

concrete DÉCOR SHOW

Text by SHERRY BOYD

FAMED DESIGNER-CONTRACTORS WILL BRUDER AND FU-TUNG CHENG TO KICK OFF EDUCATION EVENTS WITH LIVELY DEBATE

THE CONCRETE DECOR SHOW & DECORATIVE CONCRETE SPRING TRAINING MARCH 16-19 IN PHOENIX, ARIZ., WILL PROVIDE THE CONCRETE BUILDING INDUSTRY AN OPPORTUNITY TO LEARN MORE ABOUT CONCRETE sustainability and improvement of both the aesthetics and performance of concrete in building and renovation.

Architects, interior designers, landscape architects, builders, property managers and municipal authorities are invited to courses that offer design and technical continuing education about architectural and decorative concrete and its uses as a durable, versatile and green material of choice.

The pre-conference keynote address March 16 by internationally acclaimed Phoenix-based architect Will Bruder, AIA, president of Will Bruder + Partners Ltd, promises a lively debate on sustainability with his colleague, the award-winning designer and author, Fu-Tung Cheng, principal of Cheng Design Inc. The pre-conference keynote, sponsored by Media Partners *Concrete Homes* magazine and *Concrete Monthly* newspaper, will begin at 8:30 a.m. Tuesday, March 16, in TU 101K.

Bruder and Cheng will provide a discussion of design and sustainability at varying scales, from decorative details to large-scale, commercial and civic environments. Each will share his work, past, present and future. Attendees will see through their eyes as artists: their process, approach and perspective on light, space, mixed materials and composition.

The combination of Bruder and Cheng's work comprise a rich palette of mixed materials and creative thinking. The audience will experience a dynamic discussion and visually rich presentation on why design and sustainability of built objects and environments really matter.

WILL BRUDER

For 40 years, Bruder has explored contextually exciting and perennially inventive architectural solutions that are sensitive to site opportunities and user needs. Most of Bruder's 450 commissions have celebrated the craft of building in ways not typical in contemporary architecture, striving to invent form specific to function and his clients' aspirations.

Through his creative use of materials and light, Bruder's ability to raise the ordinary to the extraordinary is renowned. He is a consummate craftsman with demonstrated attention to detail and building processes.

Bruder holds a bachelor of fine arts degree in sculpture from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. Supplementing his studio art education were studies in structural engineering, philosophy, art history and urban planning, followed by a full



Photo by Randy Tunnell (www.RandyTunnell.com)



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photo by Matthew Millman (www.MatthewMillman.com)

architectural apprenticeship under Gunnar Birkerts and Paolo Soleri. After becoming a registered architect, he opened his own award-winning studio (willbruder.com) in 1974.

FU-TUNG CHENG

Fu-Tung Cheng, the principal designer of Cheng Design in Berkeley, Calif., is also a licensed general contractor. From architectural design to construction, Cheng's custom home projects have earned him numerous awards and recognition, including a 2009 Builder's Choice Merit Award for his *House 6* custom home project and a notable induction into the National Kitchen and Bath Hall of Fame.

Cheng is the author of three books including bestseller "Concrete Countertops," "Concrete at Home," and the DIY-friendly "Concrete Countertops Made Simple." He launched CHENG Concrete Products, a complete line of creative concrete materials, and CHENG Concrete Training, which offers the industry's most comprehensive concrete design training. The program has trained more than 2,500 professionals and DIYs to date. He is also author of a monthly feature in *Concrete Homes* called "Design Notes," in which he details how to do specific design projects.

For more than 25 years, Cheng Design (chengdesign.com) has been creating homes and high-end kitchens with an understated, timeless elegance. Much of Cheng's work incor-

porates mixed materials: wood, concrete, steel and plaster. He has played the role of industrial designer as the creative force behind the line of Cheng sinks by Elkay and a full line of Cheng Design by Zephyr kitchen hoods. Cheng debuted his Elements by Tonusa line of cabinets in early 2009, a complete line of cabinetry and accessories with the keen eye toward functionality, timelessness and sustainability of materials.

