



Blending art and science

Today, bringing woodwork to life is part craftsmanship, part technology. But the results are still magical.

PHOTOS BY MARK EHLEN | EHLEN CREATIVE



Bruce Kading Interior Design worked with homeowners Paul and Kathy Rothstein and Steven Cabinets to outfit their new home with custom cabinetry in the kitchen, bathrooms and the rec room.



BY NANCY CROTTI

There is nothing like custom-made for customers who know exactly what they want.

Custom-made may mean hand-made, machine-made or a combination of the two in a process that blends art and science. Technology has shortened the process of fabricating custom furnishings. For example, computer-programmed cutting machinery has made cabinetmakers' jobs much easier and faster, and they still get to fashion the finishing touches, according to Tammy Steven, secretary and treasurer of Steven Cabinets, a custom cabinet- and furniture-maker in Minneapolis.

"The machine is good at taking away materials, cutting and routing. It doesn't work really well at creating a three-dimensional shape," she said. "You can change tooling on it. You can put bits on it that are really fine versus really big for what you want to do and what kind of material you use."

Machine-tooling aids in jobs big and small, including a couple of projects that Steven Cabinets did for Twin Cities homeowners with a keen interest in design. Their stories follow.



**THE ROTHSTEINS'
NORTHWOODS
RUSTIC LOOK**

Right: Cranberry stain sets off the Kitchen Aide cooktop with “beefy and bulky” cooking grates.

Above: The cabinets in the 1950’s-inspired rec room blend with but don’t exactly match the kitchen cabinets, which was a specific choice, explained interior designer Bruce Kading.

Far left: The master bathroom vanity.



PHOTO BY DREW STEVEN

Custom northwoods home

Paul and Kathy Rothstein wanted a rustic, Adirondack look for the spacious northern Minnesota lake home that Northway Construction Services of Baxter built for them last year. Paul Rothstein spent his childhood summers just a few doors away, so when this property went up for sale, the couple bought it and had the existing cabin torn down to make way for their new summer home.

Bruce Kading Interior Design of Minneapolis worked with the Rothsteins and Steven Cabinets to fit the home with custom cabinetry in the kitchen, bathrooms and the rec room.

"We didn't want complete consistency throughout everything," explained Kading, owner and principal of the eponymous company. "We were trying to make the rooms special and set them apart."

The kitchen features an expansive cook-

ing center, with a stovetop and island accented by bead board stained the color of dried cranberries. Black satin soapstone flanks the cooktop and tops the 5-by-8-foot island, Paul Rothstein said.

The couple chose a Kitchen Aid cooktop because of what Paul Rothstein described as the "beefy and bulky" cooking grates. Hand-crafted red clay tile with a metallic glaze forms the backsplash. Metal sculptor Jeff Kreitz of Creative Steel Work in Breezy Point, Minn., made the oven hood by hand with copper, steel and stainless steel with bronze rivets.

Steven Cabinets designed and glazed alder cabinets for the kitchen, distressing them to evoke the rustic look, according to designer and project manager James Mitlyng. The kitchen evokes that of a farmhouse from 100 years ago, although on a much larger scale.

"It definitely has an old-world flair with a hand-crafted hood, the distressed and glazed

