

Spring Design Trends

By Vivian Kistler, CPF, GCF, CMG

High Point International Home Furnishings Market continues to be a key show for retailers looking to buy furniture and accessories for showrooms across America. It also provides a great opportunity to scope out the latest trends in color, design, and lifestyle—all important if you want your wall art to be successful.

With more than 2,000 exhibitors and 12 million square feet of exhibit space, there is plenty for the 75,000 attendees to explore. With competition from the new Las Vegas World Market, attendance was a bit light at the 2007 High Point Spring Market, held from March 26-April 1, but most exhibitors reported that a commitment from major accounts was brisk. Buyers were buying aggressively, if more selectively.

Designers from all sectors of the home furnishings market look to High Point for decor trends happening right now. Here's a look at the trends at this year's Spring Market.

Luxury for Everyone

The notion that everyone deserves a bit of luxury is pervasive in the promotion of all sorts of products and services—but luxury is different for everyone. Once defined as the finest or the most expensive version of something, the new definition

of luxury is based on how we feel: proud, happy, comforted, pampered, and satisfied. It is about creating a moment of pleasure. This can be accomplished in a myriad of ways, from brewing a premium cup of coffee to creating a cozy reading corner in one's home. As the Klaussner Furniture brochure says, "I spend my quality time on my sofa, so anything less than perfect



Broyhill combines rustic and casual styling to create an "urban lodge" look in its McKenzie Place Collection. Upholstered with a faux skin pattern in bright burgundy chenille, this chair brings a modern flair to southwestern styling.

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Adesso's ready-to-assemble furniture offers fashion-forward style at affordable prices. Red remains a significant accent color—bright, likable, and versatile.

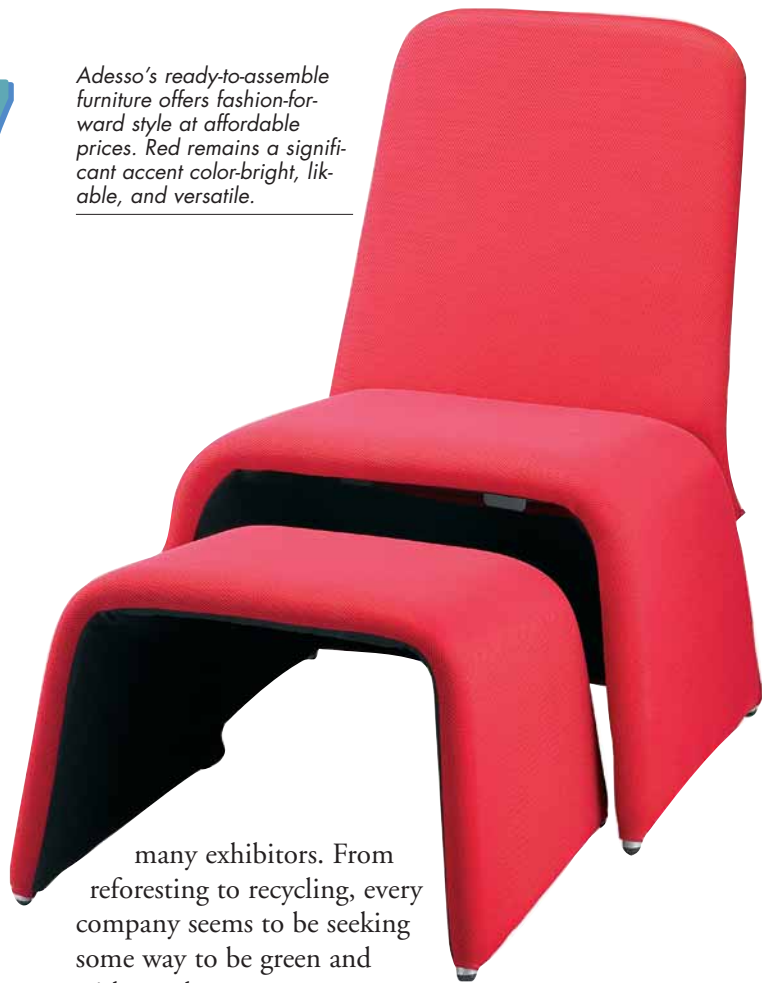
would not sit well with me!" Or from the Fjords furniture collection from Hjellegjerde: "Why just buy furniture when you can own art?"

Green and the Environment

Eco-friendly manufacturing has become a mainstream concern and is a part of product promotion for



Chrome trim, beads, and tassels complement the luminous hand painted Arctic Blue Collection of vases and bowls from Palecek. Complex finishes that provide depth and visual texture remain important in decor accessories, and rich blue colors are increasing in popularity.



many exhibitors. From reforestation to recycling, every company seems to be seeking some way to be green and with good reason: consumer expectations are quickly increasing in this area. Not only must manufacturers work to minimize environmental impact in manufacturing their products, but the products must also be healthy during use, with no harmful out-gassing or other release of toxins. And what happens when the product degrades or is discarded?

Reclaimed and salvaged were popular "green" concepts at High Point. There was an extensive use of tree

Palecek combines furniture and accessories from several collections to create this sophisticated "eco-chic" room. Palecek's products have always been green; all of their furniture is made from natural, renewable resources or plantation-grown hardwoods.





A rustic table made from eco-friendly reclaimed roots and wood accompanies a variety of earthy ceramic accessories from the Phillips Collection.



