

The good, the bad, and the ugly of home design trends

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For The Union Democrat

Style is such a personal thing isn't it? How we dress, how we live, what car we choose to drive.

Many people don't care about style or trends and that's okay. But a lot of people do care, and since women are the main decision makers in purchasing homes, it behooves most of us to keep our homes reasonably updated.

We've all been in houses that scream "time warp." But with some thought and planning, there's no reason why your home can't age gracefully, with or without the help of a designer.

The shelf life of a decorating trend is about 10 years. If you enjoy following current interior decorating styles, as I do, you might find my guidelines interesting, or at least helpful at some point.

The most noticeable changes in decorating trends happen with color.

In the 1970s, harvest gold and dark brown were "the" colors. It seemed as though every home had

gold appliances, macramé plant hangers and dark brown shag carpet. In the '80s it was all about mauve, powder blue, and duckies and bunnies. French country was all the rage. Then it was "Tuscan," an unfortunate design trend since most Americans don't have the faintest notion what authentic Tuscany looks like.

Right now, strong undiluted colors are all over the design magazines. Vibrant lemon yellow, deep Kelly green (like the grassy colored crayon), and "glam," oversized accessories are considered stylish.

Here is the good news. It's not necessary to change the entire décor scheme in your home every 10 years to have an updated style. Here are my top three tips for decorating and furnishing your home without major overhauls every 10 years.

- Mix styles and eras — You've heard me say this before. Homes with mixed-style furnishings age gracefully and only need small updates here and there. You can expect to make bigger changes every 15 to 20 years if done with thought, creativity, and planning.

As an example, I did a home 13 years ago that has been updated with fresh paint (no color changes, the paint just needed to be redone), some new fabric slipcovers for two chairs, and a ton of new accessories. It still looks very fresh and updated without spending more than a few thousand dollars.

- Choose colors that don't date quickly, such as those found in traditional style settings. One color scheme that never dates is navy blue, hunter green, red, and taupe. It's a little on the safe side, yes, but what if you add the new Kelly green into your scheme with pillows? And repeat the color with accessories like jardinières or pots for your plants?

Another color scheme that never goes out of style is yellow and blue.

Okay, perhaps it's a bit staid but not if you update it with great, cobalt blue graphic print pillows and the super-hot, oversized Chinese bell jars, arranged in collections. The point is, if you start by purchasing the big expense items like sofas, carpet, and curtains in styles and colors that don't date quickly, you can easily update your

interiors with gorgeous trendier colors and oversized items like lamps, pillows and planters with less expense and more frequency.

- The best big return updates will be changing "colored" carpet for neutral colored high quality wool or wool blends depending on budget; replacing or painting golden oak cabinetry in the bathrooms, kitchen, and laundry room; replacing linoleum with updated styles and colors; and installing granite countertops or large granite tile with hairline grout and diagonal set.

Stainless steel appliances are de rigueur these days with any remodel.

Other style update ideas

- Repainting Navajo toned walls with fresher, lighter neutrals.

- Removing and/or avoiding altogether wallpaper and borders. Wallpaper dates very quickly.

- Replacing light fixtures and cabinet door pulls is a big expense, but it is a high return investment.

- Cool, clear colors are currently replacing warm and muted colors.

Tips

- Use feather forms for your throw pillows; 20-inch square is a nice, medium size, 18-inch is small and suitable for a small chair, while 22-inch is large and works best on large sofas.

- When purchasing lamps, the less "stylized" the better. Go for classic and simple lamp with linen or silk drum shade. The new patterned shades are fun but hard to work with. Opt for a shade with a little band of bright color at the top and bottom. I love red or black.

- Sofas are a big investment and should be a once in a lifetime purchase. Choose one with a kiln dried hardwood frame, and high quality cushions and upholstery fabric. I prefer the ones with either one long cushion or three cushions. No one likes to sit in the middle of a two-cushioned sofa; 90-inches is a nice size.

As a designer, I prefer to help clients develop a style of their own using furniture and accessories in/from a wide variety of styles and eras, choices that will evolve with them through the course of a lifetime.