PANEL DISCUSSIONS

Panel discussions on March 16 will cover timely topics including: Decorative Pervious Concrete in Municipal and Commercial Projects, Exploring Form and Function: New Directions for Commercial Floor Coatings and Treatments, Concrete Polishing in LEED and Safety Improvements, and Creative Opportunities for Decorative Concrete Design. Sessions offered during the afternoon breakout sessions provide continuing education credits.

Continuing education topics include: Creating Theme-Magic, Designing and Specifying Decorative Concrete, Now Every Color Can Be Green (coatings and toppings), Advantages of Polyaspartic Seamless Floors, Applications for Architectural Stain and Concrete Formliners, Gorgeous, Graphic and Green Concrete Artistry, A Systematic Approach to Successful Concrete Countertops, and Moisture Mitigation Testing and Methods Demystified.

ask the expert

Kitchen Islands – Simplicity Equals Elegance

○ text by FU-TUNG CHENG | photography by MATTHEW MILLMAN (www.matthewmillman.com)

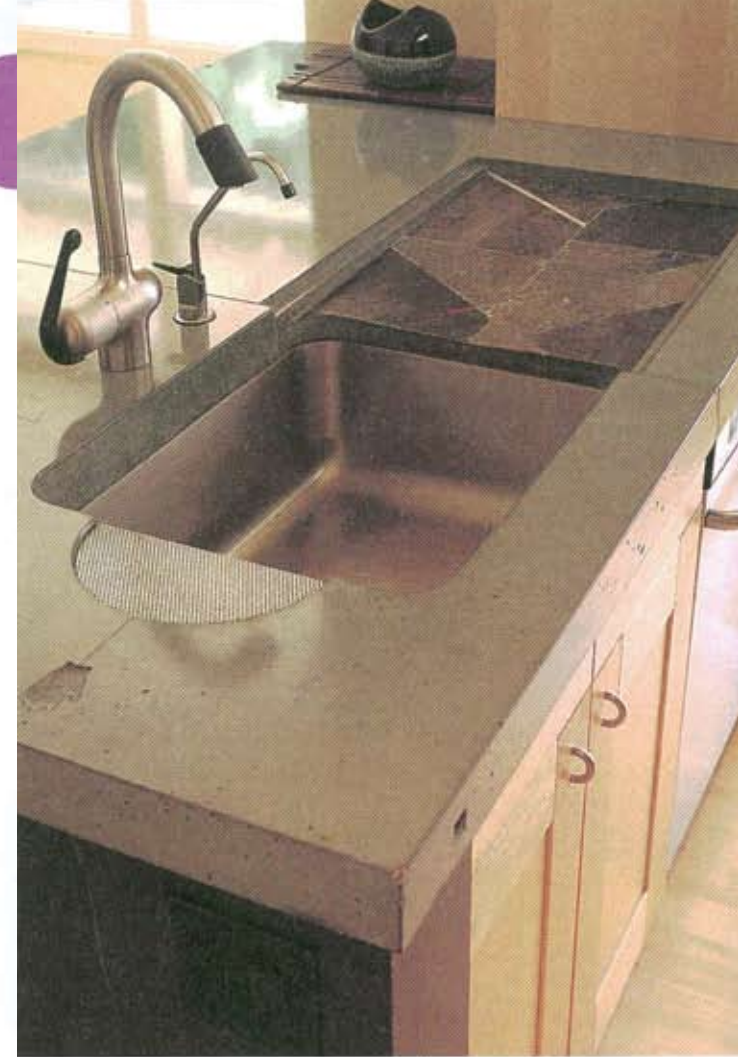
Q: WHAT ARE THE PRIMARY CONSIDERATIONS FOR INTEGRATING AN ISLAND COUNTERTOP INTO THE KITCHEN DESIGN?

