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BONUS CIRCULATION
TO 5,000
HOME CENTERS

FROM 'BLACK HOLE' TO SPRINGTIME CARNIVAL

Formerly a "dungeon" in a $2 million spec house, the kitchen above now has butterflies on stained glass doors, flowers flowing on a tile backsplash, a clown standing guard near the pantry, and an array of high-tech appliances. For more on this remodeling by Diane Plesset, DP Design, Santa Clara, Calif., see page 106.

HOW HOME CENTERS RANK WHEN IT COMES TO KITCHENS

How well are home centers selling kitchens these days? To find out, KITCHEN & BATH BUSINESS sent two reporters undercover to shop six home centers. They found everything from dead bugs (and dead wood) to well versed salespeople in eye-catching displays. Full report starts on page 110.

by MICHELE TOMASIK, contributing editor

Send in the clowns

Butterflies and flowers from dining room drapes were reproduced in kitchen (left). Above, trompe l'oeil clown conceals enclosure for water heater.

Guided by the longest "wish list" ever supplied her by a client, Diane Plesset, DP Design, Santa Clara, Calif., turned a former "dungeon" into a springtime carnival kitchen.

That was the theme the designer chose for the room where butterflies alight on custom stained glass cabinet doors, a garland of flowers flows along a tile backsplash and a pregnant clown pauses near a pantry door.

But the kitchen is not just another pretty place. The 12′ × 12′ main work area and nearby 7′ × 7′ pantry include a triple sink, pull-out serving cart, planning desk/bookshelf, two cooktops, bar peninsula and more than double the cabinet space of the old kitchen.

The previous U-shaped kitchen was dark and uninviting, concocted by a contractor who built the $2 million house on spec and ran out of money before it was completed. "So he just threw anything into the kitchen," Plesset said.

"Anything" consisted of inexpensive dark ash wood cabinets and drab olive green countertop and carpeting. A professionally landscaped yard could be glimpsed from only one tiny window. And a skylight built up into a parapet turned into a "black hole" at night when the fluorescent lights around its rim cast direct lighting on only one-half of the room.

Plesset was asked to design a kitchen that provided more cabinet and drawer space, more light and a better view of the yard.

She also had to include a long list of appliances—built-in wok, can opener and toaster; Fasar and Thermador cooktops; dishwasher; Sub-Zero refrigerator; and Sub-Zero freezer.

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'Wish list' inspires carnival design

To accomplish this, Plesset broke through a wall and created a walk-in pantry from a room that housed the water heater and furnace. In addition to redesigning the skylight, she brightened the room by installing more and bigger windows and track lighting.

Light oak cabinets and cream-colored tiles on the backsplash and countertop also gave the room a light, airy feeling.

The client's desire to incorporate her clown plate collection into the new kitchen was near the top of her wish list. The collection greatly influenced the kitchen's color scheme and inspired much of the room's styling.

Floral backsplash

The floral pattern of the room's drapes was reproduced by artist Peggy Spaulding, Tile Art Co., in the nearly 6′ floral garland painted on the tile backsplash and the Fasar cooktop.

To lighten the kitchen, Plesset used custom oak cabinets from Midland cabinets. Butterflies, flowers and colors from the drapery fabric were reproduced in the custom stained glass cabinet door panels made by craftsman David Benoit.

To provide a better view of the backyard, Plesset had contractors install two greenhouse windows. A triple Franke sink was installed beneath one of the windows.

To prevent the skylight from turning into a "black hole" at night, Plesset had Midland build a custom baffle. Then she reversed the lighting so it shone up, illuminating the parapet and providing diffuse light below. Finally, to reinforce her springtime carnival theme, Plesset rimmed the bottom edge of the baffle with miniature Tivoli lights.

Plesset did a lot of research before deciding on the built-in wok from Yick Co., South San Francisco. It was the only built-in wok she could find that was approved for home use.

Since both clients stand about 5′5″ tall, they asked Plesset to install countertops at lower-than-standard heights. Although eager to accommodate them, Plesset discovered that other elements in the kitchen prevented her from doing so.

The dishwasher and roll-out serving cart were already at fixed heights, she explained. And the complicated installation for the Fasar cooktop also required standard heights.

But another compromise made by the clients worked out better. The clients had originally requested a 4′ Sub-Zero refrigerator. But Plesset found the large door would conflict with an L-shaped countertop/bar also requested by the clients and located directly opposite the refrigerator.

