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REAL ESTATE | DESIGN

The Top 6 Interior-Design Trends for 2020

Oval furniture is making sharp angles seem passe. The reign of white Carrara is giving way to many-colored marble. We canvassed over 100 décor pros to bring you the design trends that are winning—and waning

GREEN SPIRITED The walls in a Montauk, N.Y., bungalow designed by Studio Robert McKinley exemplify the emerging trend for colors evoking nature. **PHOTO:** NICOLE FRANZEN/STUDIO ROBERT MCKINLEY

By Catherine Romano

Dec. 27, 2019 10:25 am ET

OUT: Throwaway Furniture

Even if chain-retailer prices are tolerable, it's become less appealing to buy a bed or dresser thinking you'll replace it in a few years. "Longevity is in, throwaway culture is out," said Shea Soucie, co-founder of Soucie Horner, a design and architecture firm in Chicago. The toll that disposable furniture takes on the environment has people looking at revitalizing old pieces, noted Richmond, Va., designer Sara Hillery, "especially those with meaning." Said Rome-based designer Achille Salvagni, "No one wants to inherit that IKEA coffee table."

IN: Pieces Worth Keeping

OUT IN

PHOTO: GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCKPHOTO, SUNDAY SHOP X DOORMAN

Discerning Americans are turning to furniture with soul, like this Custom Rift Sawn Oak Dresser made for Sunday Shop by New Orleans workshop Doorman. "There is a palpable shift toward collecting fewer but better things that represent shared experiences through real craftsmanship," said Nicola Coropulis, CEO of Italian brand Poltrona Frau. Also gaining value: the history inherent in antiques and hand-me-downs. Said Elizabeth Lowrey, of Boston's Elkus Manfredi Architects, "If it's meaningful, find a place for it."

OUT: Bleached and Whitewashed Floors

OUT IN

PHOTO: RORY GARDINER/OTTO, MATTHEW HRANEK / ART + COMMERCE

Blanched wood surfaces, a hallmark of Scandinavian and Modern Farmhouse styles, are fading. "Clients worry that it will be too identifiable as 'a look' from this period and not stand the test of time," said San Francisco designer Kendall Wilkinson. Also taking a powder: the flooring materials that were part of the gray wave of the past five years. "Gray woods have been reigning supreme for years, but we're seeing a shift to warmer palettes," said Glencoe, Ill., designer Andrea Goldman.

IN: Warm Woods Underfoot

People want rooms that are a bit more cozy, with richer, darker colors, noted Jenna Rochon, co-founder of Transition State design in Los Angeles. On the floor, that

translates to walnut, mahogany and dark oak. New York designer Young Huh also noted a tendency toward "finishes with old-world charm." Honey-toned species like oak and maple contribute to a casual vibe, said Ms. Goldman, "but since they pair nicely with warmer hues, the final look is not as faded out" as that of bleached wood.

OUT: Gray…Again!

PHOTO: F. MARTIN RAMIN/THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

Yes, we confidently reported last year that the ubiquitous gray that charcoaled homes inside and out in 2018 was past its prime. Designers had tired of the sooty shade, but apparently the public hadn't. "As we close out the decade, the 'cool gray everything' style is finally (and thankfully) out for good," ventured Laura Muller, owner and principal designer of Four Point Design Build. Designer and artist Barry Lantz in Carmel, Ind., despaired of gray, "It's like a gloomy winter day all year."

IN: Earth Tones

Four of the 16 colors in Farrow & Ball's new Colour by Nature line are green. Home Depot's Behr paint declared its Back to Nature green (right, bottom) their 2020 color of the year. Joa Studholme, color curator at Farrow & Ball, credits the verdant trend to environmental awareness, while many of the polled designers mentioned olive green as part of an earthy, organic palette that includes chocolate brown, camel, deep reds, ocher and burnt orange. Also shown: Behr's Cocoa Nutmeg (top left) and Red Pepper

