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## Special Focus: TRENDS & TRENDMAKERS

Vivid color, attention-grabbing texture and fearless individuality are a few of the hot new developments in home architecture and interiors. New England's design experts give us preview of these trends—and a whole lot more. By Regina Cole

**Architects,** interior designers and showroom owners can tell us what sorts of changes to expect in the world of design because they create the trends that shape the industry. Since change is life's one given, we pay special attention to these trendmakers; they not only know what we can expect to see in the future, they can also tell us why.

We chatted with some of New England's best industry professionals to get a sneak peek at what's ahead. They see a complex landscape in which increasingly sophisticated homeowners are eager to incorporate trends from the worlds of science and art, as well as design, into their daily lives, but to do so in entirely individual ways.

One trend clearly demonstrates that sensitivity to the environment is growing.

"Our clients are well schooled in matters of energy conservation; they come to us with a high level of knowledge," says **STEPHANIE HOROWITZ** of ZeroEnergy Design, a Boston architectural firm that specializes in green architecture and mechanical design. "We are getting requests for root cellars, to augment food storage upstairs, as part of a general move toward increased self-sufficiency."

High-performance European windows, energy monitoring systems and passive house technology are all strong trends that continue to gain traction. Passivhaus, a ratings system developed in Germany, applies especially stringent standards. "It's a great fit in a cold climate when you can get free heat from the sun," says Horowitz. "For many, a passive house is an aspirational goal, but it's a widely embraced goal."

The environmental concerns of today's homeowners find expressions from structure to the surface finishes of most products. "We see a lot of interest in low-VOC products; people care about how much their paints or carpets are off-gassing," says **SHANNON ALTHER** of TMS Architects of Portsmouth, New Hampshire. "They also like to re-use old building parts, something that was espoused but seldom done until now, espe-



COURTESY OF POWERHOUSE DYNAMICS

ABOVE: Systems like the Powerhouse Dynamics eMonitor allow homeowners to track energy use while on the go. OPPOSITE PAGE, TOP: Architect Bradford Walker says contemporary styles are holding their own in formerly traditional New England, as in this Massachusetts riverfront home he recently designed. OPPOSITE PAGE, BOTTOM: This office created by Shannon Alther of TMS Architects features flooring reclaimed from an old Detroit Pistons basketball court and furniture constructed from bleacher wood that would otherwise have ended up as landfill.



cially in commercial buildings."

Homeowners also want to avail themselves of new electronic technology as it emerges, he says. "Everyone wants iPad docking stations so that they can wirelessly communicate with their houses."

**BRADFORD WALKER** of Boston's Ruhl Walker Architects sees a new interest in texture that goes hand in hand with today's strong environmental consciousness. "People are looking for reclaimed wood, wire-scraped oak, chunky and coarse textiles," he says. "They are moving away from the look of surfaces embalmed in smooth polyurethane."

As another example of the move away from smooth and toward the textural, he notes, "My clients are trying hard to not do granite countertops. They choose quartz or Durastone instead."

Walker believes that New England's historic ambivalence about new architectural forms is over. "Many younger people who have money from high-tech or medical technology industries embrace contemporary styling; for the first time, we see as much interest in modernism as we do in traditional design," he says.

But whether they love the modern or the traditional, homeowners want the tranquility that comes from an uncluttered home. Boston interior designer **JILL LITNER KAPLAN** points out that organization is a large part of a designer's work. "We do a lot of built-ins so that junk is integrated into the walls," she says. "At the same time, we see the democratization of ethnic



style. It used to be something you had to have a taste for; now, people embrace what was exclusive before."

She likens today's interior design trends to the way couture trickles down to affect mass fashion. "Choice and exclusive designs are very quickly reinterpreted and produced for a mass market," Kaplan says. "Along with that comes more of a tendency to mix high and low."

**ANTHONY CATALFANO** of the eponymous Commonwealth Avenue, Boston, firm echoes Walker when he sees the same move toward texture from his perspective as an interior designer. "Additionally, color is coming back in a big way," he says. "Brighter, more saturated colors, particularly turquoise, hot pink and emerald green, will be more and more popular. People want a bit of sparkle, too—a little metallic is fun!"

**KELLY TAYLOR**, who operates her interior design firm out of Providence, says that the shift toward sustainability is driving the biggest design trends. "We lost 100-watt incandescent bulbs in 2012, which encouraged manufacturers to ramp up innovation with LED lights," she says.

"Recessed LED lighting is amazing now," Taylor continues. "You end up with a better look, much better quality than with the old incandescent recessed lighting, and you replace bulbs every five years instead of every six months. When you look up, you see glass, not a bulb and space around it. And the light is so much nicer and richer."