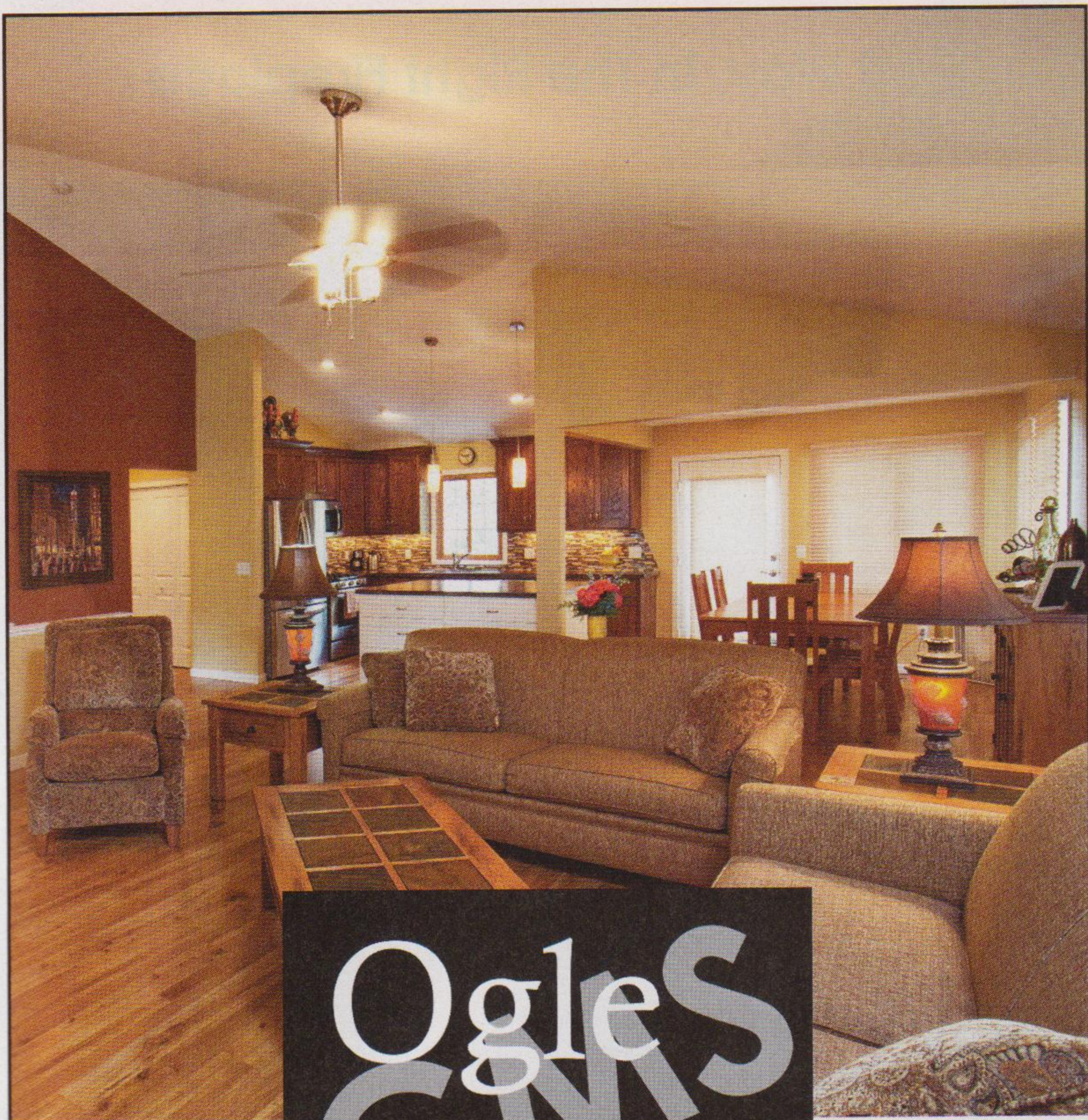
cabinetry," Mitlyng added.

The Rothsteins paged through books and looked at old cabins for inspiration for the master bath. They chose stained, knotty alder, farmhouse-style cabinetry with bead board accents and a green soapstone counter with a separate vanity for each sink.

"It's a classic style of the bead board panels to get a traditional look," Mitlyng said. "The center cabinets really function as medicine cabinets."

They drew inspiration for their lower-level rec room and wet bar from 1950s cabin style. Steven Cabinets used reclaimed wood from Manomin Resawn Timbers in Hugo to build the bar and the cabinets. Red appliances from Big Chill and red bar stools provide 1950s-inspired accents while sheet metal panels found at a flea market complete the lower part of the bar.

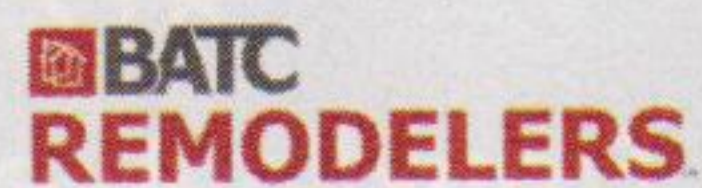
"We wanted to be rustic," Rothstein said. "We wanted to have the nail holes in it."



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Details in New Brighton

For their New Brighton home, Tom and Dee Polacek wanted details inspired by the early 20th-century architectural style of Charles and Henry Greene. The Greene brothers employed high-art aesthetics and fine artisanship, strongly influencing California's architecture from their base in Pasadena.

Tom Polacek has been honing his own fine woodworking skills at the Cape Cod-style home he and his wife have inhabited for 28 years. A business owner and farmer, Tom Polacek has built stairs and furniture with fine detailing, including inlaid woods in contrasting shapes and stains.

When it came to the wet bar that the couple wanted for their second-story addition, Tom Polacek knew that the detailed design they wanted would make for a very long do-it-yourself project.

"I let slip that maybe we should hire someone to do these cabinets and she was on the phone faster than you could say Bob's your uncle," Tom said with a laugh.



Top: Homeowner Tom Polacek is a woodworker in his own right, but he and wife Dee called on Steven Cabinets to custom-build their new kitchen cabinetry.

Below: A cabinet foot detail with ebony inlays.



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Dee Polacek found Steven Cabinets online. Mitlyng collaborated with Tom Polacek and Jim Patsch of James L. Patsch Construction in Minneapolis on the bar's design. Patsch also was general contractor for the addition, which created a large, airy space for entertaining and relaxing above the couple's three-car garage.

