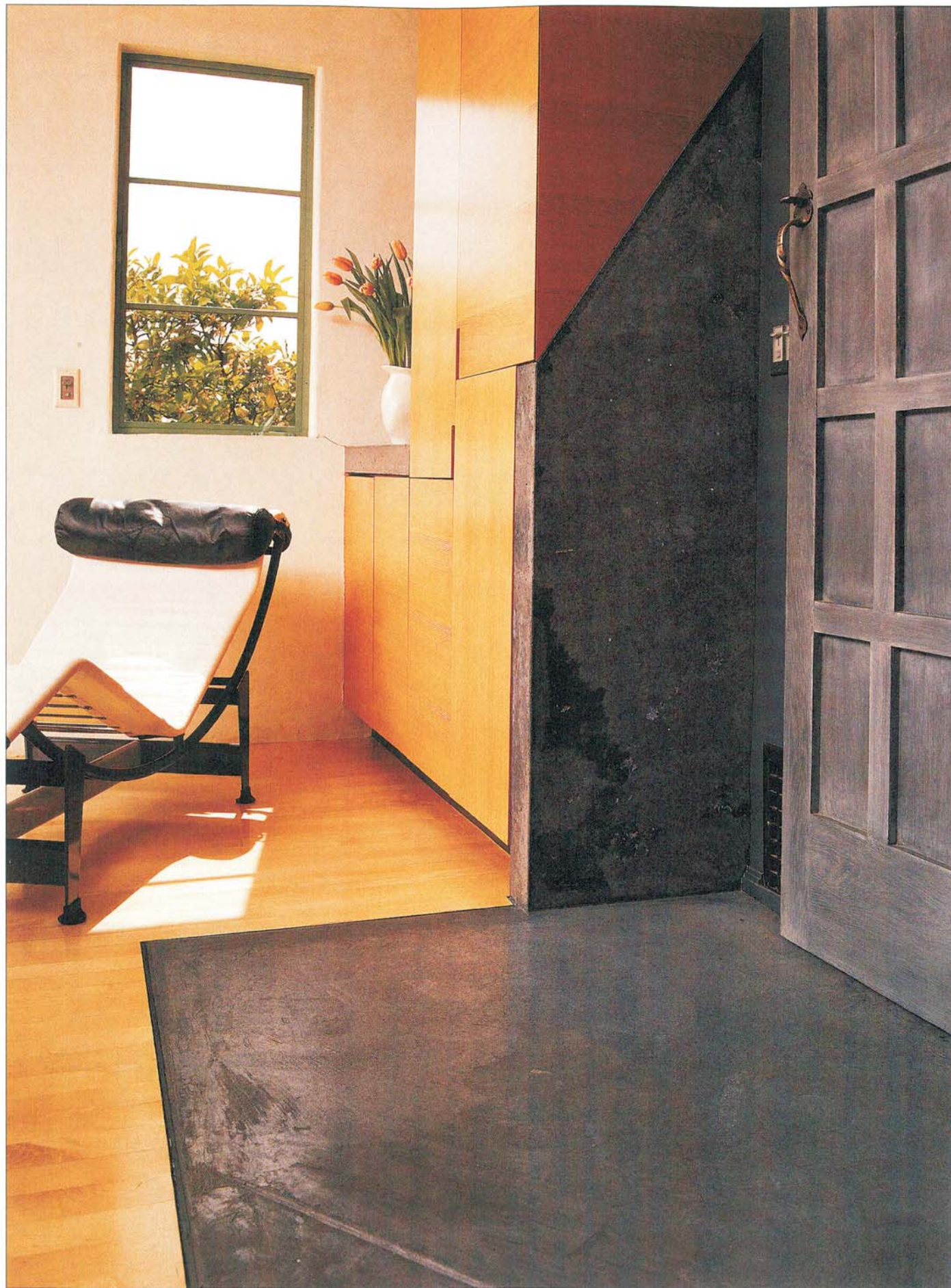
