

## The Thrill of the Challenge *Seriously Seeking Function*

By Susan I. Shiber  
Photography by Kelly O'Keefe

*P*am Monaco glows in anticipation when confronted with spatial enigma. The owner and principal designer of Whole House Cabinetry is positively gleeful at the words: *You can't do anything with this space!*

"I love it," she exclaims. "I get so excited and can't wait to go look. The whole idea around changing space, whether it involves partial remodeling, full replacement, or major remodeling is function. It's not just about making things

*Right: A designer for 26 years, Pam Monaco does it all from gutting to reconfiguring, removing doors and windows to vaulting ceilings and enclosing patios. No space is too small - or too large for Monaco's magic. A visitor to Whole House Cabinetry will be greeted by Harry and Ginger.*





pretty. It's about making things work better," insists Monaco.

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Imagine a very old house with deep window walls that could not be moved to offer more workable space in a small galley kitchen. "The solution," says Monaco, "was to get rid of a nearby powder room and put a new one in the mudroom. We reconfigured walls to improve maneuverability and installed handsome two-tone wood cabinetry."

The pièce de résistance of this renovation is a cherry cabinet with butterfly green granite lower countertop that was built into a deep window wall that Monaco lined in granite. The homeowner grows herbs in the sunny window well and enjoys looking out at her brick patio garden.

Envision a new home, typically tract, with a dearth of entertainment possibilities. "Removing a half wall between the kitchen and family room and constructing columned corners on either side of the area opened up both rooms," explains Monaco. "A room-length shelf above the columns handily holds speakers."

In addition, she removed the kitchen pantry and replaced it with a hutch, giving ample room for a larger island. Combining work and social space, the island includes the range, a second sink, and four chairs. An Advantium oven is in adjacent counter top cabinetry.

Kitchens are more the heart of the home than ever before and with two or more cooks, Monaco is called on to innovate multiple work stations and improve traffic flow. "Today's kitchen has lost the sterile look of previous eras. The furniture is rich, beautiful, and very well made. Lighting is ambient and attractive. Sound systems, television sets, even fireplaces, are featured in this very important room," she notes.

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It isn't unusual for Monaco's phone to ring on a holiday. When clients entertain for the first time in a remodeled kitchen, they want her to know that they never thought they could have such fun working and entertaining with so many people milling around. That's the secret of functional space.

Monaco works wonders with doors and ceilings, as well. Pocket doors placed in a divided room give it an illusion of spaciousness. Relocating storeroom entries allows the inventive designer to build a bar, complete with sink and stools. Simply removing unnecessary closets can create a better furniture fit.

High ceilings offer the opportunity for architectural detailing. Instead of opting for crown molding alone, a coffered look brings the ceiling down and warms up the entire room. Monaco cautions against taking cabinets to the top of tall walls, which doesn't accommodate decorative moldings. She suggests using upper shelves for display or storing items brought out only once or twice a year.

The creative designer brings a mix of artistic vision, construction expertise, and architectural design to her clients. She holds a BFA degree from Philadelphia College Art and took architectural design and drafting courses and National Kitchen & Bath Association classes. Prior to launching her business in 1999, she worked for her husband Ned Hackett, a contractor who specialized in buying, refurbishing, and selling buildings in Philadelphia, and later she was associated with other kitchen design companies in Chester County.

"I framed, hung sheetrock, painted, wallpapered, and did trim out carpentry and tile work. I had my own pick-up truck, wore construction boots, and even got involved in demolition. My husband teases me that those days are gone now that I have learned how to point," she laughs.

Whole House Cabinetry is just that. With Monaco's diversified expertise, she provides design and installation services for every room in the home. She works in tandem with associate designer Michael Clements and Hackett is project manager. Turn-key renovations are generally more problem-free and cost effective. The company belongs to SEN, a buying group ensuring competitive pricing.

A visitor to Whole House Cabinetry will be greeted by Harry and Ginger, Jack Russell/poodle and Maltese/terrier mixes. The dogs are almost always there, but furnishings are frequently turned over to

keep the showroom fresh. Exquisite pieces, such as a distressed finish Madison hutch, cherry cabinet with sink and dishwasher cutouts, or heart pine stove cabinet are for sale and ideas are boundless. •

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