

A photograph of a modern architectural structure at dusk. The building features a curved, cantilevered roof with exposed wooden beams. The walls are made of light-colored, textured stone or concrete. A long, narrow, dark pool runs along the side of the building, reflecting the ambient light. A set of stairs leads up to a covered entrance area. In the background, two palm trees are visible against the twilight sky. The overall mood is serene and sophisticated.

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Right at Home

Grant Kirkpatrick, founding partner of KAA Design Group, uses his vast experience to update his own kitchen in record time

By **Lindsey Shook** Photography by **Manolo Langis**

“HAVING DONE RESIDENTIAL design for 30 years, I did have one mantra in mind to try to make this process as painless as possible: Have everything decided and ready before starting construction,” says Grant Kirkpatrick, architect and founding partner of KAA Design Group, on a special project that’s very close to his heart: the remodel of his own kitchen. While this mantra may sound like a normal step in the design process, most professionals know it rarely happens. But in the end, diligence paid off as he was able to condense the construction time to two and half months.

Kirkpatrick designed the Southern California home in 2001 for his wife and kids, but at the time he had to lower the budget when it came to the kitchen. “We could barely afford to finish the home so we put in the cheapest cabinets we could find,” he says. After 15 years, they were ready for change. The process began with a detailed search for stylish and efficient cabinet solutions. “We started by visiting at least six kitchen vendor showrooms including Boffi, Poggenpohl, Snaidero, Bulthaup, Aran Cucine and more,” says Kirkpatrick. “Our firm had done several Bulthaup kitchens in our projects through the years but I was convinced they were too expensive. It turns out they were on par with the rest, and their materials and details were superior.” The end result is a mix of charcoal gray lower cabinets that allow the high-gloss white uppers and aluminum backsplash to give the kitchen dimension and refract natural light.

While the home’s architecture is a prime example of California Modernism—an homage to Rudolf Schindler and Richard Neutra—it was



still 15 years old, and therefore one main goal was to ensure that the new kitchen materials and layout felt connected and original to the home. “As an architect I often see mismatched rooms in homes, particularly when they’ve been remodeled at different stages,” he says. “Unless you’re doing a full home remodel, always keep in mind the overall style of your home when planning a single room overhaul.” Kirkpatrick installed custom exposed board-formed concrete walls that complement vertical grain Douglas Fir ceilings and doors. Thick, troweled-smooth integral color plaster walls and ceilings create a timeless energy in the space. A custom hanging lamp fixture called the Hood Chandelier by L.A.-based artist Brendan Ravenhill hangs above the island. “We chose it because of its asymmetrical, three-part axis—it appears different from every angle—and the walnut wood connection, and to support local artisans,” he notes.

Having designed hundreds of modern kitchens over his 30-year tenure, Kirkpatrick often felt concerned that his firm’s clean style could be less functional. But after this project he notes, “I now know it’s quite the opposite because this is truly a dream kitchen for us.”