"I told her she could have one or the other, but not both," Plesset said. So the client opted for a 3′ Sub-Zero model and Plesset suggested a stand up planning desk bookcase to fill the 1½′ of leftover space. The custom unit was also built by Midland.

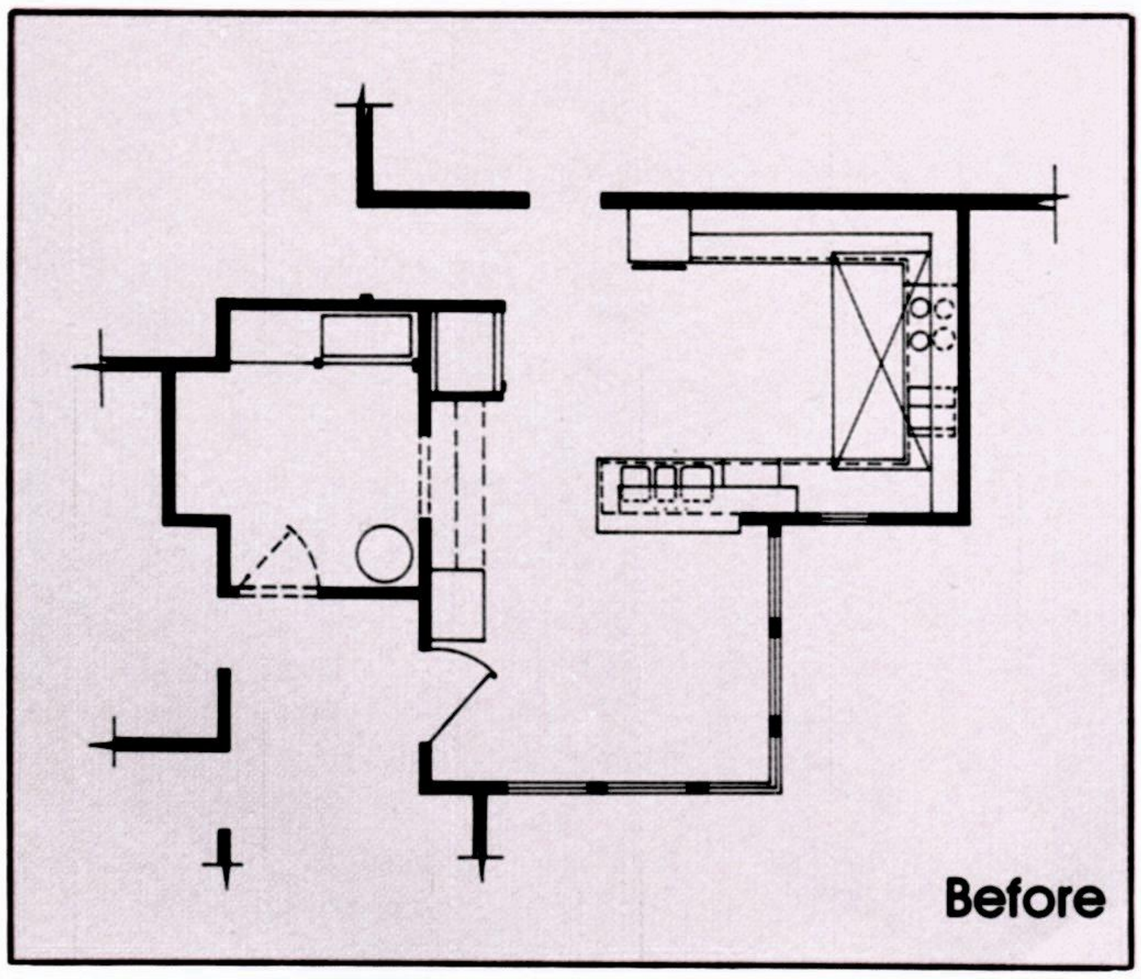
By breaking through the wall where the refrigerator was located, Plesset gained access to an adjacent room which housed the furnace and hot water heater.