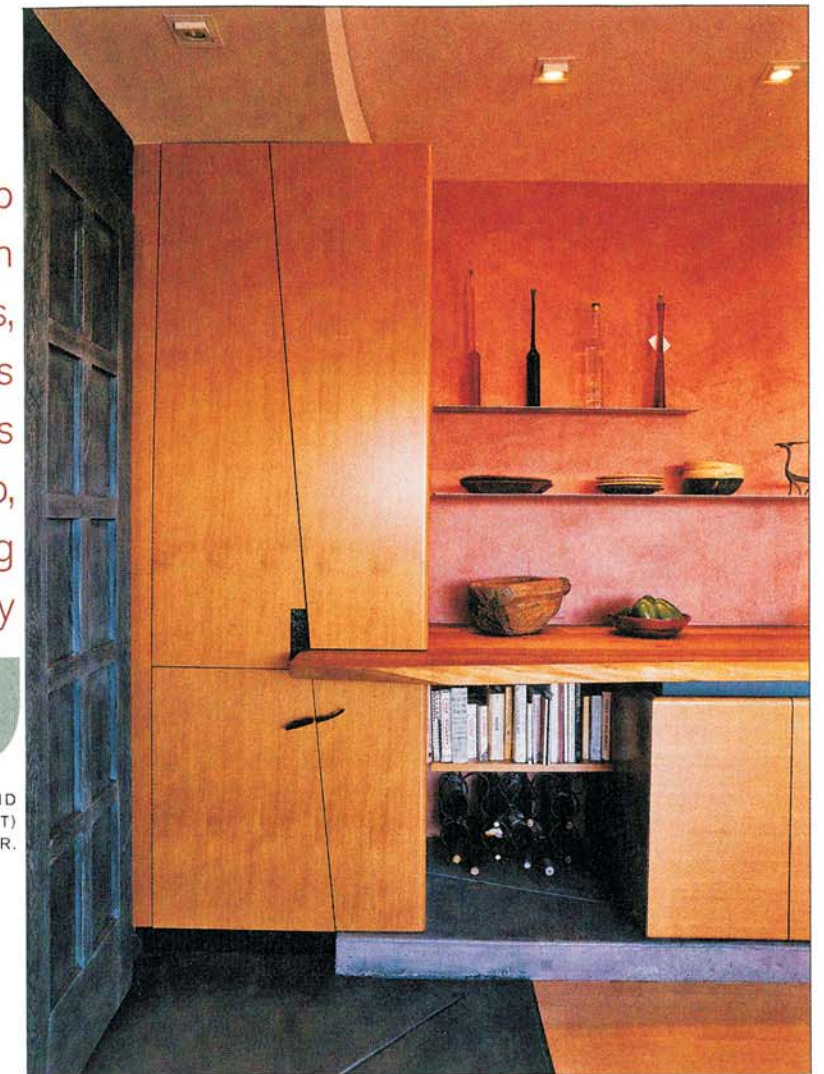


