

New Looks

By Vivian Kistler, CPF, CMG

The latest design trends setting the pace for the coming year were on display at the High Point Home Furnishings Market in October 2007. More than 12 million square feet of showroom space houses 2,600 exhibitors and hosts nearly 80,000 attendees. With showrooms carefully designed to be fresh and fashionable and with thousands of new products, High Point is an essential venue for exploring the color and design trends that will fill retail stores in the coming months. Here is a sampling of those that were on display.

Colors

Color was bold or quiet, with little in between. A hot yellow green, brighter and yellower than lime, was a popular accent color. A salmon/shrimp color, sort of a rosy peach, was strong in fabrics, either solid or in combination with several other colors. Orange was frequently used for pizzazz in color combinations, but just as a splash and with no large solid expanses. A brighter, more vibrant scarlet was seen in numerous products.

Brown is still used in many color combinations, but brown paired with blue—especially light blue—is by far the most popular. Neutrals continue to flourish as a companion to strong colors or alone as a decor color theme. Gray is becoming very popular. Rupal Mamtani, co-owner and managing member of Bluefish Home in Atlanta, says, “The gray palette ranges from soft to deep, dark charcoal gray—almost black—and is accentuated with a lot of metallics and pastels. We’re also seeing jewel colors used with grays, particularly amethyst.”

Wood furniture finishes are lighter than the dark chocolate that dominated the show a year ago. The color is not light, but has a medium warm depth of golden, orange, or reddish brown. Also very popular was black

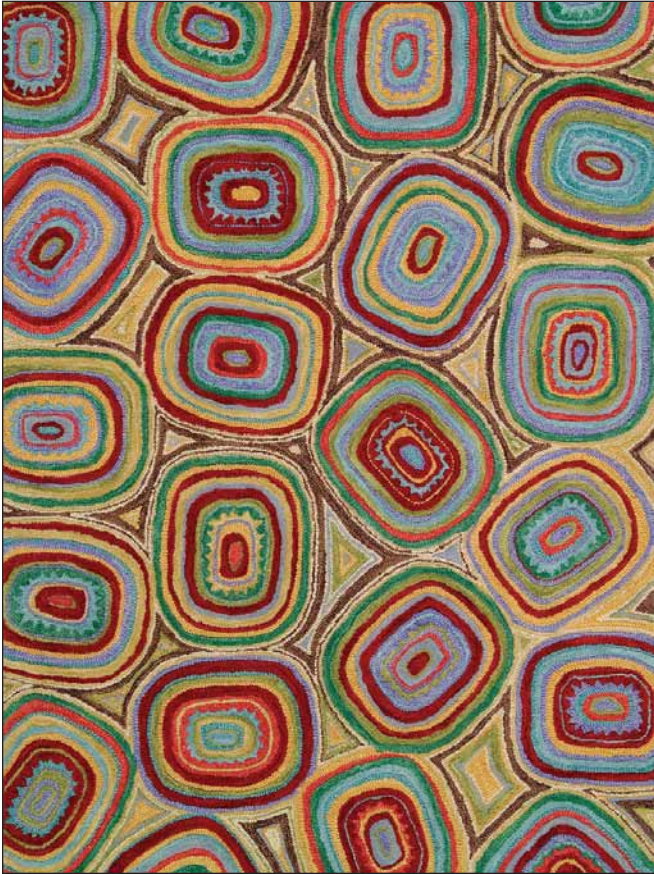


Modern furniture with a sculptural flair is shown in one of 50 pieces from internationally renowned designer Jacques Garcia for Baker Furniture. Contemporary furniture had a strong presence at High Point.



Gray is a significant current color in both home and commercial decor. The “Driftwood” furniture finish from Bluefish Home is created by layering finishes and weathering, using water-based elements.

for 2008



Inspired by a Panamanian mola, the River Bend rug from Company C vibrates with color and visual movement, a popular aspect of multicultural decor.



The Gloucester living room group from Bassett shows the white furniture and fresh upholstery that are hallmarks of the "seaside living" decor trend.

The latest interiors being showcased featured either bold or quiet colors, modern styles, coastal and international looks, and 'green' manufacturing



The Aura sofa is from the Eco-Rowe collection, made from environmentally friendly components. Note the popular salmon color used in the 100 percent cotton cushion covers.

furniture, painted or stained and more matte or satin than glossy lacquer. There were many complex "almost black" finishes, with a hint of cherry or other "under-color" showing through. This is not the mega-distressed look of a few years ago, but a more refined, elegant finish. White or "almost white" was also prevalent, especially in Coastal lifestyle fashions.

