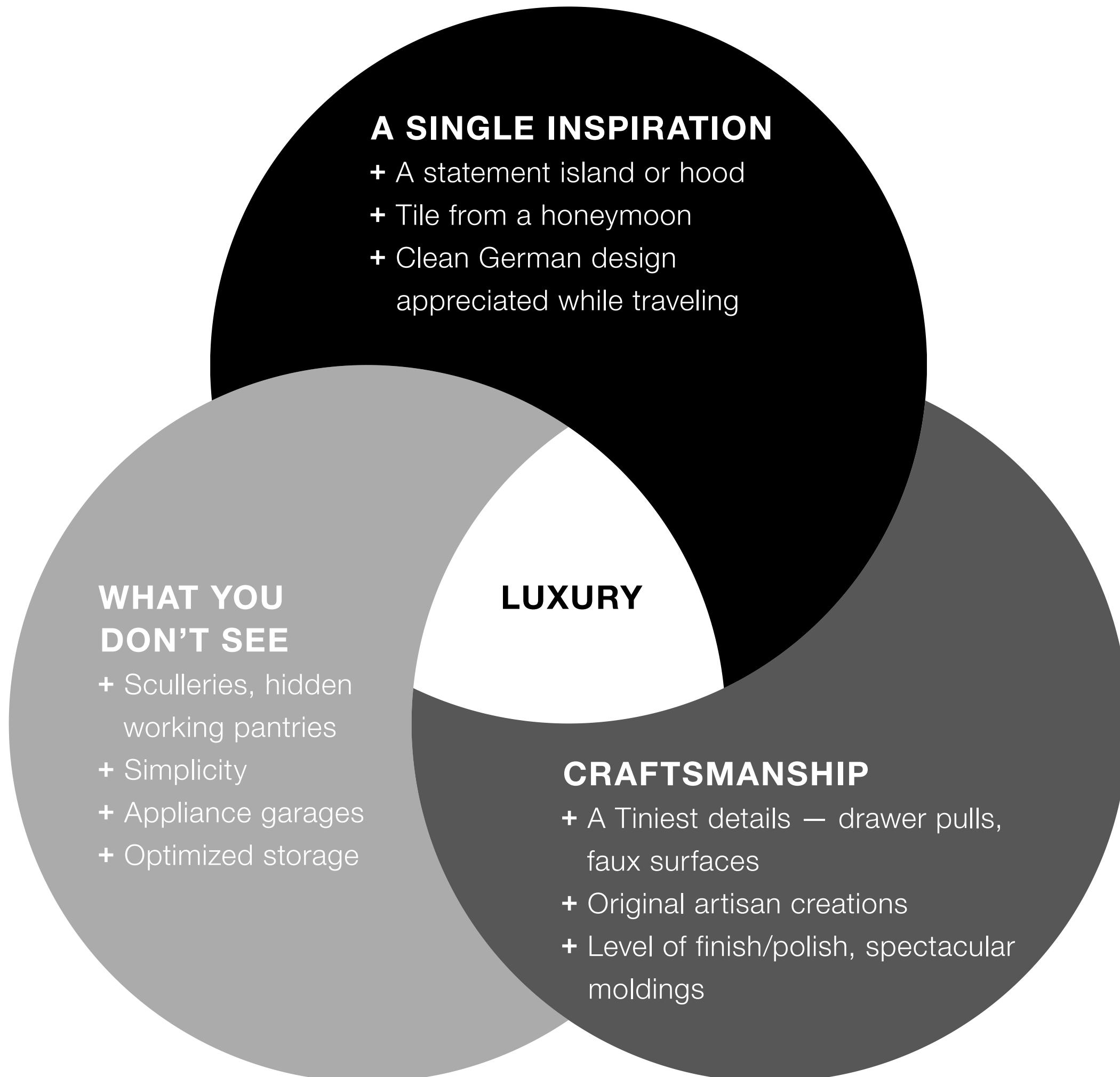
“It’s like going to a name-brand hotel that is well-appointed compared to a 100-year-old hotel in Paris. You can see a depth, quality, weightiness and beauty — it’s the real thing. That’s why natural elements are so important. It’s not perfect, poured and formed. Craftsmanship, wisdom, knowledge, effort — and flaws! Flaws make things unique and more beautiful. Brand new and shiny versus someone who has thought through and loved each element.”

Luxury is Both an Art and Science...

In an intentional and holistic integration of left and right brains, client needs and designer expertise meet to create an experience greater than the sum of its parts.



Exploring Some of the Layers of Luxury



Luxury is... A Single Inspiration

- + A backsplash inspired by a tile from a honeymoon;
- + Clean looks and German design appreciated while traveling;
- + Statement islands;
- + Statement range hoods.



Top: Sleek, clean lines of German cabinetry with detailed craftsmanship create a flush look and feel.

Bottom: A souvenir tile from the honeymoon inspires the backsplash and spirit of the kitchen.



Luxury is... Original Craftsmanship

- + Tiniest details — drawer pulls, faux surfaces;
- + Original artisan creations;
- + Level of finish/polish, spectacular moldings.

Top: Reclaimed railroad spikes from the property, stripped, treated and distressed to use as cabinet pulls; 7-layer custom paint process for distressed cabinetry.

Bottom: Artisan range hoods, window views optimized for ambience rather than matching.

Luxury is... What You DON'T See

- + Sculleries, hidden working pantry;
- + Simplicity;
- + Appliance garages;
- + Optimized storage.



Top: Oak wall hides a working pantry and children's homework area.

Bottom: Appliance garages hide a world of clutter from counters and islands.

Scalable Ideas from These Luxury Kitchens

ENDURING NEEDS

1. Timeless functional floorplans
2. Subtle elegance, soothing palettes
3. Light/white kitchens
4. Cabinetry from enduring time periods — Regency, Edwardian
5. Entertain-in-kitchens
6. Multiple cooks, island space
7. Functional slate floors
8. Easily updated whimsy
9. Chandeliers over island
10. Enduring textures, metals — real brass, with its patina, will still be loved in 20 years

TRANSFERABLE TO MAINSTREAM

1. Think “Feeling First” (light, flow, space)
2. Do YOU! (Avoid trends)
3. Take chances/pops of fun
4. Create experiences, scenarios
5. Design with “easy to update” in mind
6. Cost-efficient luxury (molding, Etsy)
7. Find unexpected uses
8. Splurge strategically
9. Separate sinks (cleaning, serving)
10. Accessible designer experience

EXCITING INNOVATION POSSIBILITIES

1. Customizable refrigeration
2. Modular refrigeration
3. Customizable oven banks
4. Range hood power and style
5. Cabinetry solutions and finishes
6. Hyper-personalization: Cold-brew coffee keg taps
7. High-end, no-fuss
8. Sink workstations: 7-foot galley with interchangeable components; faucet function
9. Trades as artisan craftsmanship
10. Luxury segment education

BECOMING
A LUXURY
DESIGNER

Luxury Designers ‘Earn It’ One Kitchen at a Time

Experience Behind These Luxury Designers

YEARS OF EXPERIENCE

- + 13 to 40 years

TYPICAL KITCHEN PROJECT SIZE

- + \$80k – \$250k

DIVERSE BACKGROUNDS

- + Self-taught to design school
- + Contractor to Pre-Med to management consultant
- + Sometimes second career

