



DESIGN NEWS AND TRENDS

Welcome to Home Plan Design's Design News/Trends page. On it, you will find the latest in decorating, design, and anything relating to home improvement projects. Information will come from experts in the field, including interior designers and architects, furniture salespeople, specialty design store consultants, and more.

Topics will include the “latest and greatest” in interior colors, furnishings, fabrics, paint, wallpaper, flooring, lighting, window treatments, art and accessories. Naturally, the trends will change often, so be sure to check back regularly!

Color: Look What's Coming Back!

Americans' spirits are lifting for perhaps the first time since the tragedy of 9/11 three years ago. Although still at war, we are beginning to opt for brighter, cheerier colors for our homes, our offices and our clothing. The somber hues are finally giving way to the eclectic, retro-brights we seek to express ourselves through the creative use of color.

Here are some of the hot, “new” colors people are introducing into their homes:

- Hot Pink – Perfect for rooms or spaces that receive little to no natural light.
- Orange – Once the rage in the 1920s, then again in the '70s, energizing orange is back!
- Purple – Accused of being the domain of those with slightly eccentric personalities or “bohemian” lifestyles, purple is becoming a mainstream color staple these days.
- Brown – Comforting, nurturing brown is making a name for itself after two decades of hiding out. A popular color with those who subscribe to the newest “natural” décor for their homes.

Anne Furey, Interior Refiner and owner of PlaceLift, One Day Redecorating, comments: “Popular colors right now include orange, hot-pink, and chocolate brown, with accent colors in blue, teal, or aqua. Brown, with oranges or reds, is also used quite frequently. Another favorite? Taupe with icy blue or aqua.

Anne, who updates her expertise regularly through attending seminars and consulting with the industry experts, quotes Benjamin Moore as saying that 60% of any purchase decision is based on color. In her work with fabric makers, she has learned that sea foam,

icy blue, blue green, Capri and aqua are also heavy hitters in decorating schemes today.

Jean Goff, Director of Design Services for Babel's (with stores located in Norwood, Needham, Canton, and Foxboro, MA), offers the following: "The newest color trend I am seeing these days is a combination of robin's egg blue with a chocolate brown. Many of my clients are asking for those colors."

For the near future, Ms. Goff predicts chocolate brown with pucci pink (a soft pink), and pink with green, the pink being a strong pink and the green possessing lots of yellow tones, reminiscent of the '60s. She reports that other 'retro' colors are making their way back as well. Appropriately enough, they are called "organic colors," and consist of shades such as avocado green, harvest gold, moss green, orange, and champagne beige. A particularly striking combination emerging onto the color scene is banana yellow (a soft yellow, as the name implies) with caviar (black).

Sometimes, it appears that color trends are bred of regional influence. According to Ms. Goff, a recent article in *The Improper*

Bostonian featuring some of the area's most notable interior designers, revealed a rainbow of colors currently being used throughout greater Boston. They are predominantly in the bright "berry" spectrum (raspberries, strawberries, cranberries, etc.) and typically include limes, oranges, greens and pinks. So far, Ms. Goff has yet to see them used, locally. Another trend that has not hit the masses is the neutrals-only, palette, a choice seemingly favored by "very high-end clients".

A trend that will reportedly grow in time is the "Moroccan" theme. This bold look is characterized by vibrant color combinations, including blueberry, orange, brassy yellow-gold, teal, cranberry and sky blue.

Despite the obvious trend toward brighter colors, designer and owner of KVS Design, Karine Scheurer, says her clients tend to lean toward pastels. Ms. Scheurer is a fan of the new hot colors and wishes people would become a little more adventurous. She likes color on the walls. "It's only paint," she affirms. "If you don't like the color, you can easily change it. But, whatever you do, use color. Give personality to a space with color."

