

Dwell on Design 2015

BY [JAMIE GOLD](#) ON JUL 20, 2015

Dwell on Design keeps growing, attracting more visitors every year to its flagship Los Angeles show and now New York, too.

Fortunately for kitchen and bath professionals, Friday is Trade Day, so one only has to jostle among colleagues. If you happen to practice in Southern California, odds are you'll run into quite a few industry friends while wandering the exhibit hall, and that's a trend we all enjoy. Here are some of the other trends on display at this vibrant show.



Stainless alternatives

Appliance manufacturers keep looking for the “next” stainless steel, and there were some interesting choices to ponder this time around. Glass fronts have been the most viable alternative, and Miele is expanding its offerings in this realm. In addition to showing off its Obsidian black glass series, it has expanded its Brilliant White and Truffle Brown glass fronts into flush-mount induction tops and hoods. It has also created a stylish handle program, letting users choose whether they want matching glass or a complementary metal. (Customization was another trend in evidence at the show.)

KitchenAid showed off a finish it's calling Black Stainless. It had traditional stainless look accents and the overall effect was steam punk chic.

Dacor released a non-stainless series it calls Alchemy. The finish on display was a warm, pale red it called Rose Gold. Nickel, Copper and Gunmetal rounded out the collection, slated for late 2015 release.

Hands-free trend

We've seen the exploding popularity of hands-free faucets, cabinet openers and, more recently, hands-free toilet flushing. The newest entrant to that trend was Miele's Knock to Open Dishwasher, which users can tap with their knee or elbow. The company wisely set the opening mechanism above the level of most toddlers and small pets.

It will be interesting to see whether this technology expands to other appliance manufacturers. You could make a case for Wolf's handle-free oven being hands-free, too, if you want to tap it with an elbow, but it's not being heavily marketed that way.

Brand extensions

Appliance makers are also delving further into brand extensions. KitchenAid has been hugely successful with its classic stand mixer. (Its sexy 2016 Matte Black model was on display in the booth.) Fagor and SMEG have also recently extended into this category.

The notable entrant at Dwell was Sub-Zero/Wolf. For your clients who want a totally coordinated kitchen (or for those homeowners who otherwise can't afford the brand), they can now get toasters, toaster ovens or Blendtec/Vitamix-style blenders with the iconic Wolf red knobs (or other choices from the line – again, customization rules).

Interesting sinks

Sink manufacturers are also innovating. Recent shows have seen a tremendous array of accessories and new materials, such as Native Trails' NativeStone concrete alternative and Laufen's SaphirKeramik ultra-thin, strong ceramic. (Both were on display at this show, too.) Julien led the new and interesting field, though, with its Social Corner stainless steel kitchen sink, designed by Matthew Quinn. It's a 16-gauge stainless apron front – and apron side – contemporary fixture. Designed for islands or peninsulas, you can choose left or right corner, depending on where you want to install it. You lose counter space on one side, of course, but gain a slick gathering spot in your kitchen design.

Outdoor excitement

This is a category that continues to bring new offerings to the market, especially at the luxury end. True showed off its new dual zone, glass door wine refrigerator for the outdoor gourmand. And, because no chef (or guest) wants to be without a smart phone or tablet while enjoying patio life, Zon's Powersol umbrella with its solar-powered charging hub is sure to be a hit with outdoor clients.

Danver introduced mobile islands for outdoor kitchens (though they didn't have them on display). While intended mainly for the hospitality market, it is possible to specify a single island for a residential client.

Other trends

A few other interesting trends on display were the many products designed to create interesting walls. Stikwood's contribution was its peel and stick reclaimed wood paneling, which looks better at each show. Plyboo showed off some beautiful bamboo wall panels. Several other brands, like Wonder Wall and Pioneer Millworks, also offered very attractive reclaimed wall coverings. This is not your father's den paneling!

On the tile front, there were also plenty of dimensional offerings on display, in case you're bored with the flat style. Oversized tile slabs were also in evidence, as they have been at most recent shows. Fiandre and Pental both showcased strong entrants in that category.

One of the major trends to hit the kitchen and bath industry in recent years is digital integration, (seen in smart phone connectivity, charging power, touch screens and other Apple/Android influences). Hansgrohe applied the touch feature

into its savvy new Select Technology series of shower heads and trims. Rather than asking users to swivel a head with wet hands, its single Select button lets one change the spray setting on the heads and tub/shower mode on the combined trims. This is such a smart way to do it that competitors will likely follow.

Last Words

Dwell on Design is a fun outing, especially if you enjoy rubbing elbows with TV types like Nate Berkus and David Bromstad. It also attracts some top notch brands, but what it might be best for is taking the early adopter pulse... What is the trendsetting public excited about? What are the millennials seeking? What are your younger clients likely to be asking for? Of course, to accurately gather that intel, you might have to jostle among the weekend crowds.

Jamie Gold, CKD, CAPS is an independent designer in San Diego, the author of New Kitchen Ideas That Work and upcoming New Bathroom Idea Book (Taunton Press), and a blogger, design journalist, seminar developer and industry consultant.