

Recent Developments

Housing and House Furnishings

What's new on the home furnishings scene?

The Spring International Home Furnishings Market just concluded a few weeks ago in High Point, NC. This twice-a-year event brings 2,100 exhibitors from 85 foreign countries and the United States to show-off their latest introductions in more than 7 million square feet of showroom space. Over 69,000 people in the design and furniture business as well as news media attend this event.

Below are some of the highlights from the Furniture Market and looks you can expect to see in the furniture stores this fall:

"Relaxed Formal" was the overall design theme. Those casual "shabby chic" looks, wrinkled slip covers (I never liked them anyway!), heavy wood distressing and lots of pillows are out.

Upholstery:

- Velvet, chenille and tapestry fabrics
- Trims, braids, fringes and tassels as design enhancements
- Overscaled traditional looks to tufted European styles
- Elements included: wood, brass and antique nailheads, loose pillows and exposed wood legs
- Mixed fabrics and mixed media (fabric/leather combos) on the same piece
- Larger scale frames (The industry thinks we consumers perceive large scale as more sofa for the money -- I think they're underestimating us!)

Motion Upholstery:

- Dressier looks more like stationary styles
- Leather and "leather looks" (in other words vinyl) strong
- Modular sectionals for custom configuration

Recliners

- Leather-vinyl combos and all leather big sellers
- Large and small scale frames
- Some even offered extra small scale frames for bedroom and for small 5' 4" ladies (Yea! finally something to fit us short gals7!)
- Glide mechanisms
- More 18th century or formal styling (Even recliners are going high class!)

Casegoods (wood furniture)

- Distressed, antiqued finishes
- Custom hardware looks
- Low-sheen finishes (high gloss is out!)
- Neoclassic style making a "comeback"
- Country French with relaxed formal look
- Wood tones - brown, light, wash finishes still popular

Home Office

Several companies had introductions in this category for the first time. Home office has previously been dominated by RTA (ready-to-assemble) furniture companies. More modular systems for individual customization were seen.

Source: *Furniture Today*, April 22, 1996.

More on the Market . . .

Dupont forecasts that the 1997 color palette for the home will be a journey to a world that is "...a warmer, more welcoming place."

Yellow and reds will continue to be strong.

Orange and pinks of apparel fashion come home as spice, peach, rose, pumpkin, coral and terra cotta.

Greens continue as a mainstay, acting almost as a neutral.

These colors and the causal elegant patterns discussed previously are exemplified in these fabrics.



This sofa by Broyhill was one of many mixed media looks seen in upholstery at the Market. It features a mixture of leather, tweed and tapestry to give a comfortable casual atmosphere. The weathered flat nailhead trim and the wooden bun feet are added accents.



Contemporary is the style and versatility is the function in this sofa by Marge Carson. The contoured back and sides give the sofa a distinct look. The basic units can be combined in a variety of ways. Since the arm and back of the corner unit are interchangeable, it offers great flexibility in rearranging it.

Combine two corner units for a loveseat

Combine two corner units and armless unit for a sofa

Combine corner unit and ottoman for a chaise

Combine ottoman between two corner units for a tete-'a-tete.



Home office furniture options are growing. This unit by Sauder Woodworking is designed to accommodate all that is needed for an office, yet it can be hidden away when not in use. Four work surface heights emphasize ergonomics and efficiency. Other features include adjustable shelves, built-in bulletin board, hanging files, and even a lighting fixture.



This "Post Office Desk" is a charming collector's item from Ligna Furniture. Its compact design uses only 25" of wall space. It features a "roll top look" with a pull-out writing surface, pigeonhole letter storage and drawers behind the upper doors. Made in plantation-grown teak and mahogany, it can be finished in warm cherry or rich mahogany.



Henredon calls this bedroom furniture Arcadia. It features fluted columns, arches and pediments. The design influence is Biedermeier, noted for its light woods and contrasting dark accents. It is made in cherry and accented with Karelian birch - a lighter, brighter wood native to Karelia, a small area in east Finland.



Fabric Looks Coming Your Way:

More color, suppleness and luxury were the emphasis in the upholstery fabric offerings. Drapability and softness were also key. Surface interest was a major element as well with matelasses, chenilles and velvets. Other surface effects seen elsewhere were brushed, washed, sueded, striae and even puckered.

From a design standpoint, there were Old World influences featuring elaborate jacquards with some tapestry effects and classic and renaissance motifs. Elegance abounded with shimmery metallic accents, Venetian influences and iridescence even in woven fabrics.

The Eastern influence was another design trend gaining in popularity. Paisley, the tree of life and pungent colors set the tone.

Novelty designs, a category that has stayed in the forefront for the last few years, this year is highlighted by faux animal skins, furniture as a fabric motif and topiary and botanicals.

The Contemporary scene featured Eurostyle designs, overscaled geometrics and classic designs with a 90's touch.

Tropical patterns were in abundance, too. Bright colors and metallic accents dominated the group. Overscaled designs were the rule not the exception.

The big color looks included purples and yellows. The entire purple family - aubergine, amethyst, plum and burgundy are back. Yellows and golds are also getting top "billing" with reds, blues and greens.

Source: *Furniture Today*, February 19, 1996.

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