CERTIFICATIONS

- + NKBA CKBD, CMKBD
- + ASID, NCIDQ
- + CAPS, CKBR

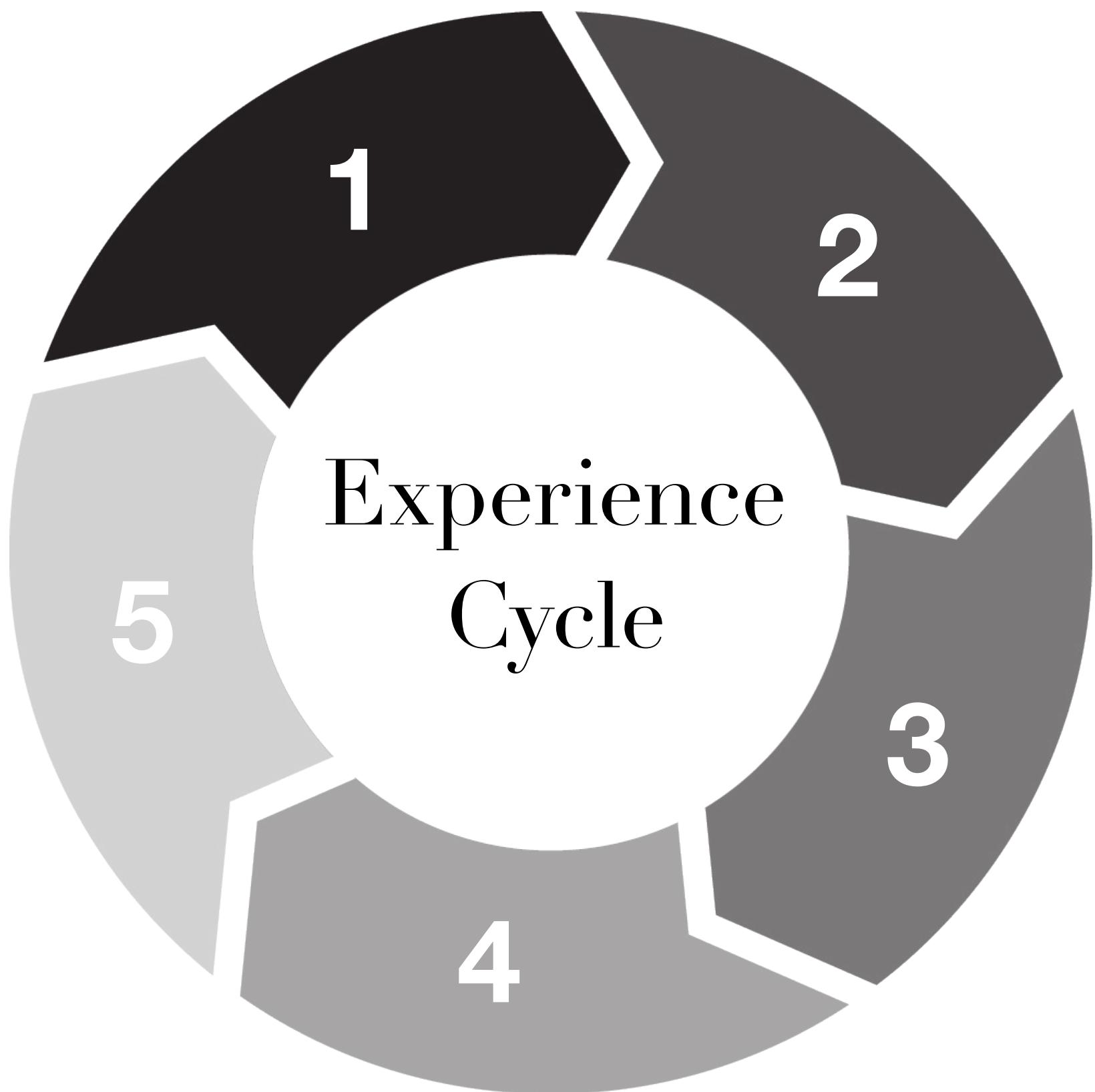
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You can't hunt luxury; they'll run from you.
It's a tight-knit club. All they do is notice.
You can't knock on their doors. You have to walk
the life. Take incremental steps with each client,
proving that you're the person, one client at time.
The work finds you.

Nar Bustamante

Experience Life Cycle

Equipping Designers to Attract Luxury Work



1. KNOW THYSELF

- + Really analyze yourself and your portfolio to sharpen your story

2. KNOW THE CLIENT, DEFINE THE ROLES

- + Know your clients better than they know themselves to build trust faster and tailor your service to their needs

3. REFRESH & REINVENT

- + Fight complacency: continuous renewal is a discipline

4. BUILD / LEVERAGE YOUR RESOURCES

- + You're only as good as the resources you bring to each project

5. DEBRIEF AND REPEAT

- + Honor the outcome and the growth of each project by debriefing success

Self Awareness is a Strong Start



DEVELOP YOUR CONFIDENCE, BORN OF EXPERIENCE – ABSOLUTELY OWN YOUR WALK OF LIFE, YOUR DEEP PHILOSOPHY

“You have to know your ‘why’... your oath to your clients and yourself. Believe in yourself, invest in yourself, and then you’re investing in everyone around you. That’s what transmits. Everything around me is quality — people, food, experiences. I deliver quality; people know me as that. That makes me trustworthy. Carry that through, deliver more each time and don’t disappoint. I know what I can deliver because of my experience — I know what I’m willing to do for people. I know how to get there.” — **Nar Bustamante**

FIND A NICHE

“Storage was not the niche I wanted to be all about. I was passionate about millwork — crown moldings, cabinetry design, storage. Through social media, the storage kept resonating. I realized it when people kept coming back to me for my storage story. Have a story about what makes your work special to build your brand.” — **Sarah Robertson, AKBD**

HAVE A PROCESS, TRUST THE PROCESS

“It’s a promise I make on my card, my signature line: ‘I don’t just design, I guide you through the process every step of the way, becoming your trusted advisor.’” — **Jan Neiges, CMKBD**

OUTSOURCE YOUR GAPS/HIRE TO STRENGTHS

“Invest in a PR firm — they develop our overall strategy, place us on panels, in local media, on social media. Our projects have a 20-year life span at least, we have to be out nurturing relationships and contacts to find the next business.”

— Vicky Serany

Know the Clients, Maybe Better Than They Know Themselves

“Make it personal – know their names, their kids’ names, who comes to visit, who comes to cook, bake, entertain. People don’t care what you know until they know how much you care. Trust is 80%, price is 20.”

— Peter Salerno, CMKBD





Luxury Clients Share A Common Motivation

EARNED INDULGENCE

- They've waited a long time for this, often five to 25 years.
- They work hard, and they know what they want.
- It's their "forever home" or "for as long as we can" home.
- They know how they want to live in the kitchen, they know it will be expensive, they know they'll get what they pay for, they're not going to cut corners, they know it will be worth it.
- They're not remotely concerned about resale value, it's about tailoring the look, feel and function of their kitchen to their exact lifestyle and life stage.

Characteristics of the Luxury Client



DISCERNING

- + Life experience
- + Traveled
- + Educated, bringing ideas
- + Seek and recognize quality

“They recognize luxury as an experience they don’t get anywhere else – like the usefulness and value of the classic white Chanel blouse.” — Alyson O’Hanlon, CKD

COLLABORATIVE

- + Good listeners
- + Research, prepared for renovation
- + Creative, willing to dig in
- + Willing to analyze themselves, how they live in a space

“They did their homework. They knew more about me than I knew myself; where I was born, accolades, other projects, references. They cared about what experience they wanted to have.” — Nar Bustamante

VALUE & TRUST EXPERTISE

- + Value design, seeking opinions
- + Trust the process
- + Commit to reasonable timelines

“My 13 kitchens are nothing compared to the number Vicky has done. I appreciate her history, wisdom, suggestions. She points to possibilities... she helps me avoid rushing the wrong decisions.” — Homeowner

