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# Trends in Interior Design

Interior designers are more than decorators—they are artistic scientists, shaping interior space with special considerations for environmental psychology, architecture, and product design

BY EMILY BARNA

With homeownership comes the task of decoration. For some, like those who are creatively inclined, this can be a joyous process involving paint chips taped to walls, carpet samples arrayed beneath their feet, and weekends spent visiting store after store looking for the perfect end table.

For others, like me, it is a chore of epic proportions, one to be avoided at all costs. One's abode never rises much above the familiar milk-crate and 2-by-6 shelves that so lovingly came into their life during the college dorm-room days.

Whether I like it or not, my home's look (both inside and out) is a direct reflection of my styles and tastes. Perhaps it is time that I shed the last vestiges of my youth and accept that. We've all visited a home where the homeowner *and* the home's interior were clinging desperately to a bygone era (remember when everything was teal and dusty rose?). Design choices can be frightening, but the good news is that, as with most personal challenges, professionals are out there just waiting to help.

With interior design trends changing as often as music and fashion (who knew wallpaper would re-emerge after its long but gaudy run), people are turning to professional designers.

A strong interior designer acts as a spatial consultant who ensures that the homeowner's vision becomes reality. They know that designing someone's home is an intimate undertaking and an important process, and that it is their responsibility to keep their clients informed about best practices, new products, and trends.

Claire Ownby is a designer of luxury residential interiors and the founder of Ownby Design, LLC. Part designer, part innovator, part visionary, Ownby draws inspiration from her studies, her extensive travels, and her affinity for fine food and wine. Her design style is a unique fusion of minimalism and lavishness that transforms the spaces of everyday living into one-of-a-kind indulgences.

According to Ownby, here are some recent trends in interior design that are important to clients:



## Sustainable Design

Going green is a hot topic in all industries, and interior design is no exception. Most modern designers are accredited in sustainable construction—or Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED)-certified. These days, green design doesn't compromise aesthetic quality; rather, eco-friendly products are a huge design phenomenon, both for their environmental appeal and attractive look.

"Today more than ever before, people are looking for completely energy-efficient homes that incorporate the use of certified organic products from sheets to towels, paints to linens to furniture," says Ownby. "Certified organic" products are completely pure of synthetic chemical influences. Eco-minded homeowners can also take their greenness outside by landscaping with native plants, using recycled rainwater, and other eco-friendly methods. Green living not only lowers people's carbon footprints, but also exposes them and their families to fewer toxins and chemicals, leading to an overall healthier (and more socially responsible) life.

## Design for Aging Residents

The elderly population—growing faster than any other segment of the population—is an important consideration for designers, because of the demands for accessibility and accommodation of various health issues.

According to Ownby, with more and more baby boomers taking in their elderly parents, she is seeing many new homes and renovations that include a second living area, and/or large, inviting living spaces that can seat large groups of people on a regular basis. These allow multi-generational households to live comfortably and maximize their home's space.

## High-Tech Living

As technological advances lead design toward smaller and sleeker appliances, designers have less need to "cover up" the unsightly systems, giving them more opportunity to work with the pieces to elevate a room's warmth and creativity. Designers hide wires and cords so that even the highest-tech rooms appear wireless. This lends itself to a clean, minimalist look—further adding to the aesthetic appeal as well as the space's accessibility.

Interior designers use an analytical problem-solving approach to meet clients' design challenges through technology.

"If a resident wants the television set to be an unnoticeable presence in the room, the designer can build the television into the wall so that it appears to be a flush wall but flips open to reveal the television," Ownby says. For complex installations involving highly technical designs, it is optimal to bring in the interior designer at the front end of design—when the architects are laying the plans for the design on paper—before the construction crews get to work.

"Smart home" has a different meaning for every individual. While one person's idea of "smart" is a robot that knows just when you are craving a cold beer from the fridge, another's view is a home that sets itself to the perfect temperature and lighting levels and turns on the appropriate radio station (in each room) before he gets home from work. Home automation set-ups offer numerous gadgets to simplify life and give the occupant control over the house from anywhere. Homes these days are smarter than ever and can be programmed to meet even the most obscure sweet spot (well, almost. The "beer fetching" robot might be a stretch—although my husband would like it!).

According to the American Society of Interior Designers (ASID), interior design is, "more than just the visual or ambient enhancement of an interior space; it seeks to optimize and harmonize the uses to which the interior environment will be put." If optimizing your space sounds like an insurmountable challenge, visit [www.asid.org](http://www.asid.org) to find a designer near you.

Claire Ownby, along with her husband and four dogs, divides her time between homes in Sedona and Kona, Hawaii. Visit [www.ownbydesign.com](http://www.ownbydesign.com) for more information.