

KBCULTURE

A SELECTIVE REVIEW OF THE PRODUCTS, PLACES AND PERSPECTIVES CENTRAL TO KITCHEN AND BATH DESIGN

2012 KBCULTURE Awards

KBCULTURE AWARD 2012

In this third year of the KBCULTURE Awards, I'm happy to report that good design hasn't been quelled by the still-challenging economic conditions.

In my experience of the kitchen and bath scene, product development follows a biennial track; one year we'll see a focus on aesthetic appearances, and in the next, engineering innovations are in the fore. Entries to the 2012 program clearly indicate we're in that latter cycle. From hands-free faucets to intelligent appliances to levitating counters, technology is making our experiences in baths and kitchens ever more rewarding.

For this competition, Alice Liao shared jury duty with me. The editor of *Kitchen + Bath Business* magazine, she brought an insider's knowledge of the field coupled with a journalist's healthy skepticism to the process of evaluating a very competitive crop of submissions.

A note to folks who happily and habitually tread the cutting edge: While not every product on this page is available at this very moment, by the close of the year you will be able to fulfill your need for the new.

Congratulations to all.

—Leslie Clagett, Editor

KITCHEN CABINETS

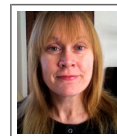


Winner: +Artesio by Poggenpohl

Architect Hadi Teherani made his mark on the skyline of Cologne with a trio of angular apartment houses that cantilever over the river, and his design for this kitchen clearly references those contemporary icons. By developing not just walls of cabinets, but also ceiling and floor structures, he's created a space that's both self-contained and connected to its surroundings. Lacquered glass, wood or melamine comprise the materials palette.



ABOUT THE EDITOR



LESLIE CLAGETT

is a seasoned yet passionate observer of the international kitchen and bath

industries. An editor at publications ranging from Arts + Architecture to *Kitchens & Baths*, she is also the author of *The New City Home* [The Taunton Press], among other books. Leslie has a tremendous respect for quality design and the people who labor in its pursuit; her discerning eye has been known to get a little misty in the presence of true beauty.

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Questions, suggestions and submissions [welcome](#).

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Honorable Mention: FloatingSpaces by [SieMatic](#)

The open-kitchen archetype undergoes an evolution with this system of wall panels and shelving that extends the space to adjoining areas in the home. A design language that is consistent in form and diverse in colors and materials, it's an effective tool for marking architectural transitions.

COOKING



Winner: Freedom Induction Cooktop by [Thermador](#)

A network of 48 interconnected heating elements liberates the cooktop—and in turn, the cook—from the having to place pots precisely on the surface of this appliance, making it particularly accommodating of oversize or irregularly-shaped items like sheet pans and poachers [it holds vessels up to 21 inches x 13 inches]. A touchscreen controls power levels and timers for individual containers, and 'remembers' the settings for each as they are moved about on the ceramic glass surface.



Honorable Mention: Connoisseurian by [Capital Cooking Equipment](#)

The first dual-fuel range from Capital is a powerhouse made to meet the expectations of serious home chefs. Up top, users can opt for either the unmitigated heat of open burners or the flame-control of sealed burners. In the oven, the MoistRoast feature keeps dishes tender and flavorful. The appliance is offered in four sizes—30-, 36-, 48- and 60-inch—and in ten standard colors. Custom hues are available, too.



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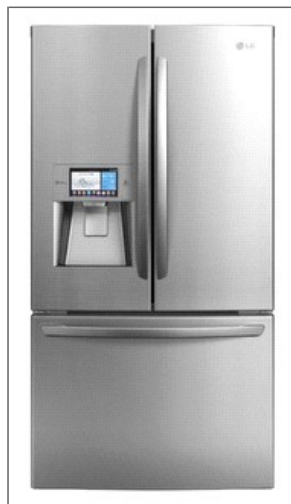


Honorable Mention: Pro Grand Steam Range by [Thermador](#)
Can an appliance be a luxury? With features like soft-close doors and controls washed in light, this range earns its 'grand' appellation. And its performance is certainly pro caliber, with a dedicated steam/convection oven and warming drawer complementing the six gas burners and primary oven. Number crunchers will be impressed by the cooktop's 375 to 22,000 Btu span.