Paint and Wallpaper

The paint industry has been making large strides for decades, due in part to increasing technology, resulting in an even wider array of hues, shades and tints available to consumers, today. With modern paint-mixing technology in full bloom, designers can practically create any color they wish, including metallics. Some very interesting effects are being used in interior design, such as the painting of piping and fixtures. The water-based metallics emulate rich metals, such as chrome, brass, copper and pewter, making them suitable for just about any room in the home. Another way metallics are being introduced into a scheme is in faux finishing. A very popular trend that has held its own for years, faux finishing incorporates bold “texture” and design into paint to create a “mottled” look. In this process, the silvers and golds produced by metallic paints are often blended in, resulting in an unexpected, high-energy, two-to-three dimensional look.

Swiss-licensed architect/interior designer and owner of KVS Design, Karine Scheurer, recommends using the low-solvent, environmentally safe paints that are available today. “It used to be that people couldn’t paint

or repaint a room in the winter months with the windows down. Breathable gas fumes would result from paints containing high levels of VOCs (volatile organic compounds), which created strong odors and seriously compromised air quality that could be detrimental to one’s health. Today’s alternative manufacturing techniques are responsible for low-VOC or VOC-free paints that are so much safer to work with these days. What’s more, with the hitech paint mixing procedures, literally hundreds of hues, shades and tints are available to choose from. What you don’t see can be easily created. Paints, in general, are so much more fun to work with, so take advantage of this medium,” she urges.

Jean Goff, Director of Design Services for Babel’s Paint and Decorating stores, is passionate about Babel’s new C-2 paint line. Developed by a group known as the Independent Paint Dealers, C-2 is distributed by Coatings Alliance. “C-2 paints use European colorants,” affirms Ms. Goff, “and often are created using up to five tints instead of the more typical three, resulting in beautifully complex colors. They just look fabulous on walls, today.”

Ms. Goff also reports that paint has been taking precedence over wallpaper for many years, now. “With today’s frenetic lifestyles, people don’t have the time or money to go through the relatively long process of removing old paper, stripping walls and woodwork and putting up new paper,” she says. Another consideration for the waning of wallpaper is today’s homes. “I think wallpaper was popular years ago because of the older homes it graced,” she comments. “Wallpaper beautifully covered bad walls that had too many defects to simply paint over. The modern home has perfect walls that many people choose to showcase,” she summarizes.

Just as in apparel fashion, elements of home design go in and out. Interior design endures its share of cycles. Often, what is declining in, or has completely lost popularity today, will show up again in the future, with wallpaper being no exception. What is more, these trends usually start with the “high end” consumer and filter their way down through the masses.

So, while wall paper is certainly being used today, mostly by these “high-end customers,” it is getting away from the elaborate, detailed designs once favored by many in order to

emulate the faux finish craze. In other words, “wall paper is, more and more, imitating paint,” states Ms. Goff.

Notes Jeanne Babel, owner of Babel’s, “you don’t see as many strong patterns on walls these days. Instead, people are using more subtle looks, including textures, tone-on-tones and faux finishes in their wall coverings. She continues, “for those who favor the faux look, hanging these new papers rather than attempting to do the work themselves with paints and requisite tools, is far easier and more convenient. The trick to faux finishing is that the results must be consistent or else the look misses the mark, entirely. The availability of these new papers eliminates that risk, a lot of hard work, and potential disappointment.”

Ms. Babel sings the praises of wallpaper in yet another way. “Even in a home that is predominantly paint,” she says, “a room or two done in wall paper breaks up the monotony and creates lively interest.

What else is wallpaper offering? Like paint, today’s wall coverings are featuring a lot of metallics, which are very popular. In addition,

many beautiful, “historic” types of wallpaper are being printed in Boston, Massachusetts and are still widely available today. So, for those who prefer and are purchasing wallpaper, many styles and options remain. But in today’s offerings, there’s a big distinction. Ms. Babel puts it simply: “it’s not your grandmother’s wall paper any more.”