Styles

Modern rules. It may be presented as contemporary, Scandinavian, or Shaker, but it is characterized by straight lines and simple hardware. This type of design probably has a strong future. It is being embraced by many age groups, including baby boomers. To Gen-X and younger buyers, the style of decor called "contemporary" has been around since before they were born. They like its plainness, and it is easy to accessorize. As the Ikea audience upgrades their homes, modern style may well stick with them.

On the other end of the spectrum was "fancy."

There was a lot of ornate European (particularly Italian, Spanish, and French) decoration on wood furniture at High Point. Many of these pieces are imposing and dramatic, with a formality that seems to be gaining popularity.

There was a distinct Romantic presence at High Point—furniture and accessories geared to young women and adult princesses. Think canopy beds and rosebud fabrics. Lam Lee showed the Larissa bedding collection, with yards and yards of satiny skirting. Hollywood-based Haute House showed the Antoinette Collection of sofas and chairs with glamorous fabrics and gossamer trims. Lea Industries introduced the Jessica McClintock Home “Romance Collection for Young Ladies,” with furniture that features an antique ivory finish with silver tipping on the carvings.

Coastal lifestyle, no matter how far from the water your home may be, was a primary theme for many of the big furniture companies at High Point. It is characterized by white, nearly white, or driftwood gray furniture as well as white upholstery or sunny prints. The accessories would be at home in a seaside cottage. Everything is relaxed, casual, light, and breezy. Even products that don't seem particularly “coastal” were shown in these settings.

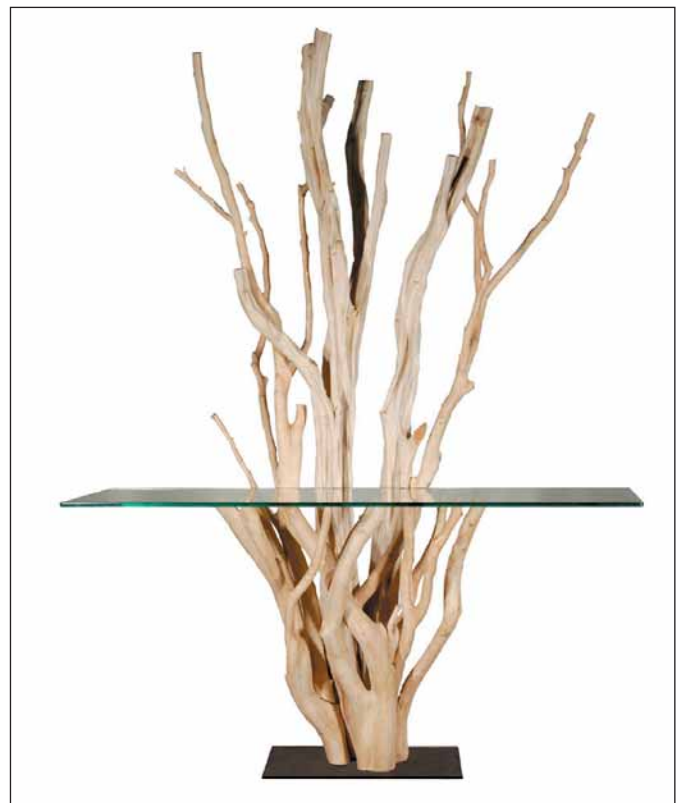
International influences also continue to be an important source for design trends. For a generation that does not remember life before 24-hour cable television and the Internet, the constant flow of images from every part of the world is part of everyday life, and the distinction between the colors and motifs of “my world” and “their world” becomes blurred. “Multicultural” has become a style of its own, paying homage to a variety of color and design traditions without emulating any particular one. “Fusion” is often used to describe the resulting mix. With every country on the planet and hundreds of years of history available to explore, the possibilities are endless. From the landscapes of Spain, the palaces of France, and the colors and spirit of Mexico to Italy—which can evoke chic modern design, the rolling hills of Tuscany, or the ancient classical style of the Romans—the influences are numerous and diverse.

Home Office & Theater

For the first time at High Point, Home Office/Home Theater was given its own section in the directory. This emerging sector—especially home theater—is making an impact on manufacturers and consumers as people scramble to find a way to integrate their big, flat-screen TVs into all types of room decor. There are now many options. Some hide the TV behind cabinet doors, some allow the TV to disappear into a slot in the furniture, and many simply display the TV in an attractive setting (consoles and traditional entertainment centers). Specialized seating is a becoming more important, such as the



From cocofeather hassocks to woven abaca twist chairs, the Bergen Collection from Palecek is the essence of organic chic. The Spring Tree wall sculpture is four panels of plantation hardwood that are stained then carved to reveal the natural color of the wood.