She notes that while the new lighting technology was originally most suited to modern styling, the industry is evolving to the point where traditional designs can now make use of it, too.

"The emergence of energy efficiency and LED lighting makes the world more fun if you're in the lighting world," adds **LUCY DEARBORN**, president of Lucia Lighting in Lynn, Massachusetts. "You get 90 percent energy savings with very little emission of heat in a small package, and it lasts a long time. And, LED lighting can easily be colored."

Dearborn sees the new technology driving a creative evolution in which traditional lighting forms reemerge. "Everything was recessed in the '70s and '80s. Now we are seeing interior designers, architects and homeowners using decorative lighting fixtures again. They are returning to lighting not only for function, but also for decorative elements. I am happy to see wall sconces



RIGHT: A dining room by Providence designer Kelly Taylor shows the versatility of today's LED lighting. LEFT: LEDs are also instrumental in a resurgence of traditional fixtures such as these Tech Lighting sconces, according to Lucia Lighting's Lucy Dearborn.

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Portland designer Tracy Davis says individuality is becoming a touchstone for today's interiors. Her own office is a perfect illustration.



returning," she says, "as well as chandeliers in powder rooms."

Dearborn points out that the trend towards better technology and more decorative fixtures richly benefits home decors. "Layering is so much more desirable than a single source of light."

Builders, perhaps more than others, are catering to the high-tech trend. "A lot of lighting—and everything else—is getting smarter," says **JOHN KRUSE**, vice president at Boston's Sea-Dar Construction. "More and more functions of the house are becoming accessible from cell phones and tablets. Homeowners all want to run their summer houses from their iPads when

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TOP: BRADFORD WALKER; BOTTOM: COURTESY OF CARTER DAYTON HOME, OPPOSITE PAGE, COURTESY OF BRASSWORKS



Texture is also an increasingly important component of New England interiors, per showroom owner Lynn Dayton. Examples? Consider the structured oak veneer on these cabinets from Bulthaup and some nubby rugs on offer at Carter Dayton Home.

they're not there."

Energy conservation is an increasing part of his industry. "Partly people are changing; partly it's because building codes are. There are much better products for air sealers, rain barriers and exterior systems."

**MARC KAPLAN** of Sanford Custom Builders in Wellesley Hills, Massachusetts, adds that while houses remain large, they are becoming more intimate. "We are building fewer cavernous two-story rooms," he says.

**TRACY DAVIS**, principal of the Portland, Maine, interior design firm Urban Dwellings, talks about a growing trend toward individuality that cuts across the stylistic spectrum. "People want something unique, not what they have seen in someone else's home," she says. "That can lead to interesting new ways of using familiar things."

A historic artifact might be repurposed in an unexpected manner, Davis says. "For example, someone may find a relic and do something like fashion it into a table or a lamp. My clients are drawn to classic modern pieces like Eames chairs, but they want to use them in new and imaginative ways. I have observed a strong interest in modernism, but there is nothing dogmatic about it."

**JOHN ALTABELLO** agrees. As a partner in KOO de Monde, a virtual design center for interior designers, architects and private collectors, he brings together the curated, eclectic mix of products favored by today's cognoscenti. "People have become more comfortable mixing antiques with contemporary pieces," he says. "It's not all or nothing—either modern or traditional. I see a kind of fearlessness, even audacity, in how homeowners want to live."

An example of this kind of bravado, Altobello says, is a room whose traditional architecture plays off against modern furniture. "Today's homeowner likes simple, clean lines, but has not lost interest in the beautiful ornamentation of the past," he says. "I see a predilection for clean lines, which can go hand in hand with a bold, individualistic decor."

That penchant for the best of the old without dependence on historicism is driving the latest trends in surface finishes, including brass. While we have seen a preference for brushed nickel and aged-bronze metal treatments in recent years, **JEFFREY NELSON** of Brassworks in Providence says that he sees a reemerging taste for the look of brass. "Polished brass is making a strong comeback," he says. "The big difference is in the finish. Where a lacquer finish is traditional, in recent years we have seen the design industry favor an oiled finish, which looks as though the brass had aged for some time. Today we are seeing more and more professionals opt for brass with waxed finishes. This way, the brass can age naturally, but the look is gently patinated,



Waxed brass is finding more favor than lacquered or oiled finishes, says Jeffrey Nelson of Providence's Brassworks.

neither dark and dull nor bright and shiny."

He sees this trend across the board, even in lock sets, doorknobs, drawer pulls and accessories.