They incorporated the Greene brothers' signature cloud line design wherever possible, above the window and round copper sink, and into the cabinet doors. They chose inlaid ebony buttons and strips to accent the African mahogany cabinets and designed the corners with tapered Arts & Crafts-style columns.

The lower cabinets hide a mini-dishwasher and small refrigerator. Flecks of black and gold give the green granite counter a visual depth.

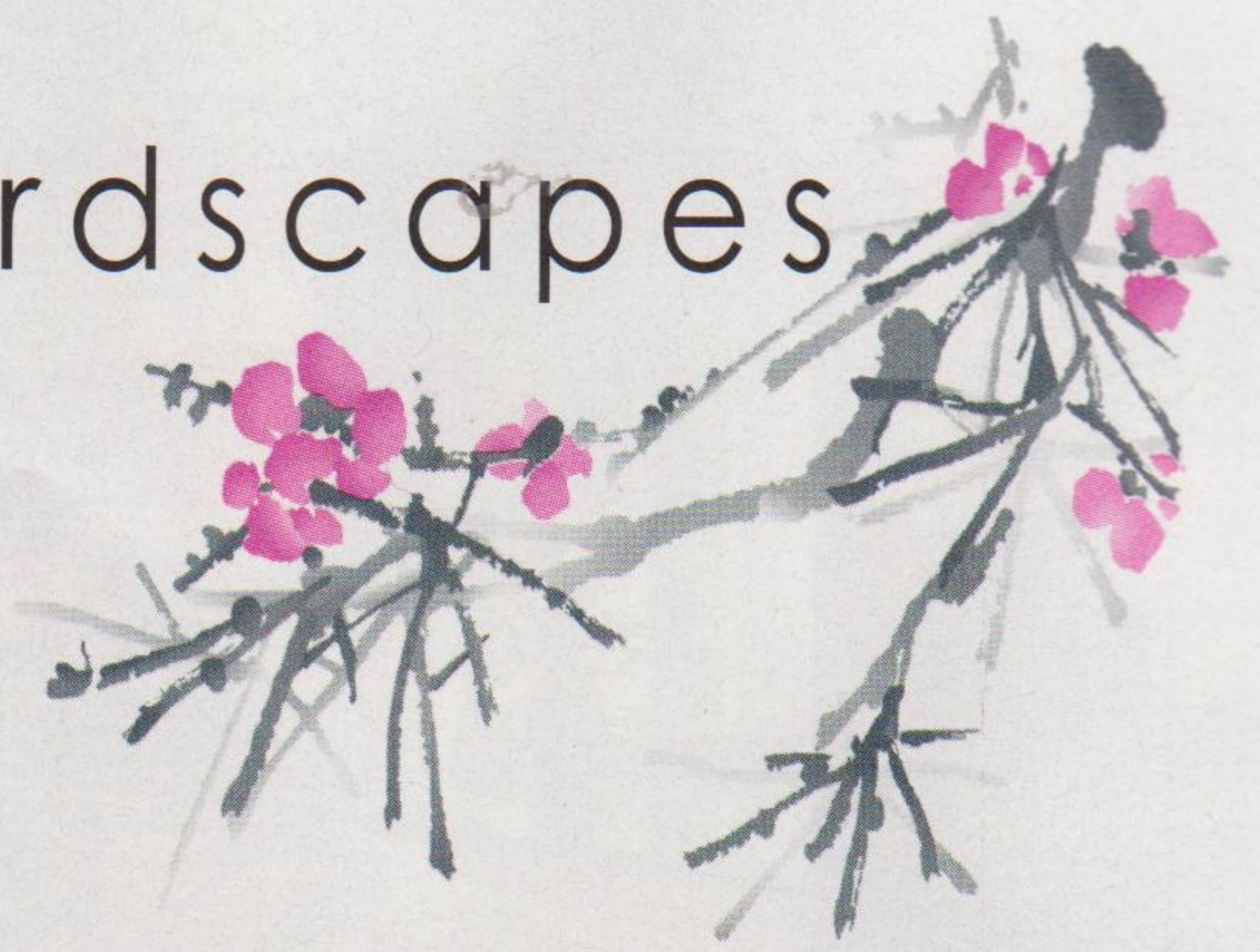
"I like that it's almost three-dimensional," Dee Polacek said.

A slate apron edges the camel-colored carpeting that covers the rest of the floor. A pair of skylights illuminates the passage from the bar to the adjacent bath. Tile artist David Aichinger of Minneapolis, who designed the travertine field-stone tile walls for the bath, brought that same design to the bar's backsplash. Aichinger added Brazilian black and copper-rust slate for diamond-shaped inlaid highlights.