Another fairly new trend has wall coverings being used on ceilings, as well. Just as people are painting their ceilings colors instead leaving them the traditional “white,” ceilings are being papered as well. And, like the trend in wall coverings, the new, textured, “raised” patterns that emulate faux finishes are being favored. Many Babel’s clients are creating ceilings that emulate a faux tin or other types of “rustic” looks that are very popular right now in home design. And because these “ceiling” coverings can also be painted, home decorators and their clients are having fun with the new metallic paints, and are taking this look even further.

As for wallpaper-related products, borders, especially laser-cut border papers, are still popular. Many consumers are purchasing borders to add an unobtrusive accent to a

quiet room’s demeanor. Some borders can be created to match fabric patterns such as window dressings, or shower curtains in the bath. Some people match paper borders to the patterns of their floor tiles, creating a unified, but punchy, look to an otherwise understated or simple room décor.

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And for those who want to almost literally “create magic” in a room, murals are back, and are bigger and better than ever before. Affords Jeanne Babel, “murals can create different moods within a space, and they’re great in both a formal room or a child’s room.” At Babel’s, murals are available in a wide variety of sizes and selections, including floor-to-ceiling

dimensions. Most are reasonably priced, however, some, because they are more intricate and hand painted, can run into the thousands.

“They are, without doubt, considered artwork because they are so beautiful,” Ms. Babel contends. “Because of their value, many are backed with paper ‘liners,’ so when a client chooses to move, they can take that treasured mural with them. It comes easily off the wall and rolls right up.” Given the cost, that makes sense, indeed!

Another element that is gaining in popularity is somewhere between a mural and a roll of wallpaper. Decorative and fun, these wall coverings serve a purpose that can be considered “essential” to some customers. They literally ‘roll out’ to form a “window,” an extra “doorway,” a “fence,” a pair of “columns”, and much more. So if a room is lacking in windows, doors or an attractive view, or is just very plain, people can “create” those missing elements or add interest to the space within minutes.

Overall Design

Anne Furey of PlaceLift, One Day Redecorating is seeing a growing trend in interiors. She describes it as “lots of clean lines, spare use of accessories, and more “texture” as part of a scheme. “Beautiful, textural fabrics such as micro suede, ultra suede, chenille and silk are increasingly being incorporated into drapes, pillows and accents, which subtly add to a room’s allure. Even modified shag rugs, now referred to as ‘frisee,’ are making a comeback!”

The elimination of clutter is also being employed as an effective tool for “cleaning up” design. Often, when working with a client, Ms. Furey finds it necessary to become a “visual editor,” which basically means, “objective decluttering.”

“Clutter is a problem for many people,” agrees designer Karine Scheurer, owner of KVS Design. “Clutter makes living spaces uncomfortable to live in,” she maintains. Yet, people, indeed, seem to have a penchant for larger and larger homes, hence, the “Neo-McMansions” described in Home Styles on this site. The development of spaces aptly entitled “the great room,” the “family room” and even

the conversion of garages into “rec rooms” beginning back in the 1950s seems to support this trend. Larger families constitute another reason. People simply have more possessions today.

As for individual rooms, the formal dining room – and living room – are on their way out. Kitchens are back – larger than life and family friendly. According to Ms. Scheurer, kitchens, historically, had a fireplace for families to gather around and share home-prepared food and wine, as well as stories and events of the day. “Kitchens are about food and love,” says Scheurer, “so it is easy to see why they are being structured around social activities.” She continues, “Nowadays, they are larger; they have islands, seating areas for gathering, tables for dining, and adjacent pantries for storing food, dishes, pots and pans and, sometimes, wine coolers. And, if the clients can afford it, they also have a fire place.”

Another room that is gaining in popularity is the home office. With so many people working from home or telecommuting, this niche space is becoming high in demand on designers’ work orders.

In summary, the designing of rooms is being driven increasingly by function, more than visual artistry -- a trend that seems to make sense.