OUTCOME DRIVEN

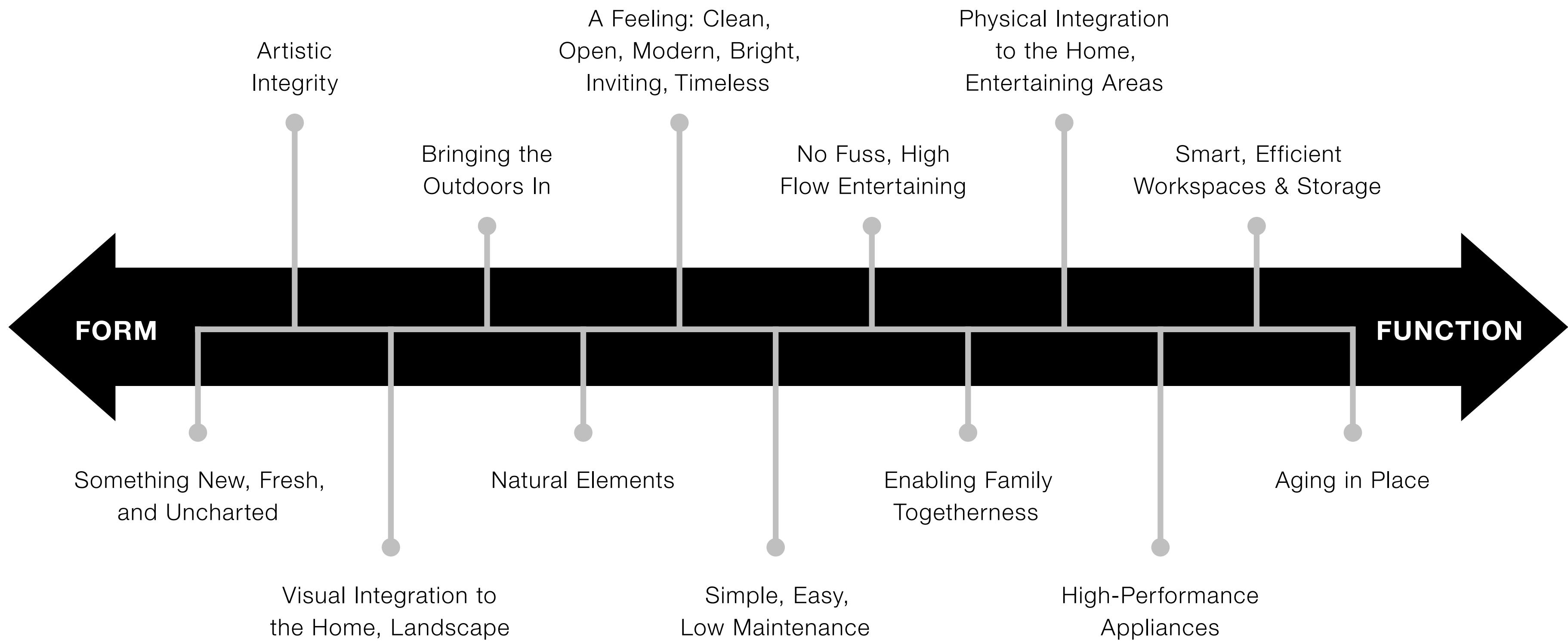
- + Have a vision
- + Emphasize vision over products and features
- + Have expectations of cost to outcome
- + Open to investing

“High-end seeks safety; luxury doesn’t. If they don’t like it, they’ll rip it out. High-end consumers are about checklists and dollar amounts. Luxury is about fluidity.”
— Brendan Flanigan



Unique Needs Tend Toward Form or Function

Luxury clients want both form and function, beauty and performance, materials and efficiency. But ultimately, their priorities fall along a continuum that can help designers understand how to “meet them where they are” and add complementary value and vision.





Styles Range from Statement to Understated

Client tastes cover the board, but a pattern exists in the ***level of statement*** they design into the kitchen.

Some clients appreciate statement pieces.

Others prefer understated elegance, seeking balance, serenity or calm as the statement.



Turning Insights into Tools



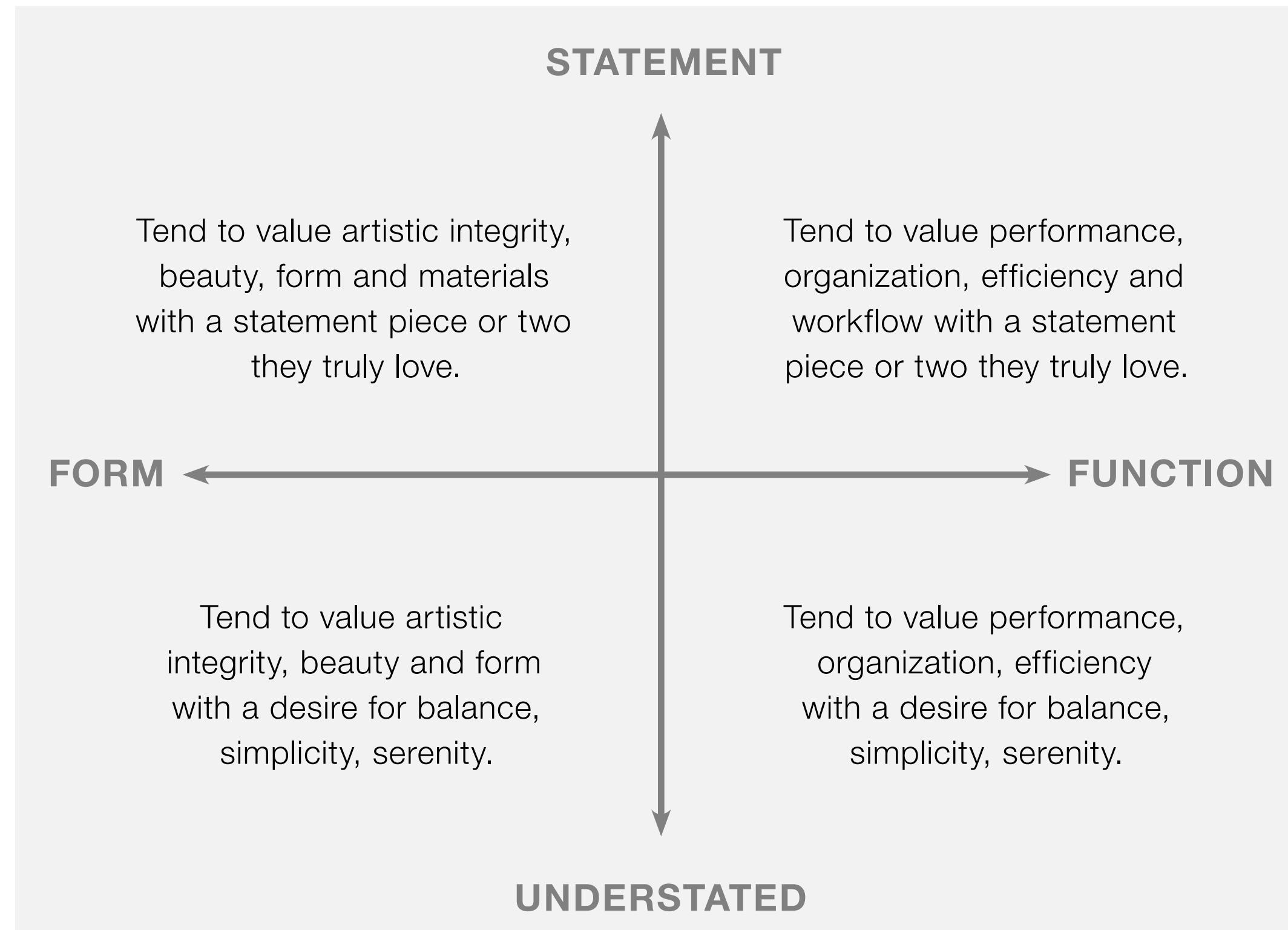
EXPLORING PATTERNS in these client experiences may help create shortcuts that help designers “get warm faster” with the next luxury client.



