

2009 Interior Design Trends

By Vivian Kistler, CPF, GCF, CMG



Simultaneously contemporary and formal, Lexington's Black Ice collection features bold, angular shapes and a dramatic carbon finish, and shows how white can be used effectively with black for contrast and flair.

Although the many companies that exhibit at High Point offer a wide selection of traditional “typical American” furniture and accessories, they also show their latest and most interesting products, making it a great venue for trend-watching. This year's show was a bit smaller than usual but still sprawled through 188 buildings encompassing 12 million square feet of show space, with around 2,000 exhibitors presenting an abundance of new introductions. Attendance was down, but enthusiasm was not dampened.

Based on the designs on display at the Spring Market at High Point this year, contemporary, earthy, and comfortable designs are stronger trends than the ornate or formal. But this doesn't mean small-scale. Grand is good, and stately is very good. Natural is good, too, and eco-friendly is very good. Every company had something “green” to brag about. One company stated that all their employees recycled.

Themes

Lexington Home Brands seems to have its finger on the pulse of some of the most popular themes. Black Ice is a chic, sophisticated collection featuring a black satin finish with silver detailing; the lines are bold, angular, and dramatic. Cimarron represents “the inspiration of the great outdoors, and the spirit of authenticity.” Upholstery fabrics feature “warm earth tones, deep hues of the forest, and dramatic colors of a mountain sunset.” Island Estate is a refined but not stuffy version of a tropical island retreat with bamboo, rattan, and coconut shell because “immersing yourself in the island lifestyle should be as easy as walking through your own front door.”

Country, coastal (think breezy Martha's Vineyard), and

Contemporary, earthy, and comfortable designs lead the way in this spring's interior design products

very contemporary are other continuing popular themes seen at High Point. Owen Hickey, formerly with New York Graphic Society, is now working with his artist wife, Suzanne Nicoll, on a collection of original coastal products. One of the most popular items was a set of old fence pickets hand-painted and carved into long fish.

Wall decor is still offered in sets of nine and, of course, as many “canvas” paintings—some real and some not—as you can fit in the showroom. Certainly there are typical art presentations—framed reproductions and canvas. But the big splash was the large size graphic, with a silhouetted pattern on a solid color background.

Patterns and Motifs

Textiles have bold patterning, and there is lots of texture and dimension on pillows. Paisley remains strong in traditional and updated versions. There are lots of single color silhouettes of large flowers or ferns in strong contrast with the background color. There are many bold, retro geometrics that feel like updated designs from the 70s.

Some toile remains, almost exclusively in what would be considered traditional toile colors and patterns, with little of the hot pink or acid green versions that were shown over the past few years. “Global” or “world culture” designs, seen on numerous textiles and accessories, is a melding of traditional patterns

Natural materials, such as the reclaimed wood and banana grass inlay in these graceful floor vases from Clayton Oxford, are valuable selling features for today's green-focused customers. The curving metallic silver lines are also trend-savvy.



Red continues to be a key color in art images. Red Vortex by Blakely Bering features “organic nuances and fiery hues” enhanced with gold and silver crushed metal. From Roma, framed in Roma’s black Moda moulding.



The “Languages of Color” collection from Company C celebrates global culture and touts caramel as “the new neutral.”

and motifs from India, Africa, Russia, Turkey, and other cultures.

Colors

Neutral is still the dominant color theme, mostly beige, gray, or cream, frequently used together for a quiet but not monochromatic color scheme. The cream is replaced or paired with white to create a crisp, clean contrast. A block of solid white in the form of a large sofa or wall cabinet is often used in these settings.

Where there is color, it is often bright or dark. The most prominent colors are red and gold in all variations from wheat to mustard to deep yellow-brown. Yellow-greens are still very strong, from olive to citron.

More citrus colors were anticipated this year, but lime was the only color used in many tones, tints, and shades. The oranges and lemons had a small presence,



Eco-friendly fabric (ultrasuede made from recycled materials) and vibrant, bright color make this Ecodesign chair from Ultrasuede a good candidate for today's furniture showrooms.

especially in accessories. A splash of very bright color, such as lime or fuchsia, was shown as an attention-getting accent, either on accessories like pillows or on a single chair or sofa, with the rest of the room using less dramatic color.

Blue and white are used together for a fresh, breezy look in country and seaside decor themes. The color combination of blue and brown is strongly established, but green and brown is now used frequently because it feels “newer.”

The color of wood furniture is fairly diverse, with driftwood and grayed finishes introduced in the kitchen area as well as the living room. Although several exhibitors showed a cool mid-tone brown, the warm, mid-tone browns seemed to be the most popular. The very dark “espresso” brown introduced a few years ago is still strong. There is lots of black painted furniture, usually in a satin finish, and some white painted furniture. Solid painted colors, such as yellow, light blue, and sage green, were shown in

country and coastal themes, and furniture with painted designs and motifs were present in either funky or formal settings.

