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## The Home Designer Wrap It Up

By Brandon Neff



A chevron patterned rug adds happy energy to this 'tween' basement hangout. Photos courtesy Brandon Neff Design

As we come to the end of yet another year, I thought it would be fun to reflect on the past 12 months and highlight some of the best of what's happened in the design world - so many trends, so many near misses, and a few noteworthy standouts that I think will endure.

Like many designers, I'm always fascinated by innovations in new materials, new silhouettes that seem to show up in every shelter magazine simultaneously and breakout products that shape how we live in our homes. As I'm not influenced much by the "latest" looks, I often look at my own portfolio of work to see if what I imagined for my clients happened to reflect any of the "hot list" ideas that seem to flood the design scene like fashion "must haves" clamoring for attention every season.

I always try to present fresh ideas for my clientele that are grounded in a classic foundation - good design should last a while. Spend a day with me and you'd see the limitless fabrics, furniture and decorative choices available to the trade burgeoning from my vendors from here to Los Angeles. My job is to help filter the ever expanding merchandise and steer clients toward achieving the look they want while building rooms that are both livable and unique.

True to the ever changing tastes of consumers, 2013 marked the official transition from Tangerine Tango to Spring Green as the color of the moment, and soon we'll be ushering in a new hue to grace everything from fabrics to accessories to cars and even toilet paper. Get ready!

While there are always classics in interior design that will forever look chic and work seamlessly in any space - European and Asian antiques, American mid-century furniture, crisp white lampshades, Calacutta marble for kitchens and baths, sisal area rugs and a touch of black in every room - there have been a few new additions to the list of "go to" items I'm constantly gleaning inspiration from these days.

Drawing from history and the *au courant*, I keep a few ideas in my back pocket that always look great and work as solid foundations in any room. Here are a few of my favorite things:

**Chevron patterns.** For rugs, draperies, accent pillows and even wood flooring, chevrons evoke a classic, yet updated motif that works in any style of home. Try a grey and white chevron fabric for dining chairs - a new traditional look that goes with nearly everything you pair it with. Or hang a pair of cream and white chevron drapes to flank windows in a child's bedroom for a chic jolt to wake up those tired baby blues and pinks.

**Animal prints.** Once a choice for only the bold hearted - think Tony Duquette and his theatrical interiors - prints in snow leopard, zebra, cheetah and tiger patterns are a new neutral. (I see you shaking your head at me - trust, people, trust.) The popularity of hide rugs layered over wall-to-wall carpeting adds both interest and whimsy to any room. (IKEA sells a fantastic faux hide.) Try a caramel leopard patterned wool runner to soften your stairs or as a hall runner as a way to create something special in a much used "connector" space. Classic black and white zebra linen looks fantastic as a neutral headboard trimmed with chrome nail heads - mix with plaid bed linens or an Ikat print for a totally boho combination. Or go over the top and use a python printed cotton for an eye-catching valance in an all white kitchen. Now, you're talking crazy, Brandon!

**Chinoiserie.** The historic design craze during England's Regency era of the 19th century, and used throughout the courts of Louis XV and Louis XVI of France, oriental motifs are back for good, and looking fresher than ever. As global styles mesh, and cultures are becoming increasingly more blended, the confluence of the Far East and Western interiors are finding a permanent partnership. From pagoda shapes and exotic fretwork on everything from etageres and lighting to lacquered finishes and japanning, Orientalism adds a well traveled and rich texture to your space. Try adding a pair of lidded ginger jars painted with a rural landscape to dress up your fireplace mantel, or choose from the myriad chinoiserie wall coverings to add drama to a powder bath - mix with a Chinese Chippendale style mirror and lacquered vanity for the ultimate in glamorous hand washing.

**Colorful ceilings.** What? No way, Brandon! Impossible! Yes, Virginia, you can paint your ceilings in something other than white. In fact, I haven't called out a white ceiling in a client's home for years. With all of the dynamic colors and finishes available today, why would anyone settle for white? It's just unnecessary. I advise the uninitiated to start with a pale grey, or soft mushroom hue - two colors that work beautifully with any wall accent. For a

bedroom, add a touch of blue to the white tinting base for a dreamy (and complementary) shade reminiscent of a clear sky above - it's subtle, but very restful. And, for those wishing to cast a flattering glow in a dining room, try painting your ceiling in a metallic - bronze and silver leaf are two of my favorites. Ralph Lauren makes wonderful Regent Metallic paints. The refracted light from your chandelier kissing the warm metal tint will throw a warm and magical light over you and your guests - like a room filled with candlelight - it'll take your dining to a whole new level.

Brass. I am continually being inspired by brass - in kitchen cabinet hardware, in fittings for showers and baths and in sconces and chandeliers. Its warm patina and depth of color add a luxe dimension. As a child of the '70s, I had thought of brass as a "second class" metal - it seemed to always pop up in hippie fern bars and was ubiquitous in all those pharmacy lamps used in pool halls and used to clad foot rests in bars. But today, I have a new appreciation for brass. For me, it evokes the glamour of Studio 54 decadence and Top Of The Mark cocktails - burnished, shaken not stirred. Look for brass to make a comeback in everything from furniture to mirrors and from faucets to cutlery. La Cornue offers a range and hood in brass that reminds me of a French bistro - mix with limestone floors and marble counters for the height in gastronomic chic.

A Parsons Table. Named for New York's New School of Design and created by design luminary Jean-Michel Frank, this table should be a staple in your home. Versatile, simple, elegant, it was a standard issue in almost every Billy Baldwin Park Avenue project for good reason - it works with everything. One of my favorites is at West Elm - use it as a desk, or for a small dining area. Place it against the wall next to your bed as a nightstand or use it for a vanity. Their squared shape and clean lines are being enhanced with colorful finishes, mirror cladding and even wrapped in raffia. Mix it up with a Louis Ghost chair, or a Wegner teak armchair. You'll keep it around for years.

To all my design enthusiasts, here's wishing you the happiest of holidays and happy decorating!

I want to hear from you!

Write me and tell me what trends you're following. What looks are inspiring your design decisions? I'm putting together my column calendar for 2014, and I'd love to know what topics and stories interest you. Don't be shy, drop me an email and say hello!







A white lacquered Parson's table adds a modern touch to this traditional entry. Photo courtesy Brandon Neff Design

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