Toolkit Illustration: Client Mindset Roadmap

This does not mean to label or oversimplify — each project has a complex bundle of needs, but homing in quicker on client priorities can accelerate the process of clients feeling heard and cared for.

THE LOOK OF THE PROJECT



Outcomes bring a vision to life better than starting points.

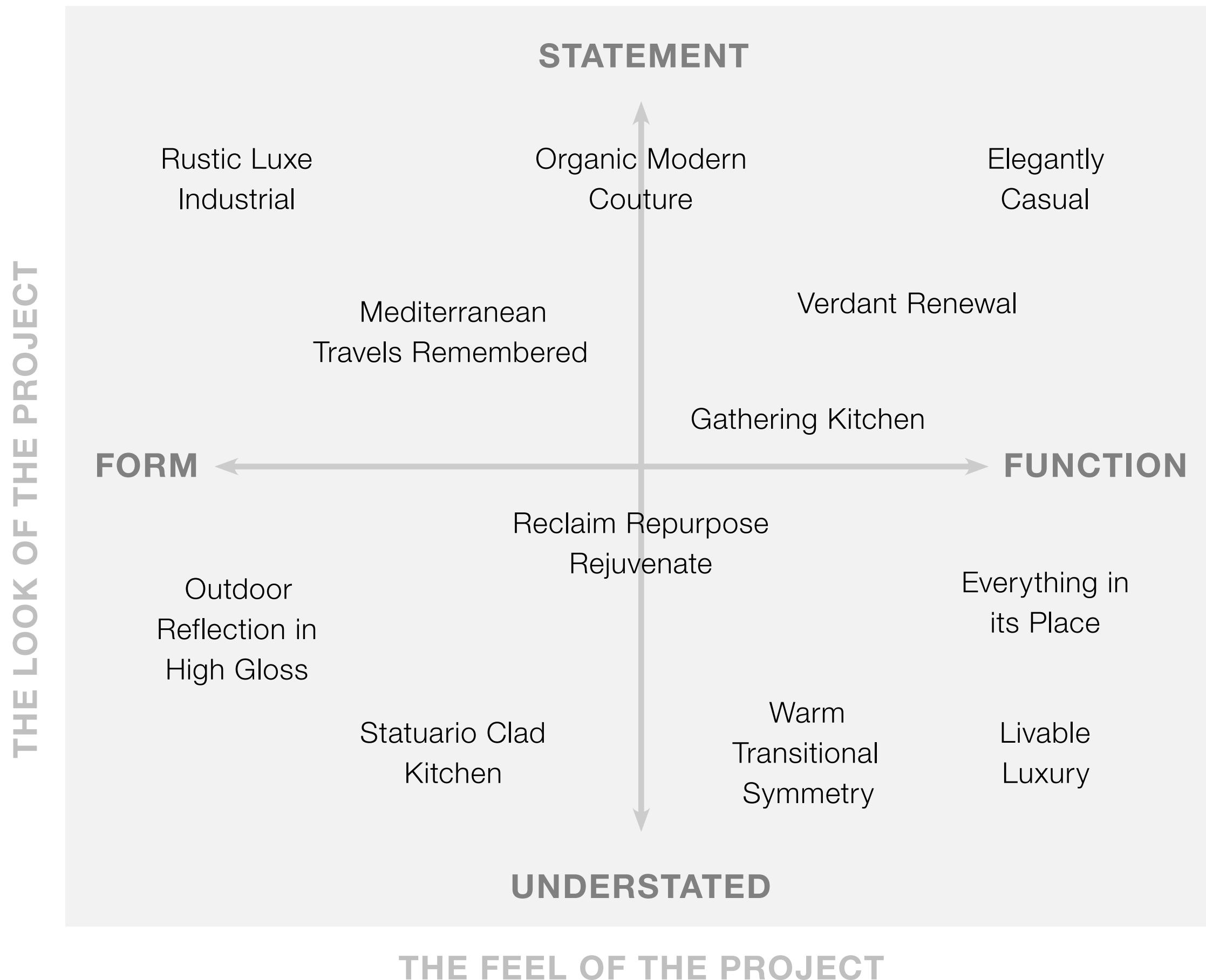
A review of these kitchen outcomes reveals a balance of priorities some homeowners find hard to articulate.

Mapping client priorities (form vs. function) and preferences (statement vs. understated) may accelerate trust by meeting clients where they are and bringing in complimentary value when they are ready for it.

How it Works: Connect Faster



There is no “Winning Spot” on the map. These outcomes simply reveal how early client intuition can help the designer find and enhance the client’s vision.



Focus early conversations in the client’s “comfort quadrant” until they feel heard and understood.

Bring ideas when they’re ready from other quadrants to add value in ways they might have missed.

Consider ways to tailor your offering even further:

- + How might this understanding clarify initial scope?
- + How might it direct portfolio pictures to show first, later, last? Appropriate references?
- + How might it help reveal who needs help visualizing versus who needs product education?
- + Other ideas?

Toolkit: Engagement Profile



What kind of support is your client really looking for? Assessing his or her ideal level of engagement or involvement can help the designer tailor the right luxury experience for each project.

DO IT DESPITE ME

These clients aren't *difficult*, they are often *talented*. It may not be easy, but it will be spectacular and stretch your portfolio.

- + Have vision and related experience, want some control
- + Will value artisans, specialists
- + May require plug-and-play collaboration with their hand-picked trades
- + Finesse is critical, like the perfect waiter anticipating the right time with the right solution

DO IT WITH ME

- + Often designers hiring designers; have vision, want creative collaboration
- + Seek the consummate facilitator with complementary skills to put a unique fingerprint on the kitchen; chemistry and synergy are critical
- + Artisans and specialists will be important, valued, and aligned on role sort

DO IT FOR ME

- + Need help casting the vision, pre-work, Houzz assignments
- + Need support visualizing concepts
- + Seek the most curated experience, less likely to search and shop
- + Manage logistics, protect them from overwhelming experiences

Advice for Clients *from* Clients

10 lessons from across the finish line.



PLANNING

1. Invest the time: Don't rush — it's not about getting there faster. Use images if you have trouble articulating what you like or don't like.
2. Really analyze yourself: Think hard and enjoy time reviewing what you find beautiful, or what specifically makes things feel easy or joyful.

DESIGN

3. Absolutely use a designer: They will prevent mistakes that cost more than they cost.
4. Reclaim space wherever you can: Repurposing unused garage, pantry, nooks can be transformational.
5. Design in form (pretty!) and function (smart!).
6. Leave space for space's sake.
7. Let your light shine: Layers for work, mood and ambience.

IMPLEMENTATION

8. Build good relationships with trades and subs — contractors make the difference between a smooth project and a disaster.
9. Respect the process. Be patient, trust your designer, allow time to leverage each contributor's expertise.
10. Beware decision fatigue — you will cut corners you'll regret; lean into the designer to back you up and prevent late-game carelessness.



Fight Complacency: Continuous Renewal is a Discipline

INSPIRATION

- + **Grow outside of your field** – travel, architecture in Paris, French Quarter, webinars at the Louvre, Guggenheim, study jewelry, furniture, cars, watches music, nature, shapes forms, curves.
- + **Follow edgy designers that inspire you** – Beata Heuman, David Rockwell, Michael Smith, John Derian.

COLLABORATION

- + **Get Coaching!** You have to feel comfortable in this space. Sometimes you feel like you're not worthy, outside your comfort zone. Earlier on, I thought there was a secret design rulebook others had that I didn't. Use trial and error, be vulnerable, don't be afraid to take risks. But first of all, feel worthy of it.
- + **Build a team of thought partners.** I asked showrooms and subs about other designers like me and started meeting these designers for regular coffee and idea sharing. Get a mentor.

