

Home Den can be a "Power" Office

By MARIE CHAN, ASID



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It is inevitable in Orange County's fast-paced life style that work and leisure often intertwine in myriad ways. And, as home entertaining gains favor, there is an increased tendency to carry on business negotiations in the privacy of one's home. The den, then, becomes a logical extension of the daytime office.

Professional interior designers, when called upon to design home office space, often take the design direction from the client's profession. Such is the case of the den-office created for "Trend House" at the Interior Design Show to be staged at the Orange County Fairgrounds in Costa Mesa Friday through Sept. 24.

Taking the premise that the client-occupant is a developer who uses the den, not so much as an administrative office, but as a place where projects are initiated and negotiations hammered out, the room is geared to suggest an image of sophistication and sta-

bility. The room is meant to help market the client's concepts to his guests.

Relevancy is always an important issue when working with a client. So, in reality, whether the design is for a show house or an actual client, the design should be customized to establish the personality and identity of the person who will occupy the space.

For the purpose of the den-office in "Trend House," our imaginary client's ties to the construction industry are reinforced by the use of building materials in the interior appointments. Visitors to the "Trend House" will see this point illustrated in the application of "glass blocks" to the illuminated counter base at the entry to the den. The glass blocks are really simulations of lightweight acrylic panels normally found in suspended ceilings of office buildings.

By adapting an inherently commercial building product to such use, the design attempts to put the stamp of the client's profession in this dual-purpose space. This is a design strategy that consumers can adapt to their own needs.

A collection of minerals and geodes is displayed throughout the room as a reminder of the interwoven relationship between land and structures. As part of the decision to use the room as a marketing tool, selected architectural models of projects under construction have been placed in one of the cabinets.

Although this office requires a little paper work, its relatively small size calls for the use of

extensive built-ins to solve storage problems. To keep clutter to a minimum, all vestiges of work are kept behind cabinet doors. The glass race track table occupies less space than a standard executive desk while visually expanding the space at the same time.

The stained-glass lamp on the table acts as a piece of functional art. Its custom design is made to play off the upholstery fabrics while introducing some much needed color.

Since the neoclassic period is a running thread that unites the 11 rooms in "Trend House," stylized architectural elements like columns, friezes and pediments have been used to front the display cases. Such updated neoclassicism pays tribute to the architectural heritage of the client's profession.

The walls are executed in a "rag" finish that is custom tinted to match the furnishings. The paint work creates a formal but dramatic "broken color" effect. This imparts depth, color and sophistication to the otherwise nondescript surfaces. The contrast between the reflective black lacquered counters and the speckled tone-on-tone finish of the cabinet fronts also brings more textural interest to the interior.

To further convey a "power image" and heighten the sense of drama in the space, black is used extensively throughout. Moreover, the desire to balance "power" with "refinement" is achieved by interspersing ethnic art within a setting of sensuous

curves.

We have chosen to display an ebony carving from Tanzania and Kalimantan totem masks from Indonesia because they are particularly appropriate in the context of this office-den. In this case, it is easy to discern the connection between these artifacts and the jungle-like business world outside. They evoke the feeling of a primitive, tribal power and act as a counterpoint to the urbane gentility of its surroundings.

As a means of reshaping the space, the display cabinets and entry counter are set at 45 degrees to the walls while spherical and curved surfaces are liberally deployed to break up any feeling of angularity in the room. A free-form ledge and corner cabinet hang cantilevered over a brightly painted sphere and create a dynamic tension that is simple yet arresting.

In essence, this den-office is designed to project a professional image and provide a backdrop to encourage creative thinking and discussion.

"Trend House," a series of 11 vignette-like rooms, will be on display at the Interior Design Show for three days; beginning Friday. Professional designers, members of the Orange County chapter of American Society of Interior Designers, will be on hand to answer design questions.

For information, call the ASID office at (714) 643.1549.