Art and Collectibles

People are becoming much more involved in the inclusion of art and collectibles in their decorating plans. Many already own extensive, treasured collections that they seek to showcase rather than merely store “someplace safe.” And some folks are starting collections for the very first time, an activity they find more and more pleasurable. They attend art galleries, museums and auctions on a regular basis. It becomes an ongoing hunt, according to some designers. Karine Scheurer has noticed that many of her clients are adding more artwork to their schemes and purchasing colorful oriental rugs to beautify their spaces. Another look in art and accessories is a tropical motif. Designers contend that people are gravitating toward a “vacation whimsy” in their décor, introducing monkeys and palm trees into both fabrics and accessories. Again, it is speculated that this might be part of the movement toward more fun in a downsized economy and an ongoing war.

And Anne Furey is seeing an increase not only in objects d'art, but also in scale of the pieces. "To accommodate the growing size of homes and rooms, people are opting for much larger accessories, such as planters, statuary, and urns," she reports.

Lighting

Styles in lighting and lighting sources, themselves, have changed drastically over the years. Thanks to technology and innovation, lighting has become a significant aspect of a room's design and should be considered as seriously as everything else being planned. Again, our contributing designers add their thoughts, preferences and comments, based on recent findings.

KVS Design owner, Karine Scheurer, believes strongly that light creates the mood of a room. She especially likes halogen, and often recommends the "torch" style floor lamp. The lamp consists of a 5 or 6-foot stand with a torch-type of shade that throws light upwards and reflects light on the ceiling. In her experience, halogen "warms up a room with a soft glow reflecting from the ceiling." Scheurer recommends the use of fluorescent lighting for

specific needs such as outdoor lighting, lighting that is on a timer, and all fixtures that will be on a great part of the day. "Fluorescent does last forever," she concedes, "and they save energy."

Scheurer often uses overhead, recessed ceiling lighting for illuminating bathroom mirrors. "It acts like a single, bright eye, for task functions such as applying make-up, contact lenses, or shaving," she reports. Another trick Scheurer swears by? Mirrors. "Mirrors could cover a large portion of a wall in small, dark rooms such as bathrooms or powder rooms. Mirrors reflect light and color and brighten a small space. What's more, mirrors make small spaces seem larger."

PlaceLift, One Day Redecorating owner, Anne Furey, assesses, "Most everyone could benefit from improving their home lighting. People need to be careful not to use 'accent lighting' as their only source of light. There are way too many little table lamps in the home stores, calling our names, featuring dark and dramatic color-coordinated shades with beads, feathers, and glittery accents. People buy them but find that, once they get them home, they shed very little light. They're basically useless, except

as an accessory.” In this case, Ms. Furey recommends that clients make sure they have a balance of general illumination, task lighting (with 3-way bulbs, if possible) AND accent lighting.

And, finally, lighting designer, Evelyn Audet, contends, “fluorescent lighting has come a long way.” Another product she likes? LED (light emitting diodes), which is fairly new on the horizon and is very long lasting. And she feels that fiber optic lighting is something people should really look into. “It’s not being used enough and should be, despite its cost which is, admittedly, rather expensive.” (For more information about Evelyn Audet, go to The Designer’s Page and access the lighting section.

Newsflash! A hot item that is popular in Great Britain is the tinted bulb, used to create “ambience.” Just as with other design elements, color should be used wisely. A pale pink bulb will result in a rosy glow while a pale yellow will visually “warm” a room. Darker colors have a more dramatic, obvious effect so they should be considered with the function of the room. A red will, like yellow, “warm” a room

but much more so. A blue creates a cooling effect, which makes it perfect for summer gatherings.

A much smaller version of the tinted bulb is the colored Christmas tree light. You can use one color only or buy strings of them in multiple colors. Perfect for any celebration, indoors or out. And for year ‘round pizzazz, consider Christmas tree lights in white or gold. Many people intersperse them among indoor plants, creating a sophisticated, glamorous look in any room. The sparkle is irresistible and so easy to achieve, which is why so many restaurants feature them in both dining areas and lobbies.

Another glamorous option is candlelight. Nothing quite matches the allure of candlelight since is, after all, “natural” light, much like the sun and moon. Always popular, there are more choices in candles today than ever before. Many people collect them, both for whimsy and for sumptuous lighting. With all the shapes and sizes – and scents – available, it is common for a single candle to cost as much as a table lamp. Still, to many folks they are worth the investment, since the beauty they add to a room is so remarkable.

