

Hi-tech from page 2

American expatriate community in Japan."

Both John and Gwen agreed it was difficult to pinpoint exactly which features, including other conveniences of this state-of-the-art system, they found most important.

Gwen, who made no claims for technological know-how, marveled at the five shelves of equipment on either side of the 52-inch TV screen, all neatly protected by black glass doors.

"These 10 boxes are the control center for multiple functions such as modulating the high-definition sound from the nine speakers, giving us theater-quality sound from our television or laser disc/music/recorder," John said. "We're delighted it is also set up to include other functions, such as housewide audio, video, telephone paging and surveillance monitoring of any part of the house."

"Our television, by the way, is a rear-projection type from the Dutch company, Philips NV. It allows for a flat screen as well as delivering superior picture quality.

Thomas Yesowich, president of Vitex, which installed this system, assures us that the HDTV (high definition) coming into the market will be compatible with our TV."

Both John and Gwen agreed on the advantages of the CD disc, interactive capacity of their TV — "especially for our son, who enjoys tours through the Smithsonian in Washington as well as playing video games."

Gwen said she "also benefited from her golf lessons in the interactive mode."

By using a photo CD, they liked putting all family and travel photographs on the discs so they could be played on television, even being able to use the zooming device for close-ups. "A clear advantage," Gwen said, "was getting rid of the clutter of old photo albums."

The film system, available in three levels of complexity, gets rid of a lot of wiring normally associated with such a variety of equipment and functions, by digital electronic coding at the point of origin, then decoding at the receiving end.

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Sleek

Kitchen, bath sports racy new look

BY JANICE TIGAR-KHAMER SPECIAL WRITER
What's new for kitchens and baths is about as sleek and shapely as a high-speed sports car.

And no wonder. The newest offering of contemporary cabinets comes from Pininfarina of Italy, the same company that has designed Ferraris and Alfa Romeos.

The Pininfarina-designed cabinets, made by Snidero of Italy, are about as custom as cabinets come. Snidero will make a cabinet, or a whole section of storage, to fit any niche in the house and even give you a choice of six colors.

The cabinets are made either of laminate or a wood veneer over sturdy beech and oak fiber board. Tall units with curved fronts are a Pininfarina trademark. These units are made of a patented structural foam and finished with a glossy lacquer.

The large, curved cabinets make excellent corner storage and give even small kitchens snappy architectural interest. Arched moldings and convex-shaped doors can be placed over the cooking surface or sink to balance the room and give some dimension and shape to the most ordinary kitchens.

"The look is very functional and architectural," says Sherry Huntzinger, kitchen and bath designer for EuroStyle, Ltd. of Bloomfield Hills, the Michigan dealer for Snidero. "People don't want to re-do their kitchens every 10 years or so. These cabinets have a timeless look."

Though the lacquered finish looks as fragile as glass, the surfaces are tough and built for family use, promises Michael Martin, design consultant for EuroStyle, Ltd., formerly in the Michigan Design Center, Troy.

To accent the snazzy Pininfarina cabinets and similar ones by Snidero, customers are using more than one type of countertop in the kitchen. Smooth tiles and Mexican or Pewabic tiles often are mixed with granite tops or hard surfaces like Corian.

Other new looks for the kitchen include open shelves, glass doors and all-white cabinets with a corner storage unit in a contrasting color like red, gray or turquoise.

More and more new or remodeled kitchens have work surfaces of varied heights to make food preparation easier.

"The Europeans have used countertops of different heights for years," Martin said. "It's called 'stepping' or 'drumming' and it is catching on in this country."

Also popular is a single-lever faucet by Franke that pulls up and out of the sink. The Lady-Lux faucet by Grohe comes with attachments like a scraper and a brush.

Since Snidero has a distribution center in Canada, some cabinets are in stock, but you could wait up to 12 weeks for delivery. Cost? For a complete kitchen (floor, cabinets, countertops, appliances), expect to pay about 12 to 18 percent of the market value of your home, says Martin.

Clean, classic lines for kitchens and baths are in and trendy, glitzy-modern is out, says Ken Stokkes, co-owner of Que Vie in Royal Oak.

More than 70 percent of the customers who remodel through Que Vie choose lacquered or formica cabinets, he said.

"White cabinets with countertops or accent tile in gray or teal is very popular," Stokkes said. "Contemporary cabinets are bright, timeless and easy to clean."