REFRIGERATORS



Winner: Profile French Door with Hands-Free Autofill by [GE](#)
At last, a claim of hands-free operation that exceeds expectations—and originating from a refrigerator, no less. A combination of proximity detectors and ultrasonic sensors gauges the size of the container that's to be filled with filtered water and monitors the level of the liquid; the stream turns off automatically when the vessel is full. An equally convenient feature is the PreciseFill function, which dispenses measured amounts of water as specified by the user.



Honorable Mention: Smart Refrigerator LFX28995 by [LG](#)
When the nationwide energy-monitoring Smart Grid is up and running, this fridge will be all ready to connect and conserve. But until then, it offers several options that set it apart from the pack. Using either the door-front LCD panel or a smartphone, it's possible to keep track of food supplies and expiration dates with the SmartManager system. The SmartShopping feature completes the cycle, as it can place online orders with the grocery store.

DISHWASHERS



Winner: Integrated Double DishDrawer Tall by [Fisher & Paykel](#)
Pardon the upcoming pun...This two-compartment dishwasher has undergone a *sizable* improvement, as its top drawer [no bending down!] has been designed to fit plates and platters up to 13 inches in diameter. Apply door panels to match your cabinets, and this remote-controlled appliance goes incognito.



Honorable Mention: TrueSteam Dishwasher by [LG](#)
Two pressure settings—one for fragile items, another for more substantial dishes and cookware—unleash the power of steam cleaning in this dishwasher. For mixed loads, it's possible to target upper and lower racks separately with bursts of higher- and lower-pressure moisture.

LAUNDRY



Winner: WF457 by [Samsung](#)
A hands-off approach to laundry? Yes, please! Using a smartphone app, users can put this washer through its paces from afar. Start or stop the appliance, check on how much time is left in a cycle, receive remote notification when the wash is done; all are helpful to folks who have a busy domestic schedule to keep—especially those whose laundry rooms are located a time-



Honorable Mention: Elite Front-Load HE Steam Washer + Elite Steam Dryer by [Kenmore](#)

Enhanced washing technologies cut the time—by more than 30%—consumed by this household chore. With the ActiveSpray feature, rim-mounted nozzles dispense water and detergent throughout the soak cycle, accelerating the process. ActiveRinse works on a similar principle, jetting a cleansing mist onto clothes during the spin phase.

VENTILATION



Winner: Cirrus / Sorpresa Collection by [Best](#)

Going undercover overhead, this ducted range 'hood' rests flush with the ceiling, preserving architectural planes as well as sightlines. With a maximum pull of 500 CFM, the 43-inch-wide model effectively evacuates cooking odors and vapors; if an external blower option is exercised, that ramps up to 1,500 CFM.



Honorable Mention: Intrigue / Sorpresa Collection by [Best](#)

With its inverted question-mark-shape emphasizing the ambiguous nature of this range hood—is it a work of art, or an appliance?—the Intrigue lives up to its name. A paintable flue cover poses interesting design potential for those who are creatively inclined. Available as either a recirculating or ducted model, it produces 460 CFM of exhaust power.

KITCHEN FAUCETS





Winner: KWC ONO Touch Light Pro by [KWC America](#)

By tapping and turning a wireless, fully portable control module, it's possible regulate both the temperature and flow of this faucet from a distance of up to 26 feet. A magnetic base allows the remote to be anchored [and operated] at a convenient point. This sophisticated technology serves to simplify—and beautify—life in the kitchen for people of all physical abilities.



Honorable Mention: MotionSense by [Moen](#)

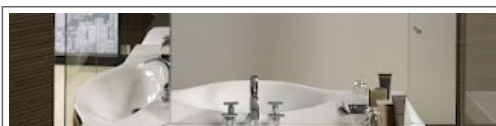
Select from three different ways to activate the flow of this faucet. In addition to the familiar manual handle-style operation, there are two sensor-based systems. One turns water on and off when a hand passes over the top of the arced spout. The other detects objects that are placed under the spout, which triggers the flow.