photography by MATT MILLMAN



“A floor can come up and become a curb, and in this room in the Berkeley Hills, it becomes a wall. With this sculpted material, it feels like the earth is coming up, becoming something, creating a real feeling of the honesty of the material, and a sense of continuity.”

CHENG ON THE LOUNGE AREA OF HOWARD AND JEAN HERTZ'S KITCHEN (OPPOSITE AND RIGHT) OPENING PAGES: CHENG'S OWN FOYER.

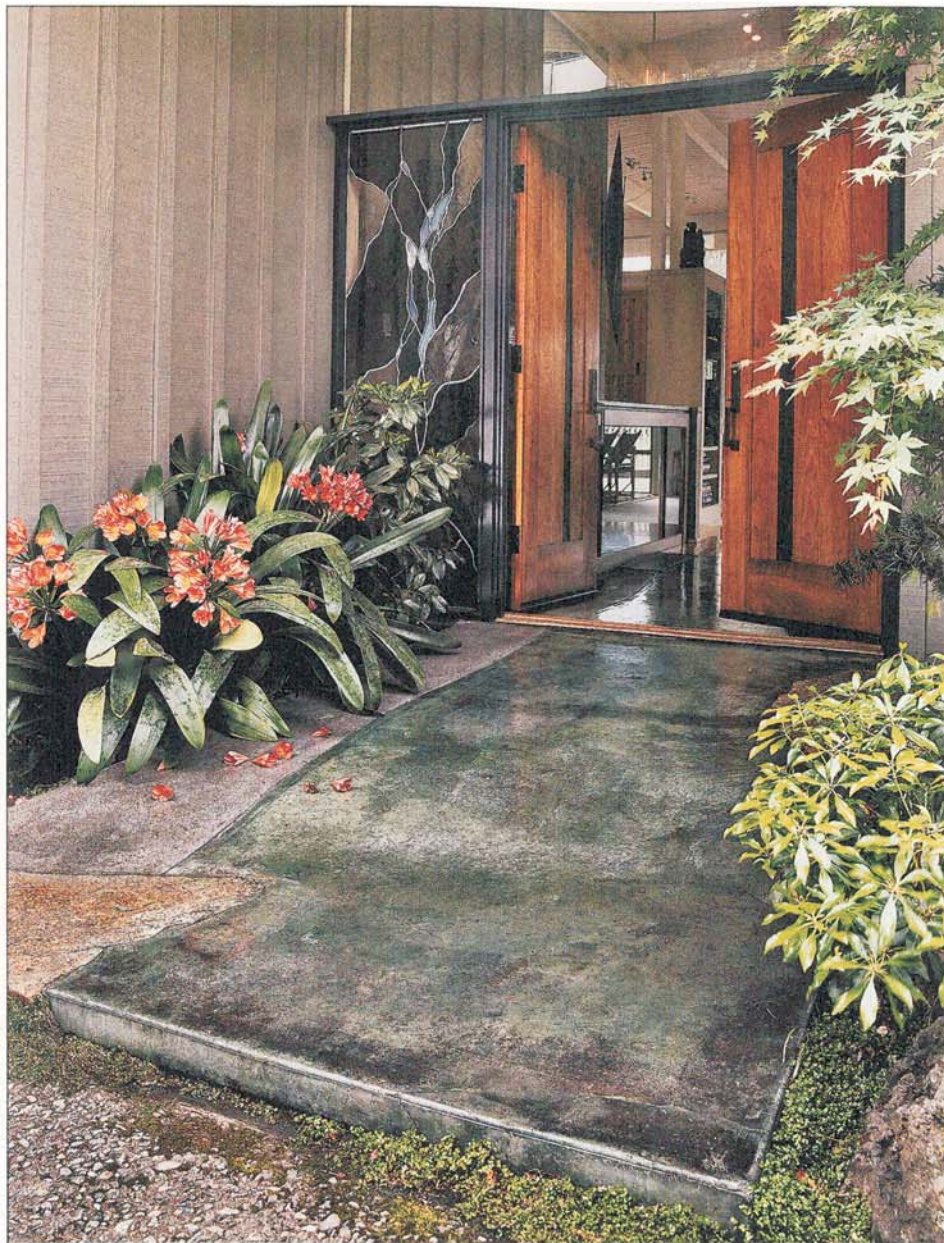


C

oncrete guru Fu-Tung Cheng would love to design your home—but first you'll have to get him up off the floor. You see, once Cheng gets started talking about concrete, he gets his whole body into the act, gesticulating wildly, even getting down on his hands and knees on the smooth surfaces of his Berkeley studio.

“People usually think of concrete as what you scrape your knee on when you fall down,” he says, rubbing a floor he's made as slick as a satin sheet. “But it can be inviting to the touch. That's what's so ironic.”

That juxtaposition between common perception and what Cheng can do with the mixture of rock, water, and cement powder has done a lot to drive the designer to explore using concrete in the home. Since the day