At Ideal Finish in Canton, requests for custom tile work for kitchens and baths are "out the roof," says Mona Applegate, co-owner.

"You can create a very custom look by adding just a few decorative handpainted tiles to a backsplash or countertop," said Applegate, who has helped customers create Southwest and art deco looks with tile. "New ceramic tile in an existing kitchen or bath is an inexpensive way to update a room."

Ideal Finish also sells a laminated, contemporary-styled vanity, called the Waterfall, that mounts to the wall instead of resting on the floor. The free-standing unit, which sells for about \$1,000, is used as often as a dining room buffet as it is a bathroom vanity, says Applegate.

See SLEEK, 5

Glitz to granite: boosting awareness

BY HELEN DIANE VINCENT SPECIAL WRITER

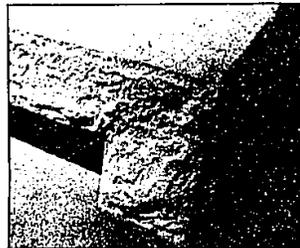
If you want to raise your design consciousness, particularly of the bewildering variety of contemporary styles, you can get plenty of help at the Michigan Design Center in Troy.

For exposure to authentic early modern, stop by Baker, Knapp & Tulbys to see the reissued L.&J.G. Stickley furniture, originally manufactured in the early 1900s. The new museum is F. Stimmer for the Frank Lloyd Wright Collection of textiles and rugs. Both men provided a major impetus to the early modern movement that reverberates throughout the design community today.

You can sense a major shift in design sensibility with the Eileen Gray rug in the Tennant showroom. It was originally designed in the 1920s according to the maxim of the International Style: "Less is more." She struggled against tremendous odds, but her work is now appreciated and has become a status symbol, along with the 100-plus furniture designs now designated as modern classics being offered by Palazzetti, a major design resource at Tennant Associates.

Once you've digested all of this, you're ready to move on to the post-modern styles initiated in the 1970s and a driving force of much good design today. Examples of this style in furniture can be found at the Zeising, Bill Perlmuter, Norman Lockoff and Bill Born showrooms. Lockoff features a Parnberg dining group using the unusual anigre wood and Bill Born goes all the way with the art furniture trend with the Quess line and the hand-made, handpainted tables by Nancy Denison, a native of Michigan whose work is beginning to be collected internationally.

Both classic and post-modernism is evident at Stark Carpet, one of the key resources of handknotted



Rugged: The travertine table in detail — 48x18x16 inches, \$3,314. In the Design Resources Showroom, Michigan Design Center, Troy.

rugs to the decorator trade. Here you will find "Art Deco," made up of a dynamic combination of motifs a client may arrange to his or her liking. It is, in effect, a concept offered by the futurist Alvin Toffer, in which the client and the designer are in partnership creating a design. Stark also offers rugs made in Israel, more in the post-modern vein, but also open to custom adaptation.

The most ancient of home furnishings products — glazed floor tiles, usually identified with Spain and Mediterranean countries — gets a modern systems treatment by the German Korzilius company through its Contemp line. The combination of shapes allow you to create interesting patterns to suit your individual taste. Virginia Tile carries this and other lines that take modern concepts seriously.

For unsurpassed glitz and glamour, make sure you go to the Stroheim and Humann showroom to see the JAB Byzanz line. Donna Stevens and the J.L. Hudson designers selectively use the JAB line in-store settings and for clients. The technically superb and complex pattern uses Byzantine motifs, but casts them in a modern way, adding metallic yarn to enhance a

powerfully opulent statement.

When you leave Stroheim and proceed toward the Design Resources Showroom, you should be aware of the wide range of effects modern design offers: from glitz to granite, and the granite in this case is at the Design Resources showroom. The rough-hewn sides of the travertine marble table shown are contrasted by the smooth top. It's a table and a rugged landscape, all in one.

At another extreme in texture, gaining in popularity, are the proliferation of acrylic and glass tables. Of the many items available, The Design Group's dining table, designed by Frank Hill for Bagatelle Glass, stands out because of the unconventional handling of glass; the designer works with rough-chipped and polished surfaces contrasting with each other.

Reaching for still another realm of material and light is the Telos curtain system of sliding panels, again at Tennant Associates. Gloria Fulton of Gorman's Gallery of Fine Furniture uses a lot of this line with great effectiveness in her interior design projects. Some of the options in this line offer leafy tree patterns that beautifully filter light.

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