

## HOME DESIGN

## Adding personal touches

Beyond bold colours and textures, people want décor that reflects values, writes Susan Schwartz

There are a handful of key decorating trends this year, but many consumers are also seeking individuality in the home, searching for design features that mirror their personalities and their lives.

"In an age when we find ourselves feeling disconnected, we want our home to be a restorative place, to reflect our values, and also be beautiful," explains Jill Lewis of J.L. Architecture. "I think the biggest trend in home interiors has less to do with aesthetics and everything to do with consumers being interested in making more mindful choices with their purchases."

This means consumers are interested in creating interiors that do more than just look good – they also want to know their history behind their purchases.

"If the products have a story that makes the buyer feel like they can have something beautiful, that is high quality and perhaps relate to their current content in terms of design, that will be an interior that will be deeply personal and truly resonate with them," Lewis says.

"They want to know the source of the wood, and be assured that the fabrics were produced in an ethical manner, and perhaps are even organic."

The importance placed on ethically sourced products led



Tiron Interior Architecture suggests simple colour schemes.



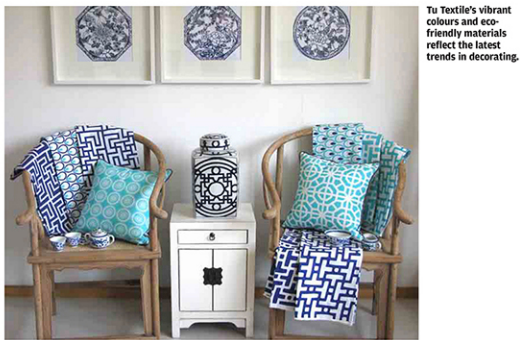
Lewis to create her Beijing-based company, Tu Textiles, which makes vibrant fabrics and cushions using certified-organic fabric and water-based ink.

The bold, saturated colours and geometric patterns used in Lewis' fabrics also reflect the latest trends in decorating. Emerald green, Pantone's colour of the year, is a popular choice. But other bold, vibrant colours are also dominating, including orange, raspberry and yellow. All shades of blue are increasingly sought after – especially indigo and aqua, which Lewis says are fresh, soothing and modern. Alternatives include pastels and layered neutrals.

"Simple colour schemes without much colour and lots of neutrals – especially black and white – are also popular," says Timothy Cheng,



Clean lines and low seating are popular, according to Indigo Living.



Tu Textile's vibrant colours and eco-friendly materials reflect the latest trends in decorating.

managing director of Tiron Interior Architecture. "Orange is also in demand, but green is still very new to Hong Kong. Most people wouldn't paint their walls green; instead, they would incorporate it through accessories and plants," he says. "An example is the bamboo which I installed in one apartment."

Cheng adds that art has become increasingly popular, especially with the accessibility of art fairs in Hong Kong. "A simple background colour scheme makes it easy to pair with collected works."

Graphic prints are also still trending, especially stripes, which can bring movement to a room and are often favoured by designers, and animal prints and modern, painterly florals.

Textiles is increasingly being incorporated into interiors, especially in neutral tones, which can benefit from an "awakening" by using grass cloth on walls, tables made of stone, lampshades made of burp and patterned rugs.

Cheng says lighting is also becoming more widely discussed, as people become more conscious of how it can change the atmosphere in a room and now tend to ask questions, such as what colour the light will be, and whether it is energy-saving or dimmable.

When it comes to lighting, accent tables and decorating in

general, there is a move away from colder stainless steel towards warmer tones of brass, copper and gold.

Lewis says this year's must-have accessories are those that reflect time, location and values. "Nobody wants a home that feels like it was accessorised by a stranger – we want our home to reflect our personal taste, which includes a nod to our home city. Chinese-inspired accessories with a Western spin are what feels right," she says.

"And, more importantly, we want the products to have a story that aligns with our values. We're surrounded by so much 'stuff' and don't want to fill our homes with more useless and mindless purchases."

