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shaking his head as he looks at pictures of this project. "Everything was oriented the wrong way. The place was filled with knick knacks, it was very distracting." Rizkowsky has been doing interior design for the past 20 years and is taking on the library and bathroom in the Showcase House this year. For this client, he went beyond fixtures and window treatments. "I did everything for him down to his coffee cups and sheets."

BEFORE: "This looked more like a garage. He lived with this kitchen for a long time, nothing worked, and everything was broken, falling off the hinges. It was bad... And he cooks and entertains!"

AFTER: "We put in new windows, a new dishwasher, a new fridge. The client was very hands-on. He'd ask, 'why that dishwasher?' or 'why that fridge?' and I'd say, 'cause it's the best and the best looking.' We took out the old wooden cabinets and built new ones out of zebra wood, with a clear coat, no stain, and new black absolute granite counters with a brushed finish. It looks clean, modern and more inviting."

From Drab to Fab

PROJECT: Pasadena residence for a film industry exec
FIRM: Cynthia Bennett and Associates

An admitted history buff, Cynthia Bennett specializes in restoration. She has a minor in history, and lived and worked in Europe for 16 years. "I never thought I'd be doing restoration in California," she smiles, "but we try to be true to a period." For Showcase House she is bringing the kitchen in the former Red Cross headquarters up-to-date with an eco remodel. She started her design business in 1981 with a specialty in kitchens. This project is neither a kitchen nor a classic restoration, but she says, "It was fun and challenging. The client is really unique in that he wanted every room to be different."

BEFORE: "It had no character at all, it was under designed and very drab. The rug, the wall, the drapes— everything was the same color. The table and chairs he inherited, so they were never a personal choice. He wanted a lot of character and he liked transitional design."

AFTER: "We started with the rug. Typically we start with a rug or a piece of art work, something that has a lot of color and go off that as our palette. Transitional is blending traditional with contemporary, you can see traditional in the drapes. They are elaborate in their cornice boxes, but the fabric is simple, silk embossed



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AFTER: Cynthia Bennett creates a luxurious transitional dining space



BEFORE: Dining Room, Pasadena Residence

with some banding. The sheers are embroidered. Sounds overdone but it's a contemporary pattern. The table is round and traditional, though the base is contemporary. The lighting fixtures are contemporary. The wall is lined with leather, padded and tufted with nail heads. We added a coffer in the ceiling, with Venetian plaster, the up-lighting gives it a luminous quality and heights and interest."

From Rags to Riches

FIRM: Parker West Interiors
PROJECT: San Rafael residence, Showcase House 2001

For Greg Parker, a former opera singer turned interior designer, his most challenging rooms

have usually been in the Showcase Houses, where he has designed a room for the past six years. This year he is remodeling the Solarium in the Cravens' Estate. "Most of my clients homes aren't that bad. But often the Showcases Houses are just too large and rooms tend to get neglected," he says.

BEFORE: "This room was part of the maid's quarters of the house. There wasn't a lot of attention put into the space. It was functional and not very aesthetic. It was left to whoever was living in that part of the house to their own devices. It kind of became a catch-all space."

AFTER: "We took out the tub, and put in a new