"We see a strong demand for indoor-outdoor products," says **LYNN DAYTON** of the Wellesley, Massachusetts-based Carter Dayton Home, a retail outlet she manages with Boston designer **MICHAEL CARTER**. "We are selling a lot of wicker, along with indoor-outdoor fabrics and accessories, which are not necessarily being used outdoors," she says. "There is a strong trend toward the spirit of outdoor living, even if it takes place indoors."

Like her peers, Dayton believes that, for the time being, vanilla interiors are over. "There is a lot of color: orange will be very big, as well as pinks and a strong emerald green."

Monogramming is enjoying a resurgence in popularity, Dayton says. "It underscores the individualistic ways in which people like to decorate their homes. Technology has a strong bearing on that trend, because embroidery is getting so much better."

She, too, notices a renewed penchant for texture in all aspects of decor, which includes rugs. "We are getting away from wall-to-wall carpeting; people are really into rugs again."

**MAHMUD JAFRI**, principal at Dover Rug, agrees. "Rugs are the artistic arena of home furnishing," he says. "For the first time, homeowners want rugs that will go with what they already have; they won't buy a rug if it does not go with their curtains and their furnishings." This differs from a traditional decorating approach in which a rug was the jumping-off point for color selections. "Every generation defines its taste and style," Jafri says. "The big shift now is toward a more transitional and contemporary look. Gaudy colors are out; simple, clean lines are in. This was once a very traditional market, but the carpet retailers who are doing well have reinvented themselves to meet the new demands."

Jafri explains that socioeconomic and political forces have driven up the price of hand-knotted rugs. "Tufted rugs are beginning to take their place; we will see a lot of hand tufting in the near future."

He, too, sees strong colors heading our way. "We see fifty shades of gray now," he says with a laugh, "as well as safer colors

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A move toward simplified forms in the kitchen is counterbalanced by a multiplication of materials, according to designer Donna Venegas.







Bold hues, particularly the rich oranges and blues of these fabrics from Dwell Studio's Modern Bungalow collection for Robert Allen, and these LuRu Home cotton pillows from Privat House in Connecticut, are finding increasing favor.

like blue and aqua. But we will soon see brighter colors, in particular a deep mint green."

"Yes, our palette is becoming more complex," agrees **DONNA VENEGAS** of Venegas and Company, a design studio located in the Boston Design Center that specializes in custom cabinetry for the private residence. "Neutrals are still important, but now we love texture. Partly that's because clients are experimenting with more materials. In any given kitchen, we might see milk paint combined with pewter or stone, with metal on the counter. The complexity of the palette is in keeping with a trend towards simplification. We see a lot less adornment in the kitchen."

The kitchen, which continues to grow in importance as the heart of the home, is also growing in size. "We see these wide-open spaces," Venegas explains.

That trend extends beyond the kitchen. "More people are not doing formal layouts," says **MEREDITH BASQUE** of PlanetaBasque, a full-service design firm located in Boston's South End. "They are more family friendly."

She recalls the strictly segregated interiors of yore. "When I grew up, there were rooms you couldn't go in; they might as well have had a red rope across the doorway, as in museums. Today's family wants a well-done, livable house that ages well."

She, too, sees a growing color trend.

"Colors are more saturated again. We see jewel tones coming back into favor, but done for today's taste. One of the trends is for striated, or ombre colors."

**NANCY ZWIENER**, one of the owners of DesignSourceCT, a vast to-the-trade design center in Hartford, Connecticut, says that an overall trend toward more transitional and casual furnishings has been gathering steam. "Even in New England, the land of steady habits, we rarely have a call for exclusively traditional furniture," she says. "Favorite styles still include Midcentury Modern. Upholstered headboards and fully upholstered beds are very popular, in keeping with the less formal, homey look."

"Wall coverings are becoming very popular again; especially grasscloths," she adds. "Area rugs are far more popular than wall-to-wall carpeting," she notes, echoing the observations of other industry professionals. "In new nylon fibers, we now see the look of sisal without the drawbacks of natural jutes or hemp, which often result in a tough texture and are not stain resistant."

Zwiener also concurs with other pros that color is poised to make a comeback. "We are still seeing a strong demand for neutrals, especially gray," she says. "But there is a strong resurgence in all shades of blue, like navy mixed with marine blue mixed with gray. For accent colors we see citrus and persimmon, or coral."

Bright colors, surface texture and a deep environmental sensitivity will guide consumers as they make thoughtful choices in the coming year. While trends come and go, understanding the deeper issues behind the styles makes sensitive homeowners part of the changes that make the world better and more beautiful. •