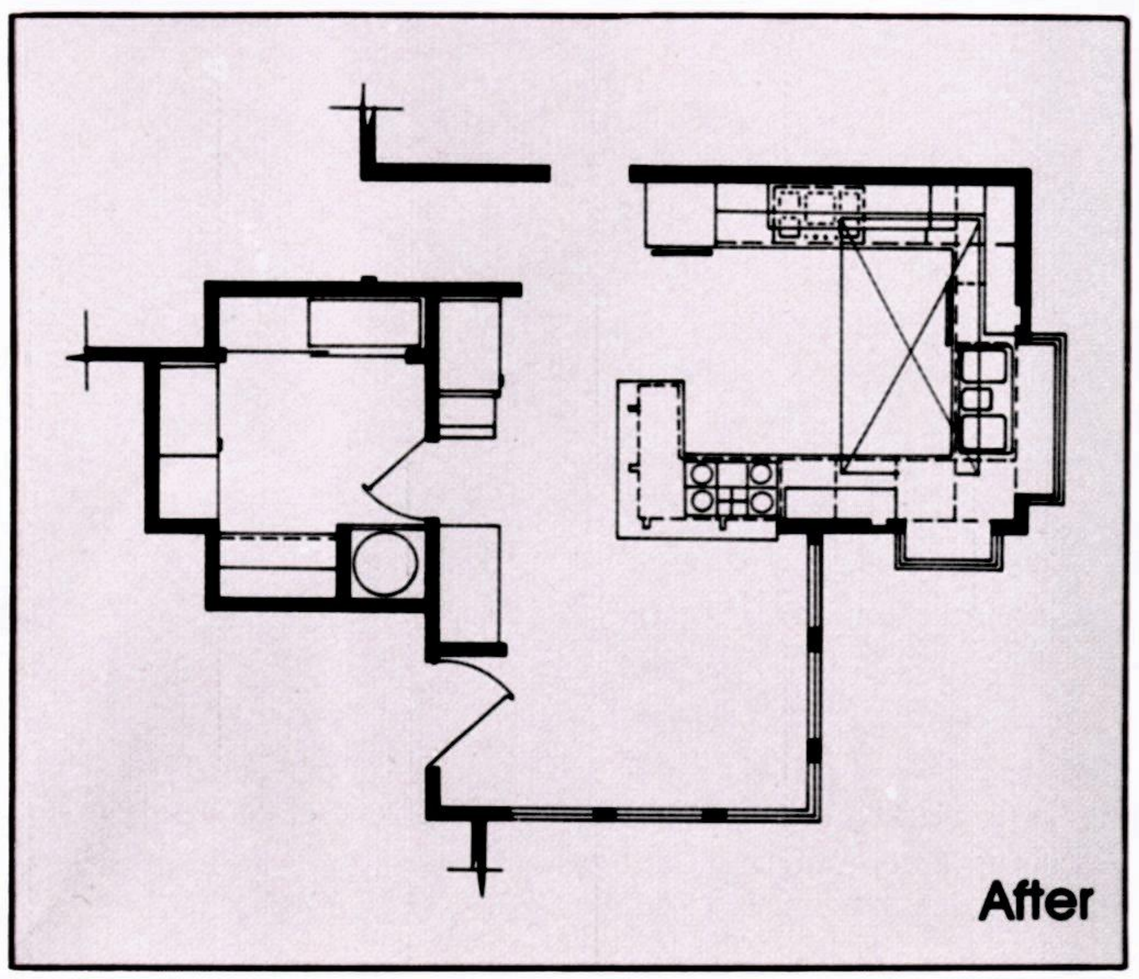
She installed more cabinets in the room, including a pantry unit with pull-out shelves from Hafele. A Sub-Zero freezer was also installed in the newly available space.

Building codes required that an enclosure with a door be placed around the hot water heater. Plesset suggested concealing the door with a trompe l'oeil painting of the client dressed as a clown. And since the client was expecting her third child at the time of renovation, the clown in the painting is barefoot and pregnant.

The figure is also holding a golf club because golfing is one of the client's hobbies. The painting was done by Carolyn Patterson & Jan Meyer, Painted Illusions. It cost some $2,000. **K&BB**

Twinkling Tivoli lights rim the edge of custom baffle installed around skylight (right, below). Plesset improved lighting installed around skylight. She also improved lighting in the kitchen and the view to the landscaped backyard by installing a pair of greenhouse windows. Track lighting was also placed around the perimeter of the work area. Floor plans below show how countertop was extended to create a snack bar/eating peninsula.





Photography by Russell Abraham