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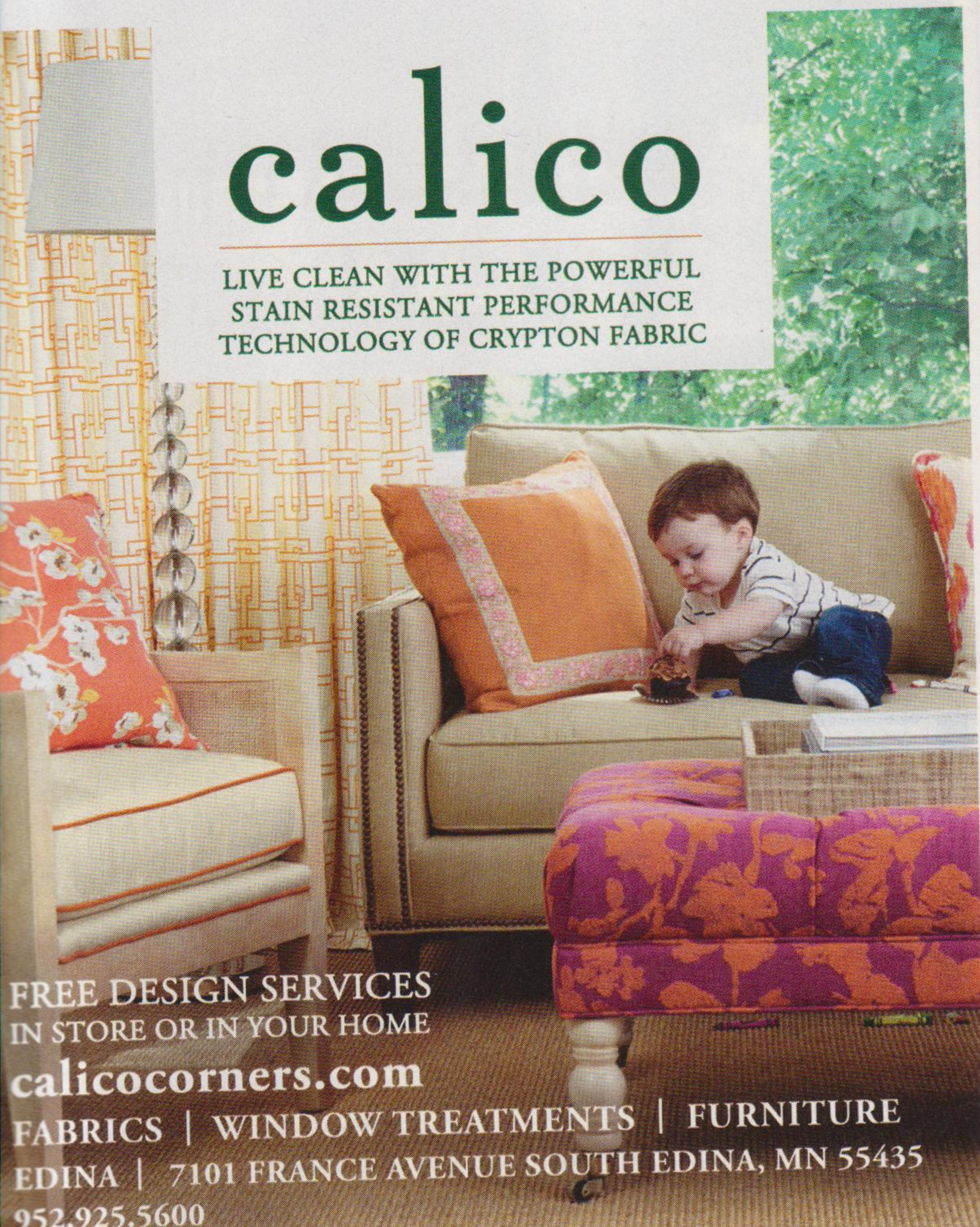
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Jim Patsch of Patsch Construction contributed the idea of using a branch motif in the stained-glass upper-cabinet doors. He collaborated on the design with Kim Saima, an artisan at Gaytee-Palmer Stained Glass in Minneapolis. Saima incorporated brown and gold earth tones with a tiny bit of red into her design, which carries the branch motif from one door to the next. Lighting inside, above and below the cabinets highlight the artistry of the entire bar.



Tammy Steven said she considers the Polaceks and the Rothsteins ideal clients, "someone who appreciates the details and cares about them."

Paul Rothstein had worked with Steven Cabinets on a different home three years ago, and didn't hesitate to ask second-generation company president Doug Steven to work on the lake home.

"At the end of the day, we chose quality, attention to detail, execution, service and knowledge, over price," Rothstein said. "It is the showcase of our home. These cabinets are just incredible." ■

Nancy Crotti is a Twin Cities freelance writer and frequent contributor to Spaces.



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