

WINTER HOME

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SUPPLEMENT TO THE RECORD-EAGLE

WHAT'S INSIDE

Eclectic furniture trends reflect region

BY LYNDA TWARDOWSKI
Special to the Record-Eagle

Northern Michigan is like no place else, and its residents' tastes for trends and style — even in furniture — refuses to piggyback the masses.

"Our area is tough to categorize," said Janet Hessler, co-owner of the upscale Betsie Bay Furniture with her husband, Jeff Hessler. "I sometimes wonder if we were in Grand Rapids, what sort of furniture we would sell."

Credit the proliferation of second homes, cottages and cabins, the breathtaking combination of woods, water and sky, or that relaxed attitude, but lower Northern Michigan home style tends to embrace the unique environment it reflects: casual, comfortable and natural.

Michael Todd, owner of The Pinery in Traverse City, agrees. Although he said he's been selling Mission-style pieces (think simple and straight lines ala Frank Lloyd Wright) lately, most of his clients steer to the cottage look.

"People here are looking for something more relaxed, less urban," he said. "I think people don't often have that formal living room anymore where the kids can't go. People are nesting, they're staying home more."

Domestic bliss

What does that mean for furniture style? Today, the living room has to do triple duty as the place where the whole family hangs out, Fido crashes and company goes to mingle. Function and fashion are important, quality is essential, but versatility is top priority.

Stacy Farmer was looking

for all of the above when she was decorating her Frankfort cottage. With three kids and a primary home in Rockford, Farmer said she wanted something cheery and cozy, but also washable and durable.

"I wanted it to feel like a home away from home, nothing stuffy or formal, so when we had company people wouldn't feel like they had to get up and go on Sunday morning — they'd still be relaxing on Sunday night," said Farmer.

Thankfully, upscale furniture and upholstery makers such as JM Paquet, Lee and Dino Marc Anthony are heeding the call, banishing the formal, one-upholstery-fits-all pieces and offering tailored slipcovers galore instead.

"Slipcovers suit the informal lifestyle. People can change the look from season to season," said Hessler. "I'm seeing a lot of rich velvet or chenille (slipcovers) in winter and lots of light and airy fabrics and color in summer — a lot of cotton. It's light, airy and has tremendous wearability."

Slipcovers don't stop on sofas and loveseats either; they often find a place on that current must-have piece, the oversized ottoman, which is frequently replacing the standard coffee table.

At Nest in Traverse City, owner Jennifer Ringl carries JM Paquet, a line that offers eight fabric choices — a host of color and fabric options her clients are glad to receive.

"I think people are looking to invest in quality. They want a piece they can have for a long time, so they want to purchase something that allows them some flexibility," said Ringl.

ty," said Ringl.

One of her most flexible and most popular pieces is a sofa crafted with three different color fabrics, which allows owners to change the sofa's look with just a flip of the cushions.

Color me adaptable

The typical lower northern Lower Michigan home features a lot of earthy elements and tones, according to Todd.

"People are doing a lot of wood floors, ceramic tiles — especially in the eating areas, lots of neutral colors, so they're looking for ways to bring in color," said Todd. "Furniture is a great way to do that."

In his showroom, Todd said he sees a lot of people searching for a bright cottage look. As a result, white and yellow and lots of light blues move quickly.

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Record-Eagle/Meegan M. Reid

Top, a love seat by JM Paquet at Betsie Bay Furniture in Frankfort. Above is a sofa, also by JM Paquet, that comes in eight different fabrics

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Color your world with a variety of vibrant interior paint hues

BY TOM TRACEY
Special to Record-Eagle

Thinking about painting the living room white again? Think again.

"Color adds warmth, depth, dimension and personality to a room," said Val DeGroote, interior decorator and owner of The Decorating Muse in Leland. "When someone comes into your home, they know what you're about."

A variety of local suppliers, designers and painters offered their insight into interior painting tips and trends for 2004.

Hot colors

"If the color isn't right, the whole room isn't right," said Linda Dean-Stallman A.S.I.S., owner of her own local design firm.