Lewis says Hong Kong is a particularly interesting place from a design perspective, because it attracts people from all over the world who typically are exceptionally well-travelled.

"Because of this, they bring with them aesthetic 'baggage' that they naturally want to incorporate into their home," she says. "I think there are many who like to explore the Southeast Asian influence with artefacts collected from regional travels. Others draw from the north, with Chinese antiques."

Still there are others who like Hong Kong for the luxury and the

international feel of the city, and likewise feel more comfortable creating their home in the style of a luxury hotel – with crisp lines, comforting textures and soothing, sophisticated colours.

John McLennan, CEO of Indigo Living, notes that instead of buying all of their furniture to match, people are waiting and gathering individual pieces over time to achieve a more curated look.

"At this time, clean lines and lower sofas are popular. I am also seeing that furniture that is raised off the floor is becoming more popular," he says.

While most of Cheng's clients seek a contemporary style without too much fancy decoration, one thing they do tend to insist on is that their audio-visual cables are hidden, the television is the correct height and that it can be seen from various directions.

These are practical considerations, but they do tend to make life easier, especially as it is no longer necessary to include unsightly cords that can distract from the overall design features of a home.

"No matter what direction residents go, it is still a very Hong Kong style and distinct from anything you would find elsewhere in the world," Lewis says.



A bamboo installation adds a touch of green.

## HOME DESIGN

## KITCHENS

## Hi-tech touches add fun to cooking

Area develops into hub of the household, moving beyond functional space to become heart of socialisation, writes Susan Schwartz



Modern kitchens, such as this one by Kohler, incorporate clean lines, natural materials, chef-inspired sinks and hi-tech tapware.

the spectrum, kitchens with pops of colour are also trending.

Kohler has teamed up with American designer Jonathan Adler to inject colour into kitchen sinks. Adler has taken the traditional white farmhouse or apron-front sink and made it available in yellow, green, turquoise and navy.

"I think in every room in the house there should be surprises and punctuation marks, and there's nothing better than a coloured sink



Lumina's ceiling lamp, from K+I, complements a sleek kitchen.

to bring a kitchen to life," Adler says. "The great thing about the palette of sinks that we've chosen is that they will look good with different surfaces – from marble, to granite and white – and I thought about that when designing them."

Despite pops of colour in the kitchen, Lam warns against going overboard. "Some colour accents or highlights, or even a simple drawing, is fine," Lam says, otherwise there is a risk it could fall to be on-trend.



An open-plan kitchen by Tiron Interior Architecture

"A timeless kitchen is one where more emphasis is put on function and on style," Lam explains. "Style by definition is not timeless."

Lam recommends renovating kitchens with the rest of the house, typically every eight to 10 years. "Changing the tap or sink [provided it is an above-counter version] can be done every three to five years to freshen the look of the kitchen."

Look for a sink that offers plenty of accessories to complement your cooking style. Moveable cutting boards, rinsing baskets and various trays and receptacles make preparation tasks easier and more fun.

Kohler's chef-inspired Stages sinks feature accessories tailored to each stage of the cooking process. As appliances become more intelligent and energy-saving, Lam advises clients to keep it simple. "People want the latest technology because it has a high novelty value. But I would advise people to keep it basic because electrical gadgets have a high maintenance cost."

Lam advises doing something novel, yet environmentally friendly, and incorporate potted plants in the kitchen – these can be in the form of useful herbs or varieties that help clean the air.

larger pots in the sink. Sidesprays are excellent for washing fruit and vegetables as you prepare them. And pot fillers – a real chef-worthy amenity – serve as extendable taps, and can be installed next to your stovetop or preparation sink for easy water access.

Kohler's Smart Divide sinks lower the divider between sink bowls, and make it easier to clean large, bulky items.

Following on from trends in the bathroom, plumbing fixtures have become the jewels of the space. Soft tap finishes, from antique brass to brushed nickel, are very popular. Also trending is tapware that lights up or changes the colour of the running water, Lam says.

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