

HGTV's DESIGNERS' CHALLENGE COMES TO WILTON CONNECTICUT

Cathy Glass, Allied ASID, is president of Construction Concepts. Corp.of Stamford and the first East Coast interior designer to be chosen for the Home & Garden network's *Designers' Challenge*. Cathy's interior renovation of a Wilton home will be broadcast 10-12 times on HGTV this fall.

Home & Garden Television, which is distributed in 80 million U.S. households, is one of the fastest-growing networks in cable television history. HGTV *Designers' Challenge* is the network's most popular program segment. The weekly half-hour series follows one homeowner per episode through the exhilarating decision-making process of selecting from among three designers' room renovation plans, created just for the homeowner. Each Thursday evening at 9:30 PM, 1-2 million viewers watch as the chosen designer brings about a fabulous new look for the room.

Designers' Challenge Comes East

Last year, Wilton homeowner, Eileen Schneidman e-mailed HGTV with a request that they consider her home for *Designers' Challenge*.

"We know you typically don't film outside the Los Angeles area," she wrote, " but we hope you will consider us for an episode of *Designers' Challenge*. We are a family of five (we're both 37 & have three children ages 8, 5 and 1) living in Wilton CT, one hour from NYC. Wilton has one and two acre zoning, rolling countryside, tons of stone walls, ponds and old graceful trees."

Eileen Schneidman explained that although she and her husband had completely renovated the exterior of their 1968 Dutch colonial, "the kitchen remained in its original glory, with chocolate brown appliances, dark stained pine cabinets, mustard countertops and a yellow linoleum floor."

A half bath and laundry area, both next to the kitchen, were also in need of TLC. The Schneidmans wanted to create a mudroom as well.

"Our budget is \$100,000," Eileen said in her e-mail.

"The kitchen area is a large space but is dark, so our main objective is to maintain the spaciousness and significantly lighten it. French doors lead out to our deck, which overlooks mature trees and a pond. We are willing to spend money on well-designed

cabinetry, granite countertops, top-of-the line appliances and hardwood flooring. We expect to stay in this home for decades and want our purchases to last.

We like rich reds and sunny yellows, comfortable furniture, uncluttered surfaces and family-friendly design. We do a lot of informal entertaining and even in its current dismal state, the kitchen is still a gathering place.”

The Schneidmans’ timing was perfect. HGTV had just begun traveling shows, and much to their surprise and delight, HGTV chose the Schneidmans’ remodeling project.

Last fall, HGTV solicited three outstanding Fairfield County interior designers, interviewed them and outlined the project. When HGTV producers Pie Town Productions asked Cathy Glass to be a contender for the upcoming Wilton project, she was not surprised that it included a kitchen.

“People are staying at home and entertaining more,” she explained, “and the kitchen has become the most important room in the house.”

The Schneidmans met with all three selected companies, and chose Construction Concepts for their remodeling project.

“We were clearly impressed by Construction Concepts’ experience,” said Eileen Schneidman. “Cathy really did her homework. She studied how we live and what we like in fabrics, stone, flooring, lighting and accessories. The others met with us once and jumped right into the final presentation, but Cathy took a lot of time without knowing if we would choose her. Construction Concepts layout was a much better use of space than the other designers, and it helped that Cathy and Jeffrey Glass were a team with Jeffrey representing the BUILD aspect of the job.”

Jeffrey Glass is a certified Graduate Master Builder, one of only three in Connecticut, and he is a Certified Graduate Remodeler with 30 years of construction experience. CCC’s Vice-President of Design, Todd Forcellina has been designing award winning new homes and renovations for Construction Concepts Corp. for 14 years. The Schneidman’s felt that by offering architectural design, construction and interior design in one company, Construction Concepts would be more efficient and could save them time and money.

Cathy Glass approached the job, a kitchen/powder room/mudroom/laundry room renovation, as she would any other.

“We met with the Schneidmans; reviewed a detailed questionnaire that we had requested they fill out; and then created a plan that would give them everything they wanted to achieve in the space.”

But that doesn't tell the whole story.

“Cathy made our budget go so much further in the way she negotiated the job with the vendors,” said Eileen Schneidman. “She pulled together so many different vibrant colors, and it all works. We got exactly what we wanted. There is nothing like this kitchen, and Construction Concepts completely personalized each space so that it's truly ours.”