A. A kitchen island stands alone. It is a gathering spot. It commands attention. It is usually the functional and aesthetic center of a kitchen. An island countertop, by necessity, is the “star” of the kitchen and demands an understanding of what constitutes good design in the context of the whole environment.

When approaching the design of an entire kitchen, for instance, it is essential to first consider the big picture, the context of the circulation patterns, or the “flow” of the house, before locating specifics such as the stove, the sink or the refrigerator. Designing an island, and therefore an island countertop, is similar. Imagine the airflow around a car being shaped. Its shape and design will be influenced by each different functional component — such as headlights, fenders, windshields, spoilers, etc. Its style will be influenced by the style of the whole line of automobiles, but each part must work practically as well as aesthetically.

I begin the design of an island with the functional “flow” of tasks in mind such as the circulation requirements of persons using the island to both prepare and enjoy meals. I consider the maximum and minimum distances from the island to the adjacent countertop runs along the walls (ideally from a minimum of 42 inches to a maximum of 50 inches). This determines the probable perimeter shape and size of the

In designing an island, the functional flow of tasks should be considered. This island serves as a gathering place on one side while maintaining the integrity of the space needed to prepare and present or serve the food on the other side.



Functionality of the island should take into consideration whether it is to be used for food preparation (**above**) or if it is to be used for food presentation or serving (**bottom**). The bottom island does an excellent job of both with food preparation and a sink on one end, and an area on the other end for eating, food presentation or just visiting. Note that while the design employs both circular and horizontal elements, the two are completely integrated.

island. I then progress to “fitting” the specific requirements of the client into the island, such as stove and ventilation, prep sink, cutting boards, cabinets, etc. Every function that is considered, by necessity, affects the determination of the final shape the island — and therefore, the countertop — can take.

Here's what to consider functionally:

- Will dining occur at the island? How many people can it accommodate comfortably?
- Will they sit at table height (approximately 30 inches) with chairs? Or counter-height (36 inches) or bar height (42 inches)? Chairs require more leg room than stools. The depth and height of the countertop(s) will, in turn, affect the shape and presence of the island. Overhangs will be required that may need support accessories such as buttresses or steel angle supports.
- Are there adjacent rooms, such as family, dining or entertainment that affect the ultimate shape and utility of the island?
- Is the island for food preparation, or merely a staging area for food presentation? Will it have a stove (therefore a ventilation hood, or down-draft unit if the stove is modestly sized), or a separate preparation sink, or both?

And here's what to consider aesthetically:

- Are some primary curves possible to shape the island or the countertop? Will they “fit-in” with the general aesthetic style of the kitchen as a whole?
- How can the “layering” of the countertops, depending on their function of food prep or dining, be exploited to emphasize the ultimate “sculpting” of the design?
- How can the accessories such as towel bars, soap dishes, drain boards, cutting boards, and steel or concrete supports be “value added” components that complement the concrete and create a captivating balance of form and function?
- Can the number of “functions” be reduced to simplify the utility of the island so that shape, form and function are balanced to produce an island that commands attention as an aesthetic as well as a practical object? Too often the island just becomes another slab of inch-and-a-half material on top of rectangular cabinet boxes. Shape and form with concrete! Think out of the box! Less is (often) more!

Remember that, ultimately — especially with concrete countertops — simplicity equates with elegance. A wall in an island that becomes a cantilevered countertop without a lot of cabinet boxes, but plenty of leg room and open space beneath it, can not only be a practical gathering center, but a breath-taking sculptural focus that anchors the heart of the home with its presence. 📍

Fu-Tung Cheng is an award-winning designer and the author of “Concrete Countertops” “Concrete Countertops Made Simple” and “Concrete at Home.” He offers in-depth training programs for professionals across the country. For more information on his workshops and books, see ConcreteExchange.com.