INVEST IN THE BUSINESS

- + **We put the drafting boards in the attic**, started using laser measurement, and hired a college professor to train all employees on CAD, improving the way we visualized for our clients, showing 2D, 3-color examples.

EDUCATION

- + **Go to industry shows**, listen to panelists, look for webinars like how to ventilate a range hood. The fastest way to build trust is to be educated. I reach out to reps for education and help.
- + **I so love KBIS and IBS every year** – we see and hear about new products much faster than our showrooms. Incredible education in short period of time.

You're Only as Good as the Resources You Bring to the Table



LEVERAGE INDUSTRY RESOURCES

- + Budgeting estimators
- + Zillow
- + Remodelers Cost vs. Value Report
- + 3rd party resources
- + KBIS inspiration, product resources
- + Commercial Kitchen industry shows what's coming

COMPLIMENTARY ALLIANCES

- + Partner with upscale resources around design (e.g., wallpaper importer from France)
- + Upholstered goods, barstools
- + Share services such as photoshoots, showroom combined photography

PROTECT TRADE RELATIONSHIPS

- + Value and reward proven contractors on the journey with you who aren't transactional

ARSENAL OF TRULY SPECIAL SPECIALISTS

- + Local Adirondack guy for stick work
- + Master faux-finish artist
- + Live-edge table artists
- + Tile setter with immaculate mitres

Honor the Outcome and the Growth by Debriefing Success



MAKE A MOMENT

Make a moment for positive closure — big reveal, road trip, open house, photo shoot.

SERVE

Serve clients the best you can and ask *for the referrals*.

SHARE YOUR STORIES

Photograph every single project for your portfolio, Instagram, Facebook, local magazines.

FORMALLY ARCHIVE

“I design and produce a book. It serves the designer’s portfolio, celebrates the client and the work, acts as a sales/referral piece, and helps archive and protect the creative process behind the kitchen (factually who created what, listing the trades, resources, roles, involved, etc.). I make a book — the intellectual property of the design — I memorialize and codify who did what pieces of the design to protect myself. Source page, vendor page, who did what.”