SINKS



Winner: Crystalline by [Blanco](#)

Instead of side-by-side bowls, this sink has a front-and-back configuration. That's good news for compact kitchens, where ceding limited counter space is often a dicey proposition. Furthering the thought of less is more is the sliding glass cutting board, which neatly conceals the basins and converts them into a work surface. It's available in black or white.





Honorable Mention: Palace by [Laufen](#)

It's not unusual for bathrooms to have irregular layouts, especially when they're tucked into such odd spots as under the stairs or in a dormer. In these cases, using standard fixtures is often a square peg/round hole situation. The integral ceramic counter of the Palace sink can be cut while the clay is still soft [or 'green'] to custom-fit the most convoluted of spaces.



Honorable Mention: Cerana by [Blanco](#)

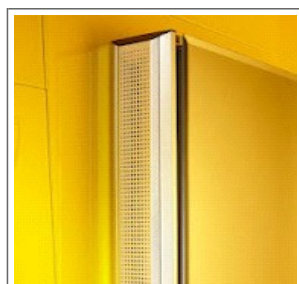
Here's an example of when being two-faced is a virtue—at least in a design context. The corners of this sink have two different radii; one pair is crispy drawn and the other has a softer, more roomy contour. Depending on which side of the apron-front fireclay basin is exposed when installed, it complements either a modern or a traditional cabinetry style.

BATH CABINETS



Winner: Dogi by [GD Cucine](#)

The design of the vanities, cabinets, seating and shelving units in this collection has been deliberately kept spare in order to emphasize the elegant grain of the ash wood used in its construction. Natural tones and quiet tints comprise the finish options. Counter tops, with integral sinks, can be had in stone, marble, or Corian.





Honorable Mention: StereoStik by [Kohler](#)

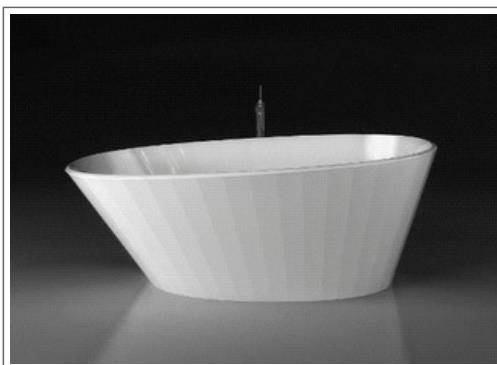
Unobtrusively applied to the side of a surface-mounted medicine cabinet, this audio accessory brings AM/FM radio and MP3 connectivity to the bath. The design is a clever compromise solution that eliminates the hassle of installing a built-in sound system or the clutter of freestanding speakers and their attendant tangle of wires. Cased in aluminum, the 26-inch-tall unit withstands the damp conditions of the bathroom, and can be hard-wired or battery-powered.

BATHING VESSELS



Winner: Cabrits Bathtub by [Victoria + Albert](#)

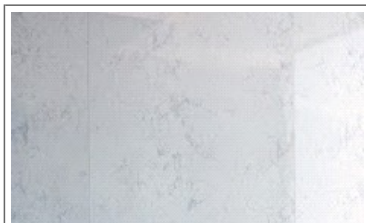
Those familiar with the island nation of Dominica might discern a correspondence between its topography and this double-dip tub, which happens to take its name from a scuba-diving resort on the island. Fabricated out of a matrix of resin and finely-ground volcanic limestone, its glossy, attenuated walls are hand-finished.



Honorable Mention: Couture by [Wetstyle](#)

Bonus points to the beachcombers among you who notice this tub's resemblance to a limpet shell, a wholly logical aesthetic inspiration for this striking fixture. Both rigidly geometric and organic in form, it's a welcome statement of individuality in a design category riddled with clones.

