

Home project results that can sing your praises or hit a sour note

Few of us are professional planners — but most of us can make simple plans like what type of carpet to choose or how large the new garage ought to be. Most of our plans work out to some extent, but others can surprise us — for good or bad. As the old saying goes, “The best of plans can go astray.” Believe me, I know, from past experience. A few highlights:

Art for the home

My mother was godmother to twins, Dianne and Donnith. Dianne was a world-class woodcut artist. As newlyweds, we were joyful when Dianne graced



BY SALLY D. KETCHUM
Local columnist

us with real art (though it was not our taste): a surrealist triptych of the wise men, a strange queen featured on a playing card and “The

Man” — sketches of enough men to form a bowling team. Each piece was huge. We were thrilled and immediately took the pieces for framing. Result: The bill was over a thousand dollars — a tenth of my husband’s salary back then. Great art. Greater bill.

Home is where the heart is

Plan: Frame a treasured piece — a poem done in calligraphy by our daughter.

Result: We named our northern place “Innisfree,” after the title of a Yeats poem about peace at a lake. I sent my husband to have it framed. To my dismay, I found that he chose a narrow glossy black metallic

frame. However, when the art was hung in the living room over the black piano, with its gleaming white keys, the words became beautifully highlighted. No frame could have been more suitable and it is among our best home décor efforts.

Bathroom blues

The plan: To paint the small bathroom a soothing sky blue.

Result: The walls and mirror reflected each other, making everyone look sick.

To cover sad interior design (and blue paint) mistakes, I attempted wallpapering. Wary of my beginner’s skills, I was careful —

right tools and precise measurements.

At the time, both my husband and I were English teachers, and finding white wallpaper with Shakespearean quotations scattered all over it was a delight. The finished job was near perfect.

Then came a note from my daughter’s third grade teacher: “I am amazed that Blake is quoting Shakespeare. Her classmates are even picking them up. However, I find the content unsuitable for this grade.”

True. Every quotation was suggestive or sexual but I was too busy measuring to digest Shakespeare’s words,

such as “The ripest fruit first falls” or “All lovers swear more performance than they are able.”

Postscript: Our grown kids still like Shakespeare.

“Barn burners”

We once decided to raise the roof to build a dormer. The weather forecast predicted dry weather. The meteorologist was wrong.

It stormed and the wind blew the orange tarps up, wildly flapping high in the wind. The folks on the next block saw “flames” and called the fire department.

Sally D. Ketchum writes from Williamsburg and the Upper Peninsula.

Texture is in and shine out for materials for home furnishings and decor

BY BARBARA MAYER
The Associated Press

Shiny finishes are as unwelcome as an unpowdered nose in many homes. Covering a large range of home furnishings products — from textiles to tile — texture is in and shine is out.

Even building materials are part of the move to texture.

“Textured looks represent a new style direction in laminates even though you can’t have much actual dimension since they are only about an eighth of an inch thick,” said Grace Jeffers, author of a forthcoming book on new materials and a consultant to Wilsonart.

Texture is introduced to laminates via finish and pattern. An example is Wilsonart’s Mesa Granite Collection, which is finished with sheen that imparts the radiance of a pearl without being shiny.

Other textured interior surface products range from heavily textured gypsum panels to ceramic tiles to panels of multidensity fiberboard that are carved so they have dimensional

patterns such as waves. Surface materials such as these would be used as interior accent walls.

The feeling for texture has even invaded a product like vinyl upholstery fabric, said Jeffers. She cited Knoll Textiles new “Forza” vinyl, which has a textured feel in a fabric that usually represents smoothness and shine.

At fall trade fairs such as New York Home Textiles Shows at Javits Center and other New York showrooms, and in textiles and rug showrooms at the International Home Furnishings Market in High Point, N.C., the emphasis was on deep and nubby textures and surface embellishment.

Textures included faux fur, chenille and soft mohair and cashmere alone or in blends, said Karen Chambers, editor of LDB Interior Textiles, a trade publication for home fashions. Embellishment ranged from embroidery to beading to outline stitching used singly or together to gussy up all manner of home textiles.

What’s coming now is a more subtle take on texture.

“People were not conscious of texture before, but the fact that textured materials catch the light differently and animate a room is of more interest to the public.”

Mariette Himes Gomez, author

At the January wholesale market in Frankfurt, Germany, known as Heimtextil, Chambers noticed curtain and drapery materials with flocking and with subtle color variations that make the fabric appear to change color as it is folded or draped. She also noted texture in wallpaper; a wallpaper called “Bubble” had real bubbles in it, like raindrops.

Beyond textiles to dinnerware and other tabletop products, “we are seeing a layering of decorative processes and the use of combinations of finishes on a single object, from both large and small companies,” said Gina Provenzano, an

associate editor at Bon Appetit magazine.

Dinnerware patterns include raised designs, recessed designs and glaze variations from matte to glossy, while glasses have cuts and etching as well as surface perforations and sometimes even several layers of color.

“It’s the combination of techniques that make you want to reach out and touch the product. The goal is to encourage consumers to run their fingers over a placemat or touch the rim of a plate or the face of a vase and ultimately to be so intrigued with the look and feel of the item that they ultimately buy it.”