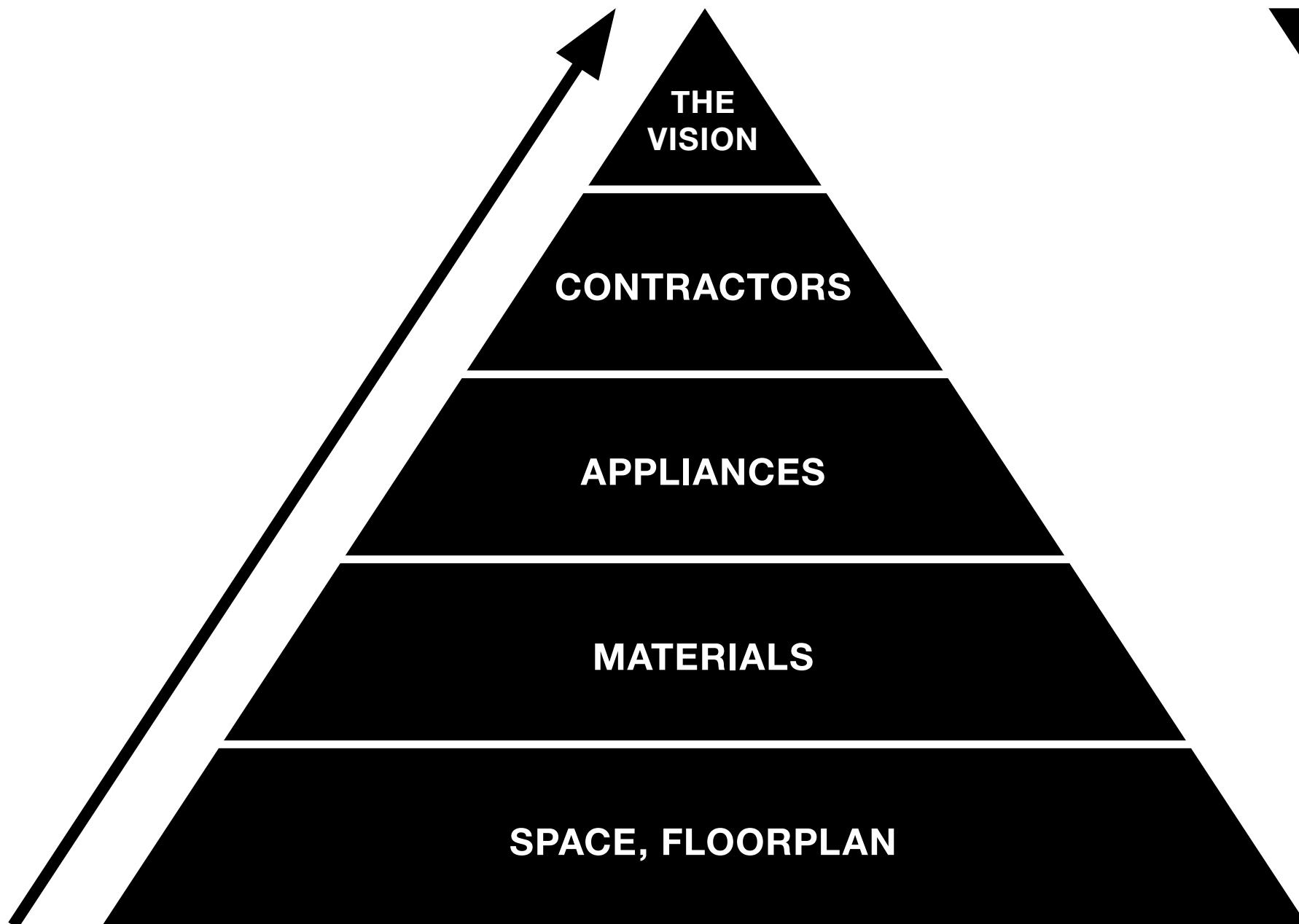
*LUXURY
DESIGNER
BEST
PRACTICES*

Luxury Designers Flip the Pyramid

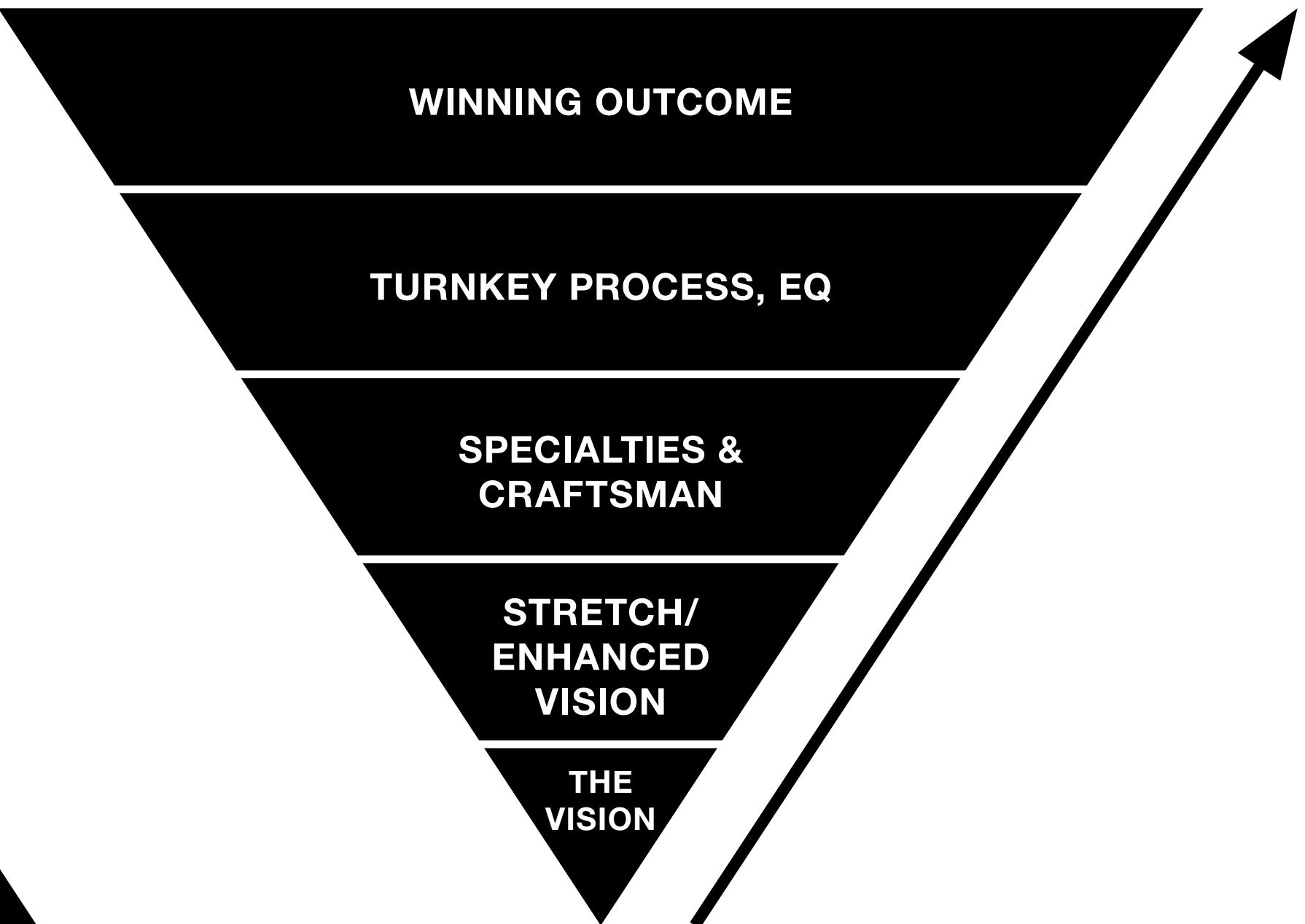
Luxury design STARTS where most kitchen renovations stop.

"A faux luxury client is only interested in the fixtures — high-end appliances, certain cabinets. Real luxury clients know they'll get that. They want to know how you will deliver, how you will take care of them, and what they can expect from you."

Typical clients focus on the pieces and parts to arrive at a vision.



Luxury designers start with this vision and develop it to the best outcome, knowing the pieces and parts are assumed.



Other Relationship Builders

EXCEEDING EXPECTATIONS

“Helping me understand trade-offs, being informed and choiceful about investments, creative and original problem solving, bringing a couple of game-changers.”

PRIDE IN OUTCOMES

Committed to getting the tiniest details right, down to integrated sink foot pedals; storage optimized to the last platter; energized, personally invested, leveraging skills and experience of the trades; bringing the whole team together for closure, celebration, photo shoots.

RESPECTING OUR TIME

“She never wasted our time. She was always prepared – she had our drawings, samples, detailed notes, she went over the architectural drawings and even corrected the builder with exact dimensions.”

PRAISE

“Chemistry matters – she understands what we mean; explained things on our level. She read, coached and praised us – ‘you guys are doing great!’ You get decision fatigue after a while.”

LOSING GRACEFULLY

“We had to pare back and cut the bar. It was out of budget and wasn’t critical. We bought our own beverage cooler and the designer said, ‘wait, let me design something to blend it in.’ Even compromise can stay on vision.”

Ask the Designers: Tips from Starting Smart to Finishing Strong

1. QUALIFY EFFICIENTLY

Have a consistent, efficient working sales approach

2. BUILD TRUST FASTER

Strategies for protecting your clients, protecting yourself

3. ALIGN ON VISION

Quick project scopes, leverage technology, break your own design

4. BUDGET & EXPECTATION SETTING

Sharpen resources, choose your camp, run into the ambush

5. COMMUNICATION

Streamline, systemize and cc: and remember, clients mirror you

6. WORKING THROUGH CONFLICT

How you recover from failure may be the winningest moment

7. FINISH STRONG

Anticipate, celebrate, gift and archive

2021 NKBA
LUXURY
KITCHEN
SHOWCASE

Rustic Luxe with Industrial Mélange

DESIGNED BY ANNE-MARIE BRUNET, CMKBD

After building their dream log home escape 20 years ago, these clients wanted to upgrade the kitchen to match.

GOAL: A comfortable, unpretentious, down-to-earth, lived-in gathering place that reflects the local land and clients' values.

SHOWCASE ELEMENTS

- + French Royal Blue Lacanche Range is the star of the show
- + Artisan craftsmanship
- + 7-layer paint process for distressed custom cabinets
- + Laser-cut steel panels bring the outdoors in and convert stair banister to art backdrop
- + Scribed cabinets adhere to log construction
- + Live-edge tables with jeweled enamel embellishment
- + Porcelain paint effect on the wood range hood
- + Refinished and texturized aluminum doors that blend in
- + Cabinet and drawer pulls are reclaimed and recast railroad spikes from the property





————— “ —————

Luxury clients trust the process.
They gave me three to four weeks to dream.
They made me feel valued, and I hope they
knew I valued them. Micromanaging won’t
get the same type of outcome.

Anne-Marie Brunet, CMKBD



Showcase Elements

This dream escape log home deserved a dreamy kitchen to match.

Bottom-Left: Laser-cut steel panels bring the outdoors in and convert stair bannister to art backdrop; industrial iron piping overcomes electrical challenges with log homes.

Bottom-Right: Seven-layer paint process for distressed custom cabinets; reclaimed area railroad spikes stripped and recast as drawer pulls.



————— “ —————

We don't like budgeting because we
don't like compromise. We weren't
focused on resale value, just enjoyment.
We warned everyone: this will not be a
cookie-cutter approach — are you in or out?

The Homeowner



Showcase Elements

Left: White aluminum doors are texturized to blend in; live-edge tables and jeweled enamel embellishment add to the rustic vibe.

Right: Lacanche range with range hood 'porcelainized' to match; scribed cabinets adhere to log structure.



Everything in its Place

DESIGNED BY SARAH ROBERTSON, AKBD

Personalized storage makes this design work perfectly for a busy family, customized to accommodate specific tools and small appliances, serving pieces and more.

Goal: To build a fun, comfortable and casual kitchen where the homeowners could entertain family and friends in their brand new country modern home.

SHOWCASE ELEMENTS

- + Statement hood which extends to the ceiling is flanked on both sides by tile
- + Glass cabinetry installed over tile makes a big visual impact
- + Decorative faucet in island sink is operated by foot pedal
- + Kitchen ladder adds both a functional and aesthetic element
- + Every square inch of storage in the kitchen and pantry has been thoughtfully planned and designed making what you don't see as impressive as what you do



“

My very luxe clients don't see any kind of limits on the things they can do or should do with the space. And they're not really willing to move on until we've got a problem solved. It's interesting because they are challenging, yet they're inspiring me at the same time.

Sarah Robertson, AKBD

Showcase Elements

Top-Right: Custom designed and built oak wall hiding refrigerator is a showstopper.

Bottom-Left: The homework/office area is neatly contained in a sunny nook.

Bottom-Right: A pantry, hidden from view from the main kitchen, contains an iced-coffee keg, freezer and refrigerator drawers, and customized shelving to house small appliances.



“

What I absolutely love about my new kitchen is sharing it with my family, and watching my kids actually use the snack drawers and make their own oatmeal or cereal. Watching my family use the things that we spent so much time planning, makes me so happy!

The Homeowner



Showcase Elements

Left: Ample storage and double dishwashers provide function while prized artwork and collected pieces speak to the personality of the homeowner.

Right: From the kitchen sink, Robertson's client has clear sight lines to the other living spaces and the outdoors.