TOILETS

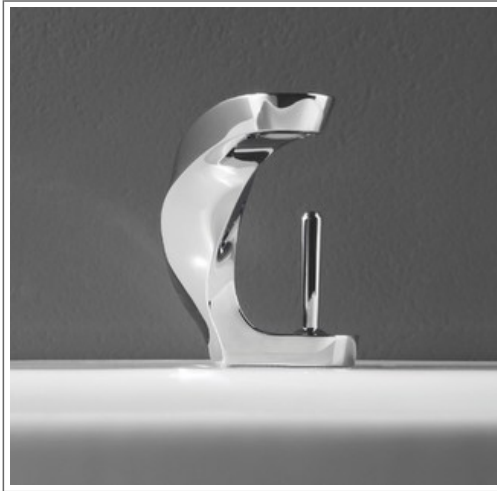




Winner: Atmosfere by [Hastings Tile & Bath](#)

No sprays, lights, music or other special effects complicate this commode, whose forward-leaning form is anything but basic. Made of fireclay, it's available in floor-mount and wall-hung versions.

BATHROOM FAUCETS



Winner: Ametis by [Graff](#)

An eye-catching combination of natural and industrial forms, this faucet has another visual aspect to its design: At the base of the joystick control, an illuminated ring shines red or blue, indicating the temperature of the water. Created by Davide Oppizzi of the studio DCUBE, the fixture's finishes include chrome, black, and white.



Honorable Mention: PureFlo Cable Drain by [Kohler](#)

Homeowners and plumbers alike will appreciate the efficiency that's been engineering into this universal tub drain. With this system, swapping out trim no longer requires ripping out the tub or breaking through the wall; just choose a new look from the four style families [basic, contemporary, traditional, Victorian], select a finish, and you're good to go.

SHOWER FITTINGS





Winner: OpenSpace by [Duravit](#)

Arguably the biggest space-waster in the bath, the typical shower enclosure permanently and conspicuously occupies valuable square footage. The glass panels of this unit, which was designed by EOOS, fold up against the walls when not in use, neatly boxing in the fittings while opening up the room. Choose from clear or mirrored glass.



Honorable Mention: Twist by [Moen](#)

A flick of the thumb spins the head of this handshower, directing each of its four different spray patterns with ease. [The stream pauses while the fitting rotates, avoiding an accidental face-full of water.] In brushed nickel, oil-rubbed bronze and chrome finishes, it's a simple way to expand your shower experience.

OUTDOOR APPLIANCES



Winner: Dual-Zone Wine Cabinet by [True Manufacturing](#)

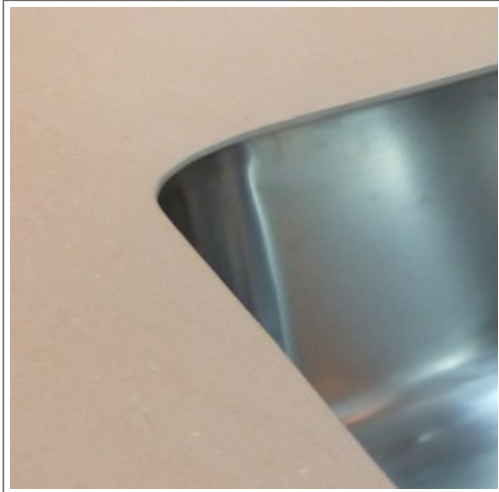
Considering the fluctuations of temperature and moisture to which it [and its sensitive contents] are subjected, a wine cabinet that's garnered an outdoor-approved UL rating is a notable achievement. Don't worry about this alfresco cellar being burgled, either: the fridge can be linked to a home security system, keeping its 45 bottles safe.



Honorable Mention: Outdoor C-Series 24-Inch Refrigerator by [Perlick](#)

The cabinet-friendly attributes of this refrigerator aren't limited to its dimensions; they include the ability to be fitted with a wood overlay door panel—a most appealing feature for those who prefer their outdoor kitchens to be finished in something other than cold steel. Zero-clearance hinges keep the cooler flush with surrounding cupboards or shelves.

SURFACING



Winner: Neolith by [The Size](#)

At 5/16-inch thick [or should we say 'thin'?] and up to 145 inches in length, this unique slab surfacing can render joints in counter stretches obsolete. A porcelain product, it doesn't stain or scratch, and is heat resistant. Neolith is offered in many colors; strong on the neutral palettes, naturally, but a few orange, blue and green hues as well, with more on the way.



Honorable Mention: Bullnose IdealEdge by [Formica](#)

The telltale brown seam is no more; say *adieu* to the non-dimensional flat edge. A new fabrication technique lets laminate

assume ogee or bullnose profiles that are free of those above-mentioned unmentionable qualities. Installations aren't restricted to 90-degree turns, either; the contoured edges can be used in curved or clipped corners, as well.