A glass surface tops a stack of twisted wood vine to form this console from the Phillips Collection. The wall art is a set of clay "antique quadritos" from artist Yuri Zatarain.

trunks, roots, sunken logs, and tree branches, such as Shira Leah's "Root of the Earth" stools made from Northern Vietnamese tree stumps and roots (cleared to create fields for agricultural use) and Groovystuff's "Back to the Roots" collection of gnarly chairs, benches, and tables. The curving organic shapes and variegated brown colors of this furniture make it a perfect fit with current trends. Old doors and other reused wood was a recurring theme, such as fence posts salvaged from East Asian corals and sold by Eastern Breeze as wall art.

Modern Goes Mainstream

Contemporary decor is growing in popularity, partly due to the availability of furnishings at all price points, not just the elite high end. For many thirtysomething consumers, this style is normal, not edgy or new, because it has been a common decor style for their entire lives. This may create a problem with semantics: how do you continue to call something Modern or Contemporary when it is a generation old?

Modern is having a distinct influence on traditional, resulting in a plainer style that is almost a hybrid of traditional/contemporary, classic with a sophisticated modern edge. This was very evident at High Point, where numerous vendors introduced furniture representing this streamlined traditional style.

On the super-modern end of the spectrum is acrylic furniture, including chairs and occasional tables in clear acrylic, like Acrylicore from Sharooz, which is reminis-



The Italia Collection updates "the timeless elegance of 18th century Italian design, part of the National Geographic Home Collection from Lane Home Furnishings." The rich red color works equally well in traditional or contemporary decor.

cent of furniture from a Jetson's episode—sort of kitschy and "old-fashioned futuristic."

Technology

Accommodating new electronics is still challenging for furniture designers, especially working with the many dimensions of television screens and multiple accessory machines. One responsive manufacturer is Sauder, who designs economical furniture for budget-conscious consumers. The new line of "media support systems" aims to provide "rightsize" options for today's bigger TV screens,



The mix of vibrant blues and greens creates a tropical mood in the "Pool" throw from Textillery Weavers. Made from Sunbrella yarns that resist mold and fading, this throw can be used outdoors as part of the emerging "outdoor rooms" trend.



Gray is being used in several emerging color combinations. Here pink and gray stripes create a mellow, pretty throw rug from Textillery Weavers.



The Hudson Street collection from Stanley Furniture "captures classic American culture" with clean simple lines that combine a dignified traditional style with contemporary sleekness. The dark espresso color is still very popular.

smaller audio systems, growing DVD and CD collections, and the need to use laptop computers throughout the house. Height, depth, storage, and ventilation for TVs are all important considerations in this collection of desks, storage units, and entertainment centers.

Colors

It is still a beige world—lots of neutral browns and tans. Continuing to gain popularity is gray, especially gray with other colors: with black, with browns, with pink, with golds, with brights, or with neutrals for low contrast. Black and white are strong, both separately and together, in every style from country traditional to sleek contemporary. Red continues to be the most popular accent color, although there was a smattering of other colors, including pale green, turquoise, and golden yellow. Wood furniture is trending darker, with a warm honey being the lightest currently popular. Painted white and painted black wood furniture also continues strong. Very few new introductions at High Point featured the ultra-distressed finish that was so popular for the past few years.

Patterns and Motifs

Scrolling swirls, paisleys, silhouettes of shapes, people (iPod), and silhouettes of chandeliers (gray on black



Oxidized, aged bronze accents the coromandel designs on the Fantasia vase from Lam Lee. Metallic accessories are popular, with silver, copper, and bronze more prevalent than gold. Except in the most contemporary pieces, complex multi-tone finishes trump shiny finishes.



Guildmaster combines two current trends—swirling patterns and the color combination of black and white—to create a fun and funky chest of drawers.



Guildmaster's Fusion Collection plays with "the union of opposing texture, color, style, and shape."



Inspired by 1950s design, the Zebra arm chair from Julian Chichester contrasts dark wood with yellow-green upholstery. Yellow-green has had impressive "staying power" in home decor, still popular after several years of steady use in furniture and accessories.



The beige and gray Bond bedding group from Mystic Valley Traders shows the continuing popularity of neutral monochromatic color schemes. Note the simplicity of the style as bedding design shifts away from the overwrought opulence of a few years ago.



The Athena Grecian Urn from Toyo is a faithful depiction of ancient Greco-Roman style. In a currently trendy brown and black color combination, accessories like this are part of the "global fusion" trend that encourages consumers to create eclectic multicultural decor.

crushed velvet fabric on the Pierre loveseat, part of the Maison du Soleil Upholstery Collection). Seashells and coral are still prevalent, not just for seaside homes. There is also a lot of button-tufting and pleats on chairs, sofas, and ottomans, which looks elegant whether in linen or satin. Button-tufted leather is very popular (leather colors continuing to trend towards the natural range of cream, brown, and black).

Faux Animal Skins

How can anyone still be talking about these? They have been popular for at least six years now, so why are they still showing up at High Point? The answer is that buyers continue to purchase them, so manufacturers keep offering them. Leopard, giraffe, and zebra designs continue to dominate, as do some reptile skins. Some theories about the persistent popularity: these prints fit in most decor styles, from traditional to contemporary; they are neutral but not boring; they add a bit of fun to any room; and people are enjoying the ability to use these beautiful natural patterns without harming exotic animals. Rugs, chairs, ottomans, and pillows continue to be the most common use of faux animal hides. Besides animal prints, paisley, and stripes, other patterned textiles are not prevalent—solids or solids with variegated texture seem more popular.

Trends are important

When you use out of date materials or colors, an entire job can appear out of date. Stay ahead of the trends by paying attention to the marketplace. The design of hotels, condo communities, hospitality environments, and new homes will be appealing to consumers based on appearances and design more than construction. ■

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