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Design Awards 2025

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The Cost of
Doing Business

STORAGE STRATEGIES • 84

Secret Spaces for
Staying Organized

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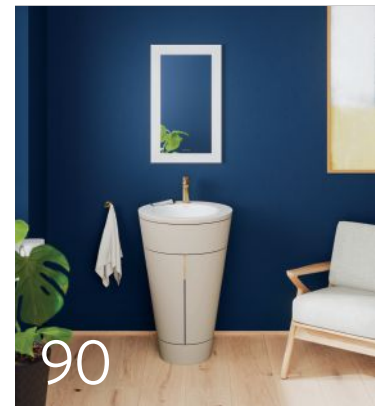
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ON THE COVER

Designed by Daniel Joseph Chenin, FAIA, this opulent kitchen in Las Vegas, NV took home the Gold in the Kitchens Over \$250,000 category in the 2025 Kitchen & Bath Design Awards. For more winners, turn to awards coverage starting on page 38...

Photo: Douglas Friedman

The Winners' Circle

The 2025 Kitchen & Bath Design Awards honors designs that showcase bold choices, customization and personal style.

Today's freshest designs are all about the power of the individual according to the entries for the 2025 Kitchen & Bath Design Awards, sponsored by *Kitchen & Bath Design News*. Honored in this year's awards were diverse designs that delivered truly custom luxury via personal flair and specialized practical solutions.

Over 340 projects were judged in 11 categories: Best Kitchen Over \$250,000; Best Kitchen \$175,000-\$250,000; Best Kitchen \$100,000-\$175,000; Best Kitchen Under \$100,000; Best Specialty Kitchen; Best Master Bath Over \$125,000; Best Master Bath \$75,000-\$125,000; Best Master Bath Under \$75,000; Best Powder Room; Best Showroom, and Best Specialty Project.

The prestigious judging panel for the awards included: Rob Klein, Conceptual Kitchens in Carmel, IN; Dan McFadden, PB Kitchen Design in Geneva, IL; Jeannine Price, Redbarn Designworks in Center Moriches, NY; Gabe Sepulveda-Villarini, Jackson Design and Remodeling in San Diego, CA; Sharon Sherman, Thyme and Place Design in Wyckoff, NJ; Karen Swanson, New England Design Works in Manchester-by-the-Sea, MA; Molly Switzer, Molly Switzer Interior Designs in Portland, OR, and Jessica Webber, Webber Coleman Woodworks in Watkinsville, GA.

Each project was evaluated on multiple points, including: aesthetic appeal, functionality of the space, attention to detail, handling of unusual situations, originality, selection of colors and finishes and overall impression. The judges also provided design feedback to all entrants.

TO EACH THEIR OWN

If there was one overarching trend the judges could agree on, it was the absence of trendiness – in other words, homeowners are truly embracing ownership of their homes in all ways.

"I think freedom to express a design vision was really a big theme for me," says Sherman. "I saw things that were really different and really thinking outside the box. And I think that's so important if you're going to keep moving design forward, especially in the home."

Webber agrees: "For the award-winning projects, the priority seemed to be highly personalized spaces – whether it be a really impactful wallpaper or antique pieces. Stepping away from the standard commodity style kitchens and baths won the day."

"The submissions reveal a clear shift: people are prioritizing comfort, functionality and seamless integration with the rest of their home," adds Price. "Kitchens and bathrooms are no longer just task-oriented spaces – they're personal, intentional and often luxurious."

She also says: "In kitchens, there's a strong focus on multifunctionality – spaces that support cooking, entertaining, working and gathering. We're seeing thoughtful storage solutions, dedicated beverage areas, hidden appliances, layered lighting and natural materials that add warmth and character."

"There was a lot of patterned wallpaper, a lot of bold choices, mixing of materials and not being afraid of just being different, you know?" remarks Sepulveda-Villarini. "There were a lot of very edgy designs, especially in the small bathroom categories."

"There were several projects that had more daring use of color and texture combinations within the same space," McFadden notes.

Some trends – or perhaps more accurately, celebrated materials and flourishes – did make themselves evident during the judging process. "The key designs that I saw have more curvature to casework," Switzer indicates. "We're seeing a lot more moldings, a lot more thoughtful details – it was simple, but it just brought so much more depth to the space to have this curvature adding that softness to design that we've been missing for a while."