Honorable Mention: Solidarity Collection by [Indus Parquet](#)

While the surface of these recycled exotic-hardwood floors delight with texture and rich color, it's what lies below that caught the judges' attention. An underlayer of solid hardwood fillets adds strength and rigidity to the planks, stabilizing them against expansion and shrinkage.

TILE



Winner: AnTeak by [Walker Zanger](#)

These mesh-backed mosaics, assemblages of reclaimed teak wood, bring unusual texture and tone to surfaces. Shapes run from classic hexagons and herringbone to rounded oblongs with a mid-century vibe. Color blends are muted, befitting antique wood.



Honorable Mention: Eco-Logik by [Plaza Cerámicas](#)

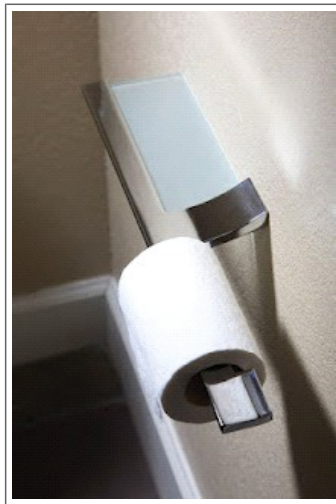
Boasting 85% recycled-material content, this porcelain floor tile sets a high standard for both eco-conscious manufacturing and performance. Non-porous, slip-resistant and durable, it's suited for use in bath or kitchen.

STORAGE



Winner: Designer Grab Bar and Shelf by [Moen](#)

A cunning combination of security and storage, this shower shelf is hung using a proprietary anchor-bolt system. Allowing installation with or without a wall stud, it still meets the ADA guidelines with its 250-pound load rating. Finishes include chrome, brushed nickel and a soft bronze.



Honorable Mention: Cinu Toilet Tissue Holder by [Ginger](#)

Particularly in a powder room, where counter space is frequently in short supply, this sleek little accessory could prove quite convenient. Working in tandem with a slip-on roll holder, a shallow scoop of tempered glass makes a secure set-down spot for keys, cell phone, or wallet.

LIGHTING



Winner: Serena Shades by [Lutron Electronics](#)

Anyone who's ever tried to balance the need for privacy in the bath while trying to relax and enjoy the view from the tub will appreciate these remote-controlled cellular shades. Battery operated, they're available in translucent or blackout fabrics, and



Honorable Mention: Spellbound by [Corbett Lighting](#)

The careening spirals of this pendant culminate in a tightly focused LED, making the fixture surprisingly suited for lighting an island or peninsula. The coordinating sconce can add zip to a bathroom.

HARDWARE



Winner: Frontino by [Häfele](#)

Think about a railroad switch or turnout, and you'll have an idea of how this cabinet hardware allows doors to glide past one another while sitting flush on a single track. The open and close actions are soft and virtually silent—infinately superior to the rattle and thump of conventional, multiple-track designs.



Honorable Mention: Arroyo by [Du Verre Hardware](#)

Understated yet distinctive, these modern knobs and handles sport troughs and angular plateaus that are equally appealing to the hand as the eye. Designed by William Harvey, the collection is offered in satin nickel, oil-rubbed bronze, and white finishes.



4 COMMENTS:



WWWinn Apr 25, 2012 12:28 PM

Congratulations on a third year of truly inspired awards! For the third year running, I have scrolled dreamily among the KBCulture awards, wanting to redo the whole house. The Honorable Mentions are every bit as interesting and the Honorees. Well Done Leslie!

[Reply](#)

▼ Replies



Leslie Apr 30, 2012 07:50 AM

WWWinn, your compliments are humbly accepted—and passed directly on to the people who design these outstanding products.

Thank you for being such a loyal KBCULTURE reader!

[Reply](#)



Anonymous Apr 28, 2012 04:59 AM

Excellent award winners and honorees list once again. Thank you!

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Leslie Apr 30, 2012 07:52 AM

It is my shared pleasure, Anonymous.

I appreciate your reading and writing.

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