The textured look also extends to upholstery. The popularity of casual contemporary style and a technological revolution that made textured woven fabrics less expensive have turned upholstery fabrics towards texture, said John Knott, president of Quadrille, a to-the-trade fabric and wall coverings company in New York.

Some preferred textures include the pebbly look of boucle yarns, the velvety feel of chenille, the softness of flannel and the sheen of linen.

Knott theorized that the continuing appeal of high-touch fabrics is related to a quest for peace and quiet at home.

“People are searching for a soothing environment,” he said, which often means decorating through the use of varied textures and soft colors.

“Textural contrasts in decorating offer repose and can be easier to live with than rooms with lots of pattern,” said interior designer Mariette Himes Gomez.

Gomez is author of “Rooms: Creating Luxurious, Livable Spaces”

(HarperCollins, \$39.95, hardcover), which has examples of rooms she designed that focus on the interplay of subtle colors and a variety of textures.

While decorators have been well aware of the value of textural contrasts, customers are now following.

“People were not conscious of texture before, but the fact that textured materials catch the light differently and animate a room is of more interest to the public,” said Gomez.

As one who is always shopping for home furnishings, Gomez finds many highly textured products.

“We are seeing nubbier materials and fabrics that are soft to the touch.

Window coverings present another opportunity for tactile materials with half a dozen weaves for window shade materials,” she said. “When you get to the floor, you have tweed tones and multicolor carpeting and Tibetan rugs, which are thicker than other Orientals, and are quite popular.”

Small favors: Furnishings that can make the most of cramped quarters

BY PAT STEIN
Copley News Service

Organization and storage are the keys to living well in small spaces — whether it’s a studio apartment, a college dorm room or even a diminutive entry-level home.

“When you’re in tight quarters, it’s a lot easier to create a haven for yourself if you have a place for everything and everything in its place,” said Anne Evans, a consultant for Linens ‘n Things.

The chain is one of many retailers that feature furnishings and accessories designed to make it possible to thrive, not just survive, in small spaces.

Style is particularly important to young adults moving away from home and furnishing a place of their own for the first time. Budget, too, plays a significant role.

College dorms

“How your room or apartment is decorated says a lot about who you are. Young people especially want where they live to express their individuality and their personality,” said Target spokeswoman Laurie Adler. “Going to college or graduating from home to an apartment is usually the first opportunity to have a room of your own to decorate as you choose, but chances are you’re on a tight budget.”

Modular furnishings that stack, fold, nest and serve multiple purposes are ideally suited to small-space living, and there is plenty to choose. Included are beds for sitting and sleeping; cubes that hold books or clothing but also can be stacked to make a nightstand or room divider; ottomans with storage inside that can be used as a tabletop or for seating and

occasional tables that open into dining-room tables.

Most college students plan to take their dorm-room furnishings with them as “starter items” when they graduate to a studio apartment, according to industry experts.

“But there are a lot of home furnishing gaps to fill in when you make that transition,” said Bette Kahn, a spokeswoman for Crate & Barrel, a source for entry-level home furnishings.

A bed is one of them. A convertible unit such as a sofa bed or a futon that can be used for sitting or sleeping is an ideal, multipurpose solution in a one-room apartment where the bed is in sight. But also consider a trundle bed or a day bed dressed with stylish linens and a colorful comforter or duvet.

Coffee tables with shelves and drawers for storage and a top section that pops up 8 to 10 inches serve as comfortable places for working or dining in front of the TV.

Armoires with fold-out desks double as storage for clothing and work space. A small dresser or chest makes for a bedside table that doubles as storage space for anything from linens to books and bed linens.

“Use vertical wall space to the maximum and space behind doors and on top of things that would otherwise be wasted,” suggested Janice Simonsen, a spokeswoman for Ikea.

Folding laundry hampers, collapsible lamps, nesting tables, over-door shelving units and free-standing modular bookcase/storage units are a few of the space-saving items offered at Ikea. Free-standing open bookcases double as room dividers and display or stor-

age shelves.

Simonsen likes the idea of bringing color and excitement into a room by hanging textiles on the wall. Hanging fabric creates an accent wall without violating apartment rules against painting.

Lighting is especially important in small spaces, according to Simonsen.

“A multipurpose room needs five or six light

sources. You need task lighting for work or study, ambient lighting for relaxing and background lighting to make task lighting easy on the eyes,” she said, adding that all of this can be accomplished with portable lamps.

Work stations, entertainment centers and storage cabinets designed for corners make use of what oth-

erwise might be dead space in a small apartment.

First Home

Nearly 90 percent of Americans describe their homes as small to modest in size, according to the AFMA.

Consequently, furnishings from your one-room apartment, or even your dorm room, may work well in a small first home, according

to Jackie Hirschhaut, AFMA’s vice president of public relations.

“The space-saving furniture that you bought for your first apartment or your college dorm room may serve well in the spare bedroom that doubles as an office and a guest room. Corner work stations are perfect for children’s rooms,” Hirschhaut said.

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