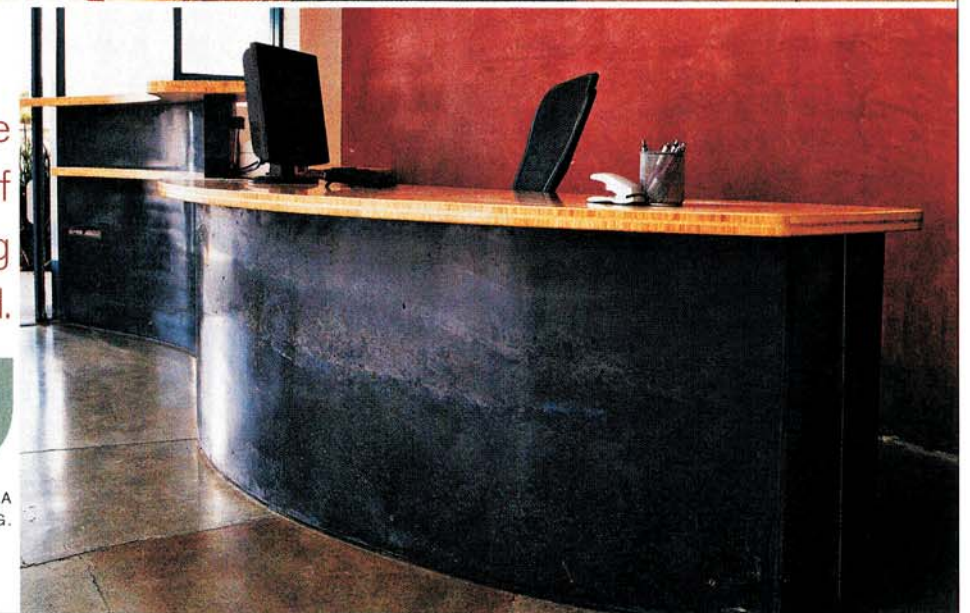
“ There are topical stains for concrete, but like paint, with wear you’ll eventually lose the finish. But with acid washing—like we did here—you actually stain down into the concrete, which preserves the color over time. ”

CHENG ON THIS WALK IN OAKLAND.



“ Creating a concrete wall is tricky because of all the weight pushing outward against the mold. This counter’s mold was made of steel. ”

CHENG ON THE RECEPTION AREA OF BLACKHAWK GROOMING.



20 years ago when he whipped up an interesting kitchen for a client with a modest budget, Cheng has been enthralled with the material’s versatile qualities. He finally put his discoveries down on paper in 2002’s *Concrete Countertops*.

While that book became a must-read for home builders and home dreamers, it still shared only a part of what Cheng was doing. Earlier this year, he let his audience in on the rest of the story with *Concrete at Home*, which shows the designer working the organic material—sometimes spiced with fossils and acid dyes—into floors, walls, and fireplaces in homes across the Bay Area, including some next door in Danville and Moraga.

The book can only help cement Cheng’s reputation, which is already pretty solid—

thanks to the *Countertops* book, well-received home designs, and a signature line of kitchen hoods. The curves and textures of his work make sense when you learn that Cheng, the son of a Walt Disney color artist, was originally trained as a painter and sculptor. As he puts it, “[My work with] concrete is merely an expression of my desire to sculpt and have tactile, emotional expression with honesty.”

Cheng’s brand of truth has won some pretty impressive fans. East Bay architect Robert Swatt loves Cheng’s concrete work because it becomes completely one with the project, “so it’s not just a product, like a cabinet or a bathtub, but part of the home’s design.”

Concrete at Home, like his previous book, isn’t just for pros. It’s also a reference for do-it-

yourselfers who want to liven up their homes with Cheng’s version of chic. “The most elite client can come in here and spend \$25,000 on a countertop,” he says. “But then Homer Simpson can build one for himself for \$600. The craft is where the value is. I like that.” ■

WANT TO TRY THIS AT HOME?

Fu-Tung Cheng’s tip-filled *Concrete at Home* (The Taunton Press, \$32) is available at bookstores or direct from www.tauntonpress.com. Instructional DVDs are also available. If you want to take a class on concrete, including some with Cheng, check out www.concreteexchange.com.



“ The owner of this house [author Terry McMillan] is kind of flamboyant and lively, and I felt like something more fun and expressive—like this Copacabana look—would be appropriate for this walk. And it had to be somewhat economical, and concrete is very economical over large areas.

With the fireplace, both surfaces are smooth, but I like the corrugated look because it gives a nice sense of movement. It contrasts with the smooth part that has the pieces of shattered mirror in it. The shattered mirror gets reflective when the fire plays off of it, adding a bit of sparkle. ”

CHENG ON AUTHOR TERRY MCMILLAN'S DANVILLE HOME.

“ Designers and architects often talk about the ‘honest use’ of a material. And when you put this stone, which is in a much more unrefined state, next to the concrete, they echo off each other. It’s very honest. ”



“ With rainfall percolating down, this will show time passing. The water will cut a channel that will get deeper and deeper, like the Grand Canyon. ”

CHENG ON THIS MORAGA HOME'S WOOD STORAGE (ABOVE) AND STORM DRAIN (LEFT). RIGHT: MORAGA ABSTRACT.