According to Dean-Stallman, there are three elements of color: hue — the actual color; value — the lightness or darkness; and intensity — the brightness or dullness.

Jeffrey Lautner, sales manager at 7's Paint and Wallpaper in Traverse City has noticed a trend toward using more color.

"Deeper, darker colors — a lot of accent colors. Those are my hottest trends," he said.

According to Lautner, his most popular colors come from the historic and classic-style color lines.

"The tans and mosses from the historic color line work well with older homes, as well as newer suburban styles," said Lautner.

"Classic paint choices include muted grays, greens and maroon," he said. "I'm also seeing more mid-tone coral and butternut type colors."

Marcy Hurst, co-owner of Olde World Custom Homes, assists her clients with decisions on paint and trim.

"The trend now is toward warm, rich colors; yellows, golds, greens, beiges and browns," said Hurst.

Latest decorating trends

According to DeGroote, new decorating trends include color blocking (painting blocks of color for emphasis), accent walls (painting one wall differently from others) and emphasizing items of architectural interest (painting archways, coves or trim).

Hurst sees a move toward creating surface variety, such as color washing, glazing and textures of straw, sand and suede. An effect called "orange peel" (using drywall topping compound) is also in favor.

With the popularity of wood floors, adjoining walls are now being painted to complement colors already present in the wood, according to Dean-Stallman.

"For instance, in a space with medium oak floors, a yellow green would not be as attractive as an ochre, which has more warmth and complements the wood undertones better," she said.

Tips from professional designers

What tips do professional decorators and designers have for homeowners planning an indoor painting project?

According to both DeGroote and Dean-Stallman, regional factors should be taken into consideration when designing an interior color palette.

"We get so much snow around here already — a white room is just not

warm," said DeGroote. "Try putting more than one color in a room."

Added Dean-Stallman, "Here in the Midwest, where it is cooler and grayer than the southern states, I choose paint with that in mind. If a client is drawn to gray, the undertones can be warmer; like a taupe instead of a steel gray blue."

Other advice from DeGroote and Dean-Stallman includes choosing colors to frame furniture (and not necessarily to match it) and using color to your advantage (for example, painting the short ends darker in a long narrow room).

"I like to vary colors slightly from room to room," said Dean-Stallman. "For instance, maybe a dark taupe in the dining area and a lighter version in the living area. When picking colors, choose one just a little less bright than you think you want, as the color reflects on itself in the room and appears brighter."

Why do people turn to a professional? In Dean-Stallman's experience, many people hire an interi-

or designer to select paint colors because they have made mistakes in the past.

Added DeGroote, "When working with a designer, it's like dating. There has to be some chemistry. Find one you click with."

For do-it-yourself decorators who don't know where to begin, DeGroote offered this tip:

"Start with colors you already see in your artwork, dinnerware, furniture or items you have in your closet. Find something you love and go from there."

Selecting paint products

Decorating ideas popularized on television "makeover" shows have increasingly been adopted by viewers. Often, painting projects on these shows specify the use of Benjamin Moore & Co. paint. Why? "Quality," said Lautner, who handles Benjamin Moore and other paints.

According to the company, their products (as well as competing products) are field tested for up to 15 years at a time. After analysis, formulations are either maintained or refined, and batch testing is conducted

daily on the production line.

"People are willing to spend a little more for a quality finish," said Paul Wagner, sales representative at Northwood Paint and Supply in Traverse City.

Whatever brand of paint is selected, the choice of finish needs to be considered. The finish determines the desired effect in a room, as well as ensuring the long-term appearance.

Flat and conventional matte finishes are commonly used for a soft, uniform appearance and easy touchup. Satin and semi-gloss are generally more durable and washable, with higher hiding characteristics. Eggshell finishes combine the features of flat and semi-gloss; a relatively flat appearance with improved durability. For maximum color retention and moisture resistance, a high gloss finish is recommended.

"All lines have a good, better and best," said Lautner.

Innovations in paint
Recent improvements in paint products have been

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