One-of-a-kind details

- A quilt-like watercolor, commissioned for the project from a local artist, became the inspiration for the renovation. Its vibrant color and juxtaposition of 19th century houses in the landscape gives a traditional theme a contemporary twist.
- A rendering of the client's home is hand painted on the bottom frame tiles of the powder room mirror, turning this custom feature into a unique heirloom.
- Five Ralph Lauren cream ware plates, representing the five members of the Schneidman family, hang on the deep sky blue mudroom wall.
- On the wall outside the laundry room (also visible from the kitchen), three shadow boxes are stacked vertically from ceiling to floor. Each shadow box contains one of three infant hospital gowns, saved from each of the three Schneidman children at birth. Beneath each gown is an engraved plaque with the child's name. These 3-D sculptures, hung with fish wire, appear animated, and add one final memory feature to a renovation that is uniquely personal.

Less than one month after the renovation was completed, the Schneidmans hosted a party for over 100 of their friends and family. “Our new space is phenomenal to entertain in,” said Eileen Schneidman in summing up her feelings about the new kitchen. “Cathy really personalized the space. She managed to make it a showpiece while totally reflecting our personalities.”

This remodeling project changed a dark, outdated, claustrophobic kitchen into a boldly striking, open and light filled space that is traditional with a contemporary twist. It functions beautifully and has become the heart of this home.

Blurring the boundary between fashion and home décor

Fashion designers like Ralph Lauren and Donna Karan have crossed over to home décor, and the boundary between the two design specialties has become blurred. After 20 years in the fashion industry, including several years as a Vice-President of Liz Claiborne's Russ & Aileen Sportswear divisions, Cathy Glass founded the full service firm, Construction Concepts Corp. in 1990.

Cathy explains, “All the design areas are interconnected, and fashion does steer how we dress as well as how we live and design our environments. Outfitting a room is not unlike outfitting a person. Just like the feeling you get when wearing something that suits you, I try to create home environments that fit my clients’ personalities like a second skin.”

Designers’ Challenge client, Eileen Schneidman, described her wardrobe as casual and leaning a little towards the funky. “I’m very active and I love color, but I need something I can be comfortable in,” said Eileen.

Cathy Glass took her cue from this young mother’s fashion style and translated it into a bold, energetic and winning interior design the entire family can enjoy.

When the final filming was completed, Cathy received a large bouquet of flowers from HGTV with the note, "Cathy, thanks again for all your hard work on the Schneidman project. Your professionalism and thoroughness are evident, and the rooms look amazing! Thanks again, Eric, Ashley and the Designers’ Challenge staff."

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PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The Schneidmans' pine cabinets, beams, and paneling were removed and a 10' center island opens up the kitchen. No longer cut in half by the original island, the new space is larger and more functional, and the new island comfortably seats five to six people for entertaining and dining.

- Nine lineal feet of additional cabinet space includes two pantry walls.
- Victoria Regina Granite (dark blue green) countertops with a simple pencil edge detail anchor the space.
- The addition of double French doors opens the dining room to the kitchen, improves traffic flow and creates the sense of a much larger kitchen space.
- A seating/reading area makes the kitchen feel more like a 'kitchen/family' room than just a 'working kitchen'. A traditional custom sofa and ottoman upholstered in a bright red contemporary designer fabric from Osborne and Little (Designer's Guild collection) give the area energy and boldness. The sofa pillows are printed with oversized contemporary flowers further contributing to the space's sense of whimsy.
- Above the sofa is a very playful and colorful abstract farm scene. This quilt-like watercolor was a custom commission for the project from a local artist (Jacqueline M. Cohen) and became the inspiration for the renovation. Its vibrant color and juxtaposition of 19th century houses gives a traditional theme a contemporary twist.
- The wall lighting (Blauet) is a contemporary sculptural design including funky tubular shaped lampshades.
- The kitchen cabinets are solid cherry with a rich antique patina. The cherry wood contrasts with straw yellow kitchen island cabinets in a contemporary recessed panel design. These are offset by traditionally designed island legs.
- Stainless steel appliances, LCD plasma TV (County TV & Appliance) and contemporary stainless steel counter stools (Design Within Reach). give a another contemporary touch to the space.

- Dramatic contemporary lighting (Flos) draws the eye to the center island. Three oversized, ridged glass pendants are sculpturally designed with hanging decorative wires that fit this young family's personality.
- The kitchen backsplash is tiled in soft yellow hand made rhomboid shapes (Ceramic Design) that are installed horizontally. The effect is bold and colorful.
- Contemporary green walls (Benjamin Moore HC-1 "Castleton Mist") are the backdrop for unique wall art and cherry cabinets.
- 3" and 4" V-groove red oak flooring gives the space its warmth and provides a neutral backdrop for all the bold color used in the space.
- Custom crown molding throughout the renovation creates a sense of height.