Savvy Solutions

With privacy becoming more and more important to home dwellers today, more and more creative solutions abound. Frosted glass, or “coke bottle” glass is frequently used in place of standard window glass around and over Jacuzzis, or the bath, in general, for instance. This type of glass is also being used to separate rooms without “cutting up” a space. The beauty to this use is, it still lets in light.

Traditionally a glamorous solution for hiding ugly, “permanent” fixtures such as radiators or a less-than-attractive window view, the folding screen is now emerging on the decorating scene as a beautiful, must-have accessory. Many of these screens have up to four “panels” so it can expand or close to according to its intended use. These screens can designate a specific area of a room as serving a specific function, such as a corner “home office,” a hobby area, or a “sewing room.” Or, it can “enclose” a special collection of artwork or art objects. And let’s not forget privacy. An overnight guest on a futon can enjoy a peaceful sleep tucked cozily within the folds of one of these screens. But most of all, folks are using them as décor props, such as behind a sofa

and chairs, creating an intimate seating area. With all the colors, materials and styles they come in, they are just plain “art” when added to a room.

Furnishings, Fabrics and Upholstery

Perhaps no one knows more about decorating and design trends than Sue Glaser, Sales/ Design Consultant for Foxboro Furniture in Foxboro, Massachusetts. She tells us that, just as people are expressing their personalities through color, style, art and lighting, furnishings are playing just as large a part of the picture. Fabrics come into play as well and, like clothing, speak to the function and mood of a room.

As someone who is able to track buying trends, Ms. Glaser reports, “lots of folks are looking just to change a room for change’s sake. They get tired of the same look year after year, which is understandable when you think of how much time they probably spend in that room. We all yearn for something different every few years.”

Ms. Glaser often helps her customers choose color schemes for a room, in addition to providing information about style, construction

and fabrics of the showroom's upholstered furniture. "For example," she offers, "the client who desires a bolder, more youthful, energetic feel to a room, will want to consider reds, yellows and blues – the primaries -- and then mix patterns and textures in the fabrics."

Some customers are looking for a sophisticated, more elegant style for a room. "For them, I recommend furnishings that are traditional and more refined in style and scale. "These pieces are generally more structured in design, feature firmer cushions and are often skirted. Accompanying end and coffee tables often are dark wood, with curvy, delicate-looking legs." Popular color palettes incorporate greens, burgundies, navy and golds. Fabrics of silk, chenille and brocade, plus leather with nail heads, complement this style.

Still other customers, she shares, are seeking a "comfy-cozy," environment for rooms where families and friends gather. "The spirit of the room is casual and carefree, so furnishings and fabrics should reflect that," she affirms. Fabrics being chosen include 100% cotton denim "duck" fabric, 100% cotton, and polyesters. People tend to gravitate toward light neutral colors for

these rooms, such as beige, tan, khaki, sage and taupe. "Most shoppers in this category prefer solids, stripes and even a mix of both," she advises.

And, in keeping with the trend of more rooms being designed around media and entertainment, there is a whole other customer she must consider. Furnishings are catering to these buyers with pieces that are more versatile than ever before. Recliners are now built right into sofas to provide comfortable seating and save space. TV armoires are in high demand, since they organize the entertainment center and provide serious storage. Cocktail, coffee and end tables do their part as well, with doors, drawers and concealed shelving that hold CD, s DVD's, magazines, and remotes attractively. Even the classic ottoman has evolved to meet today's needs. Many of them open like floor trunks and can be either additional seating or more table space for trays and game boards. Fabrics being purchased by this customer run the gamut from acrylic to olefin to nylon to leather.