Organic Modern Couture

DESIGNED BY BRENDAN FLANIGAN

These homeowners enjoyed this house plan in several locations with at least three kitchen versions over 40 years. They waited a long time for this one, and they wanted a fresh break from traditional.

GOAL: Something modern, original and inventive — a showpiece, cozy for two and still comfortable for 32.

SHOWCASE ELEMENTS

- + Statement hood with mixed metals (bronze, brass, steel and stainless steel) layered like jewelry finishes
- + Black matte cabinetry sets off cerused oak in a stunning way
- + Custom live-edge wood island contrasts with suspended steel shelves
- + An angled countertop edge creates fluidity and interest in large spaces
- + Spaces easily transform: a coffee station, then tea, then martinis, rather than committing to a large wine tower



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Luxury consumers very much want to create something unique, something special. They don't want something that looks like someone else's. They are savvy and have trained eyes. Luxury kitchens contain custom elements that are extraordinary, unexpected and strikingly beautiful.

Brendan Flanigan

Showcase Elements

The clients wanted a bold, fresh, radical departure from traditional — with staying power

Bottom-Left: Angled counter edges create interest in large spaces.

Bottom-Right: Custom layered metal range hood is an artful anchor.



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As designers, we are trying
to find the identity and personality
of each client and give them
a kitchen design that reflects that.

Brendan Flanigan



Showcase Elements

Left: Statement over-island light fixture; 48" galley workstation sink.

Right: Live-edge wine bar, with suspended steel shelves and layered metals create an experience.

Reclaim, Repurpose, Rejuvenate

DESIGNED BY PETER SALERNO, CMKBD

The kitchen was the heart of the home, but with choppy broken access. These empty-nesters wanted to transform the space for the next exciting phase of their lives.

Goals: Reestablish the kitchen as the home's hub, with six access points; integrate with all living/entertaining areas and create space for kitchen dance parties.

SHOWCASE ELEMENTS

- + Not another white kitchen
- + Statement hood
- + Reclaimed barnwood beams for authenticity and warmth
- + Optimized window views





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**It's all personal! You need to know the client
so well that you can give them what
they're asking for and design it to include
what they didn't know to ask for.**

Peter Salerno, CMKBD

Showcase Elements

Left: Views and storage are optimized from every angle while hiding the office area.

Right: Custom hood dramatically anchors the room.



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The most broken part of our kitchen was the entrance. It took an engineer, new load-bearing beams and floor support, but we walk into a stunning view straight to the outside.

The Homeowner

Showcase Elements

Reclaimed barnwood brings “old charm” to the new kitchen.

Six doors in and out make the kitchen the center of the home.





Outdoor Reflection with High Gloss Finishes

DESIGNED BY JAN NEIGES, CMKBD

Second owner to a statement home built by a famous architect, this client felt personally responsible for preserving the artistic integrity of a vision that was breaking down, literally.

Goal: To respect the home's Art Deco heritage, letting light, glass and reflection make the statement while balancing the kitchen in a house full of powerful elements.

SHOWCASE ELEMENTS

- + Quartzite countertop looks like nature's artwork
- + Three slabs together make an impact, with optimized shape and flow, while hiding the microwave from view
- + Statement sconces balance the drama made by 80-foot art sculptures in a circular foyer
- + Exclusivity in this backsplash no one else has — a custom glass panel, hand painted in the back
- + The line of acrylic cabinets is broken up with "faux stainless" (aluminum-frame) glass doors painted to match stainless appliances



— “

Luxury clients want to be shown things they never thought of before. People hire you for your knowledge. I hold a wide breadth of product knowledge, for example, studying innovation in the commercial sector, like EVO/antibacterial blue light, that could translate to residential.

—

Jan Neiges, CMKBD

Showcase Elements

A MODERN CLASSIC WITH SLEEK INTERIOR TO MATCH

- + Customized island shape hides the microwave.
- + Preserving the artistic integrity of light, the glass and windows match the spirit of the architecture.
- + Shine and reflection bring joy.
- + Statement pendants balance artistic elements throughout the house; faux stainless glass doors balance a wall of glossy acrylic cabinets.



“

I needed help with the aesthetic. Other designers wanted to talk about how I cooked, where I stand. I wanted my designer to look at this unusual house from the outside and help me imagine what you should expect to see in the kitchen.

The Homeowner



Elegantly Casual

DESIGNED BY JAN NEIGES, CMKBD

Family and friends simply could not be together in a space that was choppy, two-level, broken up and tight, with unusable nooks and distant closets.

Goal: Create a seamless, comfortable space for connection; we're in sight and together whether cooking, dining, watching the game or heading to the firepit.

SHOWCASE ELEMENTS

- + Raised living room floor transformed and integrated the kitchen entertaining area into the whole main floor
- + Reclaimed garage, choppy pantry, nook and closet space enabled tremendous openness and flow from view to view
- + Custom statement hood in pewter and steel
- + A striking black backsplash anchors the kitchen, making it feel connected even from the living room
- + New doors and access created indoor/outdoor entertaining flow and even new coffee patios that didn't exist before





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The old kitchen triangle is evolving in large kitchens with two sinks, juicing stations, wine bars, prep versus serve areas. I reclaim space from surrounding rooms and look beyond the kitchen to integrate the space into the home.

Jan Neiges, CMKBD



Showcase Elements

The triumph of this kitchen was raising a two-level floor and reclaiming corner closets, pantries and nooks to create an integrated, seamless main floor entertaining area

Bottom-Left: Single-level floor creates open connectedness.

Bottom-Right: Walk-through bar to firepit area that once was a storage closet.



“

She insisted that we raise the floor to one level and it changed everything — we opened space to move the island, so multiple people can cook — a gamechanger in terms of functionality and flow to our entertaining areas.

The Homeowner

Showcase Elements

Statement hood creates excitement; dramatic tile backsplash connects the kitchen to the living area, despite the distance.





Warm Transitional Symmetry

DESIGNED BY NAR BUSTAMANTE

After 24 years as the second owner of a custom-built house, these empty-nesters wanted a beautiful update that made life simpler and safer to stay in their forever home.

Goal: A simple, family-friendly, clutter-free, no-fuss, low-maintenance space for easy living now and in the future.

SHOWCASE ELEMENTS

- + Raised the living room floor for level main-floor safety and flow for aging family and friends;
- + Wanted an all-white space but was encouraged to include warming woods;
- + Architectural details, molding features around the sink and range hood, bump up on the island;
- + Clutter-free appliance garages, range nooks, hidden powered office drawers;
- + Working kitchen island customized to owners' height;
- + Clean sightlines offer striking, balanced views to the living room.



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They wanted something beautiful
and shared a few images, but had no idea how
to get there or what questions to ask.
I showed a design and she said ‘Build it!’

Nar Bustamante

Showcase Elements

The clients wanted a bold, fresh, radical departure from traditional — with staying power

Top-Right: Fine detailed architectural moldings reinforce simplicity, balance and warmth; features don't compete for attention.

Bottom-Left: Hidden bump-up island includes a powered desk drawer.

Bottom-Right: Additional hidden appliance garages keep the space clutter-free, with everything in its place.



“

I knew I didn't want to be the person picking everything out! I don't have bad taste, I understand how time-consuming it can be — driving, reviewing, making selections. As a non-professional, I don't have the same confidence. I'd rather use someone who knows how to put things together in a tasteful manner. Baseboards and crown molding — not something I think about. They see stuff in other homes and know what works and doesn't work.

The Homeowner

Gathering Kitchen

DESIGNED BY NAR BUSTAMANTE

Building their retirement dream home and inspired by the clean, modern lines discovered while working in Germany, this couple wanted something “different... not typical and normal,” but they needed help finding the vision.