OUT: Rigid Linearity

Ms. Huh told us that hard, cold, "all-masculine spaces" are tired. Mr. Salvagni believes 2020 is the year to shake, "the tyranny of the straight line," as seen in this particularly tyrannical acrylic desk. Sara Hillery observed that the rise of linearity coincided with the flourishing of Facebook and Instagram. "Images of stark, modern rooms flooded social media, and furniture followed suit with the rise of track arms and square

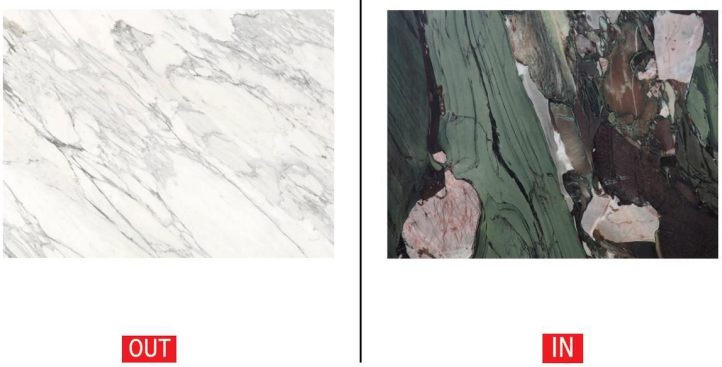
PHOTO: GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCKPHOTO, TRACEY BOYD, FOUR HANDS COLLECTION

frames," said the Richmond, Va., designer.

IN: Softer Living

"Moving away from the geometric shapes of the recent past, there was a strong emergence of softened corners, round legs, curved backs," said Denise Morrison, a designer in Newport Beach, Calif., who reports that many vendors have introduced oval tables. She points to the Skate Oval Dining Table by Tracey Boyd, Four Hands Collection, above. The trend can also be seen as a backlash to oppressive masculinity. "We're embracing the feminine touches and a soupçon of the romantic," said Ms. Huh.

OUT: Colorless Stone



OUT IN

PHOTO: ABC STONE (2)

You know Carrara and Calacatta marble. They're frequently mispronounced—even by people who can afford whole kitchen islands of them—as "Carrera" and "Calcutta." Chicago designer Kate Taylor identified it as "veiny white marble" when she opined that it had reached its peak of popularity. "White and gray marble had a very long and full life, but with oversaturation comes monotony," agreed fellow-Chicagoan Donna Mondi. "It can still have a part in your story, just don't count on it to be the lead."

IN: Multicolored Marble

Taking uneventful white stone's place? Ms. Taylor points to multicolored geological wonders like the marble at right, which New York's ABC Stone calls Opera D'Arte. Also crowding out Carrara and Calacatta are man-made materials, said Ms. Goldman. "We're seeing clients select porcelain and techno quartz over natural stone, even in high-end homes, thanks to the practicality and durability of it." Said Miami architect Kobi Karp of engineered stone, "It can mimic high-end materials at an attainable price."

OUT: White Slipcovers

PHOTO: GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCKPHOTO (2)

"For a long time, [washable] cotton slipcovers were our best bet for white upholstery, so that it would not be destroyed by stains," said Caitie Smithe, a designer with Chicago's Walter E. Smithe. New York's Vicente Wolf enumerated their shortcomings: "Cotton slipcovers are super high maintenance. They shrink, fade, stain and need to be pressed." Added Four Point Design Build's Ms. Muller, "Slipcovers also typically have a loose, casual—almost sloppy—fit, which over time and several washings, become a 'misfit.'"

IN: White Sofas

Ms. Smithe predicts that in 2020, the gray-upholstery trend will be replaced by white upholstery, driven by advances in performance fabric. "The technology has created options that are as soft and stylish as a 'regular' non-performance fabric without a difference in price," she said, "and they repel stains better than ever." Said designer

Jenny Madden, of Hoboken, N.J., "Now that performance fabrics...include textures as soft as chenille, why do upholstery any other way?"

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Corrections& Amplifications

The Skate Oval Dining Table is from the Tracey Boyd, Four Hands Collection. In a previous version of this article the source of the table was incorrectly identified as Burke Decor. (December 27, 2019)

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