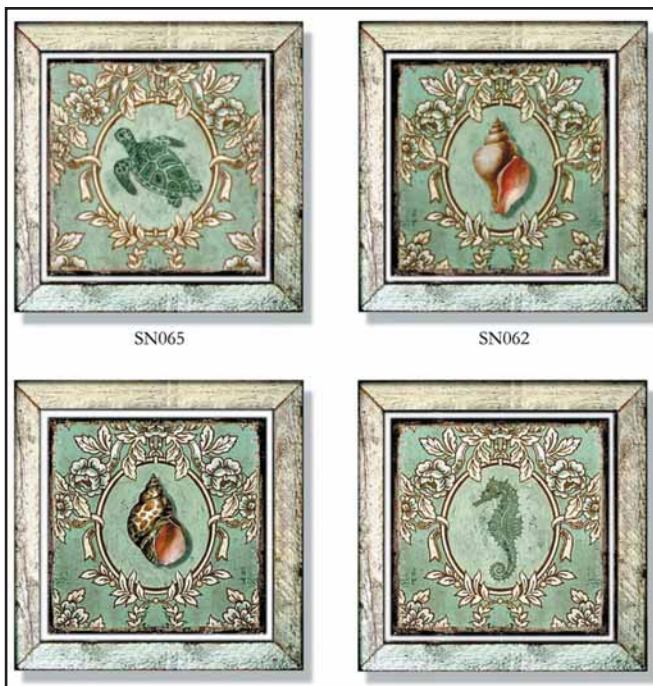
Guild Masters introduced painted-front dressers with funky patterns on the front of the drawers many years ago—it has now spread to several other showrooms where stripes, paisleys, and plaid drawer fronts were featured.

Silver and nickel used as hardware and accents on furniture continues to be used to convey cool, contemporary, or sophisticated. Copper—more like a rose-gold—is new. Bronze is now a contender and so is dark pewter. Complex metallic finishes are still popular in accessories.

Some significant color combinations included silver



A stylish silhouette is an important feature of this yellow leather recliner from Ekornes, but comfort and ergonomics are also provided (satisfying the growing demand for “people-friendly” modern design).

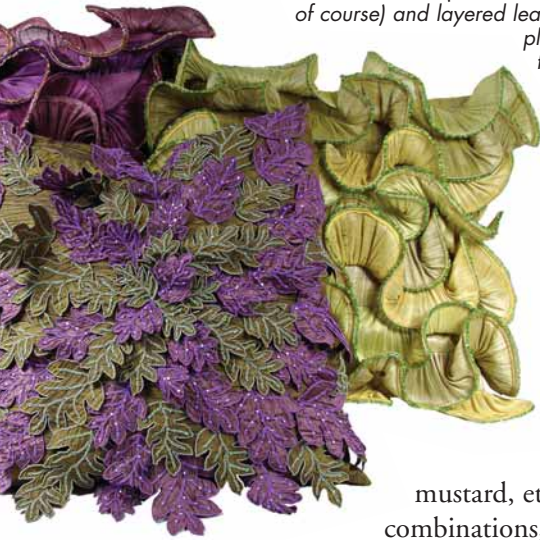


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Suzanne Nicoll Studio offered the coastal theme using driftwood frames and painted panels. Sets of squares in fours, sixes, and nines continue to be a popular choice.

Masses of ruffles (in natural, sustainable abaca, of course) and layered leaves are good examples of the dimensional texture currently popular in accent pillows, shown here in trendy purple and green. From DB Sources.



and gold in every possible nuance: gray and yellow, dark gray and mustard, etc. Several subtle combinations, such as silver

and dark taupe and taupe and olive green, were also show. Red, white, and black is still a good combination as well as milk chocolate brown and sea blue. It's been a long time since good old mint green has been in style; Bramble Company, which offers painted furniture, had a complete line of wood pieces in mint green that were pretty and clean.

Endorsements

There are still a lot of celebrity endorsements, with former fashion models leading the way. Christie Brinkley introduced a line of eco-friendly fabrics for Jo-Ann Fabrics (organic cotton, recycled polyester, patterns created with a waterless printing method) and Cindy Crawford offered a range of accessories for JC Penney—bedding, window coverings, area rugs, lighting, wall decor, and decorative accessories.

Country Living magazine, which publisher Hearst has more than 11 million readers each month, offered a collection of accessories in four themes for Sears and K-Mart, aiming to provide what Editor-in-Chief Sarah

Gray Miller says customers value: “attainable luxury, quality, authenticity and comfort.” The four themes (Modern Countryside, Blue & White, Red & White, and Faded Antique) are all defined as “country,” but they don't let that limit their scope, as the publication believes in “traditional, classic, and modern country sensibilities.”

One notable feature of these endorsements is the continuing appeal for celebrities of doing business with mainstream mass-market companies that can really move product versus prestigious, high-end boutique brands.



Retro fabrics, curving shapes, and dark orange leather make the Venus sofa from Palliser a spot-on trend showpiece.



Habersham's latest contribution to the need for accommodating today's flat but expansive television screens is the stately, masculine Highlands Media Center, which offers a hand-painted map image that lifts to reveal the screen when needed.



Neutral decor schemes that find contrast in pattern and texture rather than color continue to be popular, as seen in this room from Bassett Furniture Industries.

Close your eyes. Think about Walt Disney. Now picture Walt Disney's furniture. Nothing comes to mind? Or perhaps you see the furniture in the cottage of the seven dwarfs? Wrong. You are supposed to be thinking about "The 1950's Art Moderne Style" of Walt's heyday, according to Drexel Heritage's new collection. Or perhaps you will feel a connection with Veneman's Griffith outdoor furniture collection, with upholstery inspired by Sleeping Beauty. These are all part of The Walt Disney Signature Collection, Disney's first "upscale non-character lifestyle brand." It "invites people to experience the attention to detail and elegant style Walt was known for."



Traditional toile is still popular, especially in traditional settings like the French country Bagatelle Daybed from Highland House. Blue and white is a currently popular color combination.

Optimism

Overall, the spirit at High Point this spring was that opportunities may be harder to find, but they are still out there, and the best way to take advantage of them is to be smart, focused, and accommodating. The right product can still dazzle the customer. ■

Vivian Kistler, CMG is a 20-year member and senior chairholder of the Color Marketing Group. Kistler is the editor of the Color Names Reference book, which contains more than 37,000 names for commercial products.

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