Goal: An open, German-style, clean-lined kitchen that we could really live in, entertaining friends and a growing family. We wanted someone experienced with high-end German Poggenpohl cabinetry and Miele appliances.

SHOWCASE ELEMENTS

- + 12 linear feet of sink face integrated to avoid looking like a commercial kitchen
- + Tall oven wall, perfectly flush, with a flush walnut frame and flush finished plaster above and around it
- + Island integrates flush walnut features with wood underneath the stone





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He was at his wit's end when he met me,
having fired his last framer and designer.
He was hard on me, but I stick with things.
If I sign up, I stay in the ring, I fight for
my client. I love the challenge. It wouldn't be
easy, but it would be fabulous. He wanted to
maximize the project, but didn't know the way.

Nar Bustamante

Showcase Elements

- + Clean, open, German design with walnut integrated for warmth.
- + Walnut integrated flush with Dekton countertop.
- + Flush detail from floor to ceiling on oven bank.



“

We never would have come up with this by ourselves.

We've always been traditional, and we wanted to express how we feel — as art aficionados.

We had an opportunity to create something that let our ideas come out.

Not just fill this with something that looks nice.

The Homeowner

Showcase Elements

7-foot galley workspace
under window bank
connecting the pool and
entertaining area.





Verdant Renewal

DESIGNED BY CINDY MCCLURE, CKD

Historic homes have no closets, no islands, no gratuitous space. This couple sat on dream renovation plans for years, not knowing whom to trust or how to start.

Goal: Inventing space, storage and flow to live and to entertain as we like in a restricted 1880s historic home.

SHOWCASE ELEMENTS

- + Inventing space that transformed the kitchen
- + Sink bump-out approved by historic commission allowed a larger island
- + A broken adjoining bathroom and closet was converted into a hidden butler's pantry and powder room
- + Jade green quartzite set the tone for the overall design



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Clients come to you for your vision. Balance and push. If you make a suggestion to guide a client and they don't want to go there, you're not wrong. It doesn't make the project bad.

Realign and ask more ‘why’ questions and come back around. Remind your client that they came to you for a reason. Ask them to tell you what that reason was, and it will help fill the gap.

Cindy McClure, CKD

Showcase Elements

The clients wanted a bold, fresh, radical departure from traditional — with staying power

Top-Right: Quartzite was “love at first site” setting the design scheme; luxury is hidden elements that make life easy.

Bottom-Left: Bumping out the area for sink and pantry created enough space to have an island.

Bottom-Right: Separate beverage station relieves congestion.



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We sat on the project for five or six years!
We didn't know what the first or next step was.
We had drawings and contractor references,
but no idea how to start!

The Homeowner



Showcase Elements

Inventing space in a tightly constrained historic home from the 1880s was the game changer:

1. Approving permission through the Historic Commission to bump out the wall for the sink.
2. Reclaiming and reworking an awkward bathroom ending in a closet into a roomy butler's pantry ending in a powder room.

Mediterranean Travels Remembered

DESIGNED BY CINDY MCCLURE, CKD

With an intense, high-paced career in the DC area, this couple wanted to indulge in a comfortable, happy place they could share with their dogs and friends — and not necessarily together!

Goal: A beautiful and luxurious space that's low-maintenance, dog-friendly and ready to entertain.

SHOWCASE ELEMENTS

- + Spanish style via Carrera, Italy, inspired the festive backsplash
- + Two-story addition added a master suite upstairs with tremendous mudroom storage and a cozy sitting area
- + Barn door disappears in the mudroom, but easily and comfortably locks dogs away from the entertaining area
- + A custom built-in ladder closet helps the 5' 2" homeowner access abundant storage
- + The kitchen is integrated into the view from four other rooms for seamless flow.





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Luxury is a space easily maintained
and designed to function without thinking,
for people willing to analyze how
they live and want to live in a space.

Cindy McClure, CKD



Showcase Elements

They wanted happy, fun, festive, luxurious, comfortable, dog-friendly and easy

Top: Design is seamlessly carried into four surrounding rooms for continuous comfort.

Bottom: Barn door disappears in the mudroom but easily and comfortably locks dogs away from the entertaining area.



————— “ —————

I started with a tile from my honeymoon
and needed Cindy for everything else!

The Homeowner



Showcase Elements

Fun backsplash inspired by European travels.





Statuario Clad Kitchen

DESIGNED BY NAR BUSTAMANTE

Cramped in a too-small kitchen for 30 years, this couple wanted to bring people together in an interesting space.

Goal: Spacious, bright, inviting, timeless, not trendy. A space that allows the homeowner's art to make the statement, while high-end appliances made cooking fun and comfortable.

SHOWCASE ELEMENTS

- + Reclaimed space from the dining room and garage to create space for an island and entertaining zone
- + Mixed-surface island for form and function
- + Tiniest details: outlets adorned and hidden, sink and backsplash mitres with the quartz in the window seamlessly
- + Flawless functionality: ergonomics, island height and oven were measured and fit to the cook; sink located near the steam oven becomes a beverage station; worry-free island work surfaces are flanked by gorgeous Carrara marble



“

Luxury is accessible! These are not really expensive estates ... not huge Architectural Digest homes. These are happy, humble, everyday homes. You can have luxury everywhere.

People think, ‘Oh no! Luxury has to be a mansion.’ I can provide a really nice, luxurious experience at many levels.”

Nar Bustamante

Showcase Elements

Reclaiming space from the dining room and garage provided the entertain-in kitchen the homeowners had dreamed of.

- + Oven and island measured to fit the homeowner as she holds cookie pans, to make cooking more pleasant and comfortable after a back surgery; four people can cook at one time with the amount of space planned around the island.
- + Owners wanted Silestone on the island for ease and marble for beauty; others said, “You shouldn’t mix.” Nar said, “Oh yeah, for sure!”
- + The handles on Miele ovens flex for even more comfort while cooking.
- + Flush cabinetry and clean lines are set off by warm wood.



“

I had worked with designers before but found I was pushing them instead of them pushing me. I was looking for an aesthetic. Others put the products before the design; that doesn't give much inspiration. Nar's group had something I liked in every project. Attention to detail and an aesthetic you could appreciate.

The Homeowner



Livable Luxury

DESIGNED BY VICKY SERANY

This couple was building their 12th home and 13th kitchen.

Despite their vast experience, they absolutely used trusted designers who do this day in and day out, see more homes and know better.

Goal: “I want life to be lighter and simpler, even designing the main home and vacation home kitchens more alike for simplicity,” says the owner. “I can move from kitchen to kitchen with ease. I can put nourishment on the table, quickly, easily and free up more time for painting.”

SHOWCASE ELEMENTS

- + 48" galley workstation
- + Top-of-the-line appliances for accuracy, reliability
- + Chunky 2" Dekton surface for beauty and durability
- + Separate sinks strategically placed to separate serving from cleaning



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It's critical to educate yourself faster and faster each year. For example, planning proper ventilation for powerful cooking equipment. Electrical plans are much more technical with customized lighting plans for workspaces, incorporating power for technology, hidden outlet strips, under-island outlets for laptops, unique ways to layer lighting, task lighting for cooking versus setting moods and ambience.

Vicky Serany



Showcase Elements

Luxury is everything as simple and streamlined as it can be. It's not luxury unless you have every appliance that makes things easy, functional appliances you can count on to bring a meal to life effortlessly, everything at your fingertips, even knives — efficiency, comfort.

Top: Chunky 2" edge Dekton surfaces make beauty durable and worry free; separate sinks for serve versus slop.

Bottom: Galley workstation sinks, Wolf appliances, and separate Sub-Zero towers make this kitchen a workhorse.

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I want efficient, simplified, solid — it can
be showy, but it doesn't have to be.
It can look luxurious, but living luxuriously
is making life easier and effortless.

The Homeowner



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