Standing 8' tall, the Origins Console from the Phillips Collection is made from the salvaged roots of trees harvested for other purposes. Eco-friendly pieces like this were prevalent at this year's Fall Market.



Martha Stewart teams with Bernhardt for a sixth time with the Dunemere Collection, which “embraces restorative, unhurried living.” The Everett Club Chair (tightly upholstered in supple leather) is essentially modern but could work in several of today's decor trends, including formal.



The cherry Shaker Chest from Stanley Furniture is an example of the lighter, warmer wood colors that were popular at High Point. The simple clean lines capture traditional Shaker style but are equally appropriate for contemporary settings.



Silver starbursts against a deep black sky give both light and depth to these ceramic pieces from The Phillips Collection. Black accessories are part of several current decor themes.

G.A. Brinkel Pure-Cinema home theater recliners made to sit side-by-side, theater style, with shared armrests.

Green-ness

The growing movement towards “green” manufacturing is rapidly expanding. Companies that were already earth-conscious tout a green policy as business as usual for them. But many furniture, textile, and accessories companies do not have such a noble past. There’s been a lot of raw material and energy consumption, air and water pollution, and landfill waste associated with making their products. Recycling, reuse, reclamation, and “minimizing the footprint” are the new mantras. This “cradle to grave” consciousness asks, “Where did the materials come from, what happened during manufacture, and what will happen to the products when they get old?”

Here are a few of the hundreds of examples at High Point:

- Groovystuff introduced a “Drifter” collection made of small segments of teak root fashioned into occasional tables, mirrors, and home decor. The company's reclaimed teak product will be the first in the furniture industry to be certified by SmartWood Rediscovered, a program that verifies the sourcing and handling of recovered wood.
- Vaughan-Bassett, America's largest manufacturer of wooden adult bedroom furnishings, has initiated the “One for One” reforestation program, contributing maple, oak, pine, poplar, ash, and apple seedlings to replace every tree it uses each year (about 150,000 trees).
- Rowe created the Eco-300CC, a foam cushion in which large portions of the traditional petroleum-based materials have been replaced with renewable, plant-based materials.
- C.R. Laine introduced “down2earth,” featuring upholstery fabrics made from renewable fibers, soy-based foams, and cushioning from post-consumer fibers.
- Bluefish home uses Primavera wood, known as white mahogany, a large, rainforest canopy tree grown in Guatemala to shade coffee plants. The forest is maintained by planting new trees and harvesting the trees that have grown too large and provide too much shade for the coffee plants.

Licensing Names & Ambience

Licensing is now a staple, and why not? Consumers continue to gravitate to products linked to a famous name or place. Some of the latest at High Point: Oscar-nominated costume designer Bob Mackie's 42-piece Bob Mackie Home™ “Signature” collection by American Drew, and Martha Stewart's sixth collection with Bernhard, called Dunemere, inspired by Martha's affection for the beauty and ease of a coastal lifestyle. History-based licensing includes the “Leeds Castle” collection by

Laneventure, with replicas of furniture made especially for Lady Baillie, an Anglo-American heiress who owned the British castle from 1926 until 1974. There was also the Mount Vernon Collection from Taylor King, including such pieces as the Mary Ball Washington wing chair, the original of which is currently on display at the museum and education center at Mount Vernon, VA.

Innovative Presentation

High Point is working hard to maintain its position. An aggressive campaign to improve and market the show yielded benefits for visitors. There were daily video reports, better color-coded guides to showrooms, and market orientation seminars each morning for new attendees. The slogan, "The premier market for world premieres," lets the audience know that everything you need can be found right here. ■



The classic color combination of yellow, blue and white gives a sunny freshness to the Hatteras bedding collection from Bob Timberlake for Mystic Valley Traders. Licensing from artists, designers, and other famous names remains important.



Organic textures and a modern mix of colors create an earthy garden feeling in the Sun Kissed stripes and Linden Leaves bedding group from Company C. Nature in all its many variations is a key decor theme.

Vivian Kistler, CMG, is an internationally known speaker and author of *The Color Resource Names Book*. Vivian is a 20-year member and senior chairholder of the Color Marketing Group. Vivian has worked as a trend consultant for colors and images to many companies in the art publishing and picture framing industries.

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