Powder Room

The powder room moved from its hiding place in the original footprint of the kitchen to a much more accessible location tucked between the mudroom and the kitchen entrance.

- The powder room floor of hand painted and hand made glazed 4' X 4' tiles (Ceramic Design) is striking in five Tuscan inspired colors of maize, sand, cobalt, soft yellow and terra cotta. The irregular pattern and terra cotta tile border is a sets the tone for this stunning powder room.
- A hand made custom mirror, by a local artist (Westcote Pottery, New Palz, New York) is framed in painted tiles with whimsical motifs reflecting the same glazed colors as the floor. A rendering of the client's home is hand painted into the bottom frame tiles of the mirror, turning this custom feature into a unique heirloom.
- The wall color in a soft straw blends beautifully with the yellow of the floor tiles as well as the backsplash tiles and island in the kitchen.

Mudroom

This area is an addition to the original footprint of the project. Most guests and all family members will enter through this room into the main kitchen area.

- The focus is a white custom built-in wainscoted bench with storage drawer and custom upholstered seat in a bright red polka dot designer fabric from Osborne and Little (Designer's Guild collection) which is laminated for wear-

ability and style. Red and light blue pillows in bold patterns (one stripe and one floral print) give the room its sense of style.

- The floor is designed with 8” X 16” porcelain tiles (Ceramic Design), which are resemble stone. They have an uneven cobbled edge and a running bond pattern (subway pattern).
- The walls in white bead board wainscoting are painted an outdoor deep sky blue (Benjamin Moore “Cumulus Cotton” #2063-70) above.
- Five Ralph Lauren cream ware plates hang on the wall, representing the five members of the Schneidman family and giving the renovation one more creative and personal detail.

Laundry Room

The washer and dryer now have a room of their own, complete with supply closet, working countertop, cabinets and window - all hidden from the kitchen and out of the way of the general flow of the kitchen/family area.

- The laundry room floor is the same porcelain tile as the mudroom, giving it the style it deserves.
- On the wall outside the laundry room (also visible from the kitchen), three shadow boxes are stacked vertically from ceiling to floor. Each shadow box contains one infant hospital gown saved from each of the three Schneidman children at birth. Beneath the gown is an engraved plaque with each child’s name. These 3-D sculptures, hung with fish wire, appear animated, and add one final personal detail to a renovation that is uniquely personal.

DESIGNERS’ CHALLENGE PROJECT VENDORS:

County TV & Appliance – Thermador appliances, Sharp plasma TV and Bosch dishwasher
Rob Unger 203-327-2630
2770 Summer Street, Stamford

Ceramic Design – tile for powder room, mudroom and laundry room floors, kitchen backsplash, and granite countertops
Karen Berkemeyer, 203-869-8800
Greenwich, CT

Designs Within Reach – kitchen counter stools
Mark Major mmajor@dwr.com

Klaff's - all plumbing and lighting
South Norwalk
Tim Murphy 203-866-1603.
tmurphy@klaffs.com.

Please note the following Klaff's purchases:

- The kitchen sink was stainless from Elkay.
- Faucet in kitchen is a Blanco.
- Faucet in powder room is a Rohl.
- Toilet in powder room is a Toto.
- Pedestal sink in powder room is Kallista.
- Sconce in powder room is Urban Archaeology.
- Wall reading lights in the kitchen are Blauet.
- Three pendant lights in kitchen are Flos.

Osborne & Little - All designer fabrics in the mud room and the kitchen.
Deborah, CT., 203-359-1500
90 Commerce Street, Stamford

Labriola Frame and Art Gallery - framed shadow boxes with infant shirts
Sandy Labriola 293-322-8756
sandy@labriolaframe.com
1061 High Ridge Road, Stamford

National Forest Products - cabinetry
Ron (owner) 814-927-5622

Classic Upholstery (will be featured on HGTV for the shopping expedition part of the segment)
"Lefty" (owner) 203-845-8776
Norwalk, CT

Westcote Pottery – custom powder room mirror and watercolor above sofa
Vaughn or Jacqueline - 1-845-687-7256
Vsmithpots@aol.com
New Palz, New York

Ralph Lauren - cream ware plates displayed on mudroom wall.
Jessica Lake - 212-421-6000.
979 Third Avenue, New York

Benjamin Moore - all interior paint