



# Local Hipster

A showroom brings Italian style to San Diego

By Bill Parth



**B**old contemporary styling gives this 1,430-sq.-ft. showroom eye-catching appeal, but a trove of details makes it a truly outstanding venue for promoting the myriad benefits of its products and the creativity of the design professionals who practice here.

The location is the flagship San Diego showroom for Italian cabinet supplier Arclinea, and the space demonstrates the high-end sophistication of the cabinets in no uncertain terms. Despite forging a relentlessly contemporary motif, the design team, headed by president and owner Lisa Wilson-Wirth, ALLIED AIA, emphasized materials that would appeal to the San Diego market. They showed off lots of woods and mixed in organic flourishes among the high-tech details. They also showed off UV-resistant finishes, important in sunny Southern California.

In addition to its aesthetic charms, the showroom addresses a regional shortcoming, according to Wilson-Wirth. "San Diego has historically lacked access to high-end, European brands, reliant on Los Angeles retailers to fill the gap," she said. "In opening a full-service kitchen design center downtown, we've helped lead a movement toward a vibrant, accessible urban design community."

Fortunate area residents, then, can partake of the showroom's three fully functional kitchen displays, along with an office area, bathroom, meeting space and sample library, all decked out in Arclinea products. Even the employee kitchenette includes the Italian cabinets. Among them, these areas encompass a full range of finishes: wood, lacquer (matte and glossy), aluminum, acrylic and stainless steel.

Throughout, the showroom is all about buyer education, Wilson-Wirth said. "Each cabinet and internal accessory is planned with product sales and upgrades in mind," she explained. Appliances in

all of the kitchens are live, "allowing for hands-on culinary demonstrations and product training."

Although showcasing the product is critical, kitchen displays also demonstrate good design, including lots of countertop space, defined work zones and easy access to equipment and tools.

Current trends and technologies abound. Where appropriate, appliances sport steam- and speed-cooking features. Sinks are welded into one-piece, stainless-steel countertops. And eco-friendliness is in full bloom, with displays featuring sustainable veneers, water-based finishes and recyclable materials, such as aluminum, stainless steel, glass and acrylic. Even the ceiling panels are recyclable, made of a cement fiberboard material normally used for countertops and exteriors.

The centerpiece of the client meeting area is a 10-ft.-long wood dining table with integrated bench. This location offers a bird's eye view of the kitchen displays and is right next to the sample library, which features a built-in espresso system and multimedia resources for clients.

Cementing the San Diego connection are works of local artists commissioned specifically for the showroom. These include custom metal work and an oversized graffiti chalkboard wall.

Even small touches help draw clients into the space, whose storefront faces an active city intersection. Real food populates the kitchens, making the displays all the more enticing.

All of this serves the central purpose of the showroom, which is to present prospective customers refreshing bursts of innovation and creativity and convince them that paying for such products and services will supremely enhance their homes. The fact that it accomplishes this while also establishing strong local bonds makes it a merit-winning design. ■

## sources

**Designer:** Lisa Wilson-Wirth, ALLIED AIA—Arclinea San Diego, San Diego; [www.arclineasandiego.com](http://www.arclineasandiego.com) **Architect:** Aaron Anderson, AIA—Anderson, Inc. **Additional team members:** Giampietro Monti, Jeremy Gleiberman, Ryan Tharp, Arclinea San Diego staff **Manufacturers:** Cabinetry: Arclinea Arredamenti SpA; Countertops: Arclinea Arredamenti SpA, CaesarStone; Appliances and fixtures: Arclinea Arredamenti SpA, Gaggenau, Miele, Sub-Zero, KWC, Nobili; Lighting: Arclinea Arredamenti SpA, Juno Lighting, Tech Lighting, Artemide, Ingo Maurer, Flos, Lumina Matrix; Ceiling panels: Slatescape; Metalwork fabrication: Vincent Designs **Photography:** © Brent Haywood Photography



*Bold, modern vignettes abound in this San Diego showroom, where materials such as wood, lacquer, aluminum, acrylic and stainless steel create a clean, sophisticated feel. To give the space a local flavor, the works of San Diego artists were commissioned. These include custom metal work and an oversized graffiti chalkboard (shown above).*