The hottest new fabric, however, is microfiber. Constructed of 100% polyester, each thread

is treated individually with Scotch Guard, so the entire chair is protected. Stain and spill-resistant, this fabric is not only gathering friendly, but is built to last. And, reports Ms. Glaser, “is, next to leather, the easiest fabric to clean.” As if that is not enough, microfiber comes in a virtual rainbow of attractive colors, including a soft, new shade of yellow called “buttercup.” Imagine... a pale color in an entertainment room. Now that’s new!

As a final note in fabrics, because people are often seeking change for change’s sake, a significant amount of solids are outselling stripes and patterns. “People prefer solids,” Ms. Glaser affirms, “because it is so easy to change a look. All you have to do is add colorful or patterned accents and accessories, such as area rugs, pillows, throws and you’ve got a whole new room!

Home Theater

Lights... camera... action! Of all the trends and latest products for the home, few categories have experienced the overwhelming growth and consumer demand that home entertainment has enjoyed in recent years. With just the touch of a button on the remote,

the lights dim, the projector hums, the music swells and the picture flashes on the screen in panoramic color. Add the popcorn and, well – THAT’S entertainment!

Home Plan Designs has discovered that home owners are, more and more, converting unused rooms, basements, or any free space they can find into their own private home theaters or media centers. Thanks to today’s technologies and innovations, the enjoyment of the cinematic experience at home can be had by most anyone. And with the growing number of businesses dedicated to home entertainment needs offering the latest and greatest in equipment, the installation and even “theater” design, almost any type of dwelling can successfully host a cool home theater.

Today’s choices in home entertainment technology are practically endless. Consumers can choose from plasma, LCD and DLP (shallow-depth TV). Plasma and LCD TV, known as “flat panel” technology, typically feature three-to-five inch screens; DLP TVs measure only 14/16 inches deep. Benefits – and applications – of each vary. Plasma and LCD TVs or monitors are ideal for use in well-lit

areas or rooms that receive maximum sunlight. Their flexibility is remarkable, given the fact that they can be hung just about anywhere: a family or great room wall, over a fireplace, or from a cabinet in a study or home office. Even better, give our multi-tasking lifestyles, plasma and LCD TVs are easily installed in bathrooms and kitchens, as well.

Where ceiling projects are concerned, consumers have their choice of DLP or LCD. These project the image onto a huge, fixed wall screen or retractable screen that pulls down from the ceiling.

To accommodate both ceiling projectors and screens, a dedicated area or room that is darkened – much like your local cinema – is required in order for the most quality images to appear on the screen. Ceiling projectors typically hang from the back of the “theater room” on a pole from the ceiling or on a shelf.

Next, a five-to-seven surround-sound arrangement with a powered subwoofer is needed to complete the in-home, cinematic experience. This provides the added entertainment advantage of being able to feel as if one is “right there” with favorite movies,

especially sci-fi flicks with spectacular effects.

And finally, the “theater” itself: seating, acoustics, soundproofing all come into play to create a media center that is comfortable and audibly as well as visually enjoyable. Acoustic wall treatments help contain the sound to the room and provide a desirable listening environment. The average wall, untreated, can result in echoing and sound gets “lost.”

As for seating, options abound in fabric, styles and “extras,” such as being able to recline. Many are “refreshment friendly,” starting with cup holders for favorite beverages and ending with an array of features.

Now... how much does it all cost? When it comes to pricing, a lot goes into the equation. The size of the equipment being considered is one, followed by picture quality, performance and the intended application environment. Details will have to be considered as well. For example, the size and type of screen will, naturally, be driven by the size and characteristics of the room that will house it. Check with your local retailer or home entertainment provider for the most up-to-date information.

Design News and Trends Resources

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Babel's Paint & Wallpaper Stores
Norwood, Massachusetts

Anne Currier Furey
PlaceLift One Day Redecorating
Mansfield, Massachusetts

Karine Scheurer
KVS Design
N. Easton, Massachusetts

Evelyn Audet
Evelyn Audet Lighting Design
E. Providence, Rhode Island

Sue Glaser
Sales & Design Consultant
Foxboro Furniture
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Chris R. Grant
Chris R. Grant & Associates General Contracting
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