Photo: Douglas Friedman



Photo: Martin Vecchio Photography



■ The panel of esteemed judges for the 2025 Kitchen & Bath Design Awards included (from left): Rob Klein, Conceptual Kitchens in Carmel, IN; Gabe Sepulveda-Villarini, Jackson Design and Remodeling in San Diego, CA; Jeannine Price, Redbarn Designworks in Center Moriches, NY; Molly Switzer, Molly Switzer Interior Designs in Portland, OR; Jessica Webber, Webber Coleman Woodworks in Watkinsville, GA; Karen Swanson, New England Design Works in Manchester-by-the-Sea, MA; Sharon Sherman, Thyme and Place Design in Wyckoff, NJ, and Dan McFadden, PB Kitchen Design in Geneva, IL.

Sepulveda-Villarini adds, “A lot of natural materials are coming back. I see a lot of [designers] using less man-made materials and going back to using woods, natural stone, quartzite and marble.”

Klein points to the use of metals as an inspiring element. “Metal finishes, metal hardware.... There were a lot of metal freestanding shelves, and integration of metal into cabinetry was really on point this year – I think it was for kitchens and for bathrooms, too. The use of the mixed metals is definitely a trend that I think is here to stay.”

ANATOMY OF A WINNER

So, what elements of a design award submission really catch a judge’s eyes? *KBDN* asked the 2025 KBDA judging panel to weigh in on what makes a winning submission.

Photography and photo styling, many agreed, might just be the secret sauce that sets a great submission apart from an amazing submission. “As a small business owner, I am careful about how I spend money on marketing,” Swanson explains. “I rarely if ever spend money on advertising, I prioritize professional photography over all else in terms of promoting my design and business.”

When asked what makes good photography, Swanson immediately points to lighting. “We saw so many submissions with the overhead recessed can lighting on – it really detracts. A good photographer is opening their aperture to allow light in; they are using blankets and other devices to block light from coming into the room. I have my best photo shoot days in overcast weather.”

“Photography, lighting and staging play a critical role, especially in spaces that may lack bold colors or dramatic elements,” adds Price. “A strong visual presentation can elevate even the most understated design and make all the difference in how the space is perceived.”

Sherman looks for “a true mastery of the aesthetic and the functional. I believe you cannot have one without the other,” which translates into “an understanding of good design as it relates to human-centered design. Things can be beautiful, but how will people function within the spaces? Human scale



Photo: Phil Johnson at Phil Paul Photo

■ Projects displaying distinctive, personalized touches took home the gold at this year’s KBDA Awards. Among the honorees are: (opposite page, top and bottom, respectively): Gold winner, Best Kitchen Over \$250,000 – Daniel Joseph Chenin, FAIA of Daniel Joseph Chenin Ltd., and Gold winner, Best Kitchen \$175,000-\$250,000 – Lauren Tolles and Tori Olijar of Maison Birmingham; (this page) Gold winner Best Master Bath \$75,000-\$125,000 – Amy Klosterman and Michelle Jefferson of AB Design Elements.

is very important to the metal aspect of living in a space. You don’t want to feel overwhelmed or underwhelmed.”

On a final administrative note, Swanson adds, “Follow the rules!” When filling out the applications, she says, “Curate your narrative to be as on point and descriptive as possible. Having a short but really meaningful description is better than a multi-paragraph brief.” ■

GOLD



Photos: Douglas Friedman

Opulent Desert Beauty

DANIEL JOSEPH CHENIN, FAIA
 Daniel Joseph Chenin, Las Vegas, NV

This expansive kitchen, which blends Art Deco structure, traditional French sensibilities and contemporary desert living, is part of a custom build in the Nevada desert. Designed by Daniel Joseph Chenin, the project's core objective was to harmonize opposing forces - tradition and modernity, raw desert and refined interior - into one immersive and cohesive experience.

The kitchen, dining and living area merge into a space for cooking, gathering and quiet retreat. Though the space is large, the architecture emphasizes intimacy, with blush-toned plaster walls and millwork framing the kitchen.

Keeping everything to scale was an issue for the sizable space, which includes a monumental 13' La Cornue Chateau 150 range as envisioned by the clients. This centerpiece sits in the island, surrounded by custom matching La Cornue cabinetry. Also featured at the island is a coordinating La Cornue range

hood, polished Ivory Onyx countertop, Kohler Porto Fino white prep sink and Waterworks On Tap prep sink faucet and pot filler in polished nickel.

Along the back wall and side walls, storage and paneled Sub-Zero refrigerator and freezer in a metallic finish complement the golds and bronzes used throughout the space. The butler niches on each side include rich wood consoles highlighted by polished Jade Onyx backsplashes.

The window wall houses a wooden console with open shelving above, which allows the natural light to shine through. Included here are a Kohler Iron/Tones white kitchen sink with On Tap faucet from Waterworks in Polished Nickel and Fisher & Paykel paneled dishwasher.

The kitchen also includes a Miele Pureline convection steam oven, coffee machine and microwave oven, all in Clean Touch Steel.

