

BERGEN, BY DESIGN

Six local pros share the trends that are making interiors pop — and what to drop. By Gianna Barone

From paints to plants, there's a lot to keep up with in the interior design world these days. Professionals know that good design requires a careful curator committed to bringing the client's story to life in a home. These designers must be conversant with trends, but trends come and go. It's how they're implemented that can make an abode both full of character and full of style. We asked six Bergen County interior designers to explain what's hot — and what's not.

OUR INTERIOR DESIGNERS



Susan Anthony
Susan Anthony
Interiors,
Edgewater



Tess Giuliani
Tess Giuliani
Designs,
Ridgewood



Patty LaCourte
Eurica
Home,
Waldwick



Rita Lyons
Rita Lyons
Designs,
Ramsey



Barbara Ostrom
Barbara Ostrom
Associates,
Mahwah



Melanie Sobash
Melanie Sobash
Studios,
Ramsey



Jewel tones

From fiery ruby to regal amethyst, clients have this year's luxurious jewel-tone trend on the brain, the designers agree. "Some people will go with a bluish purple; that's probably the jewel tone I get asked for most," says Ramsey-based Rita Lyons. "I'll often do an accent wall in that color."

As for Patty LaCourte, owner and interior designer at Eurica Home in Waldwick, she says clients who usually lean towards neutral white are now asking for colors that make a statement. "Dark blue is classic, but emerald green is very big right now," explains LaCourte, noting that clients "are unafraid to mix colors and materials."

However, for designers like Ramsey's Melanie Sobash and Edgewater's Susan Anthony, some clients prefer to embrace this trend with pillows, décor pieces and artwork in an otherwise neutral room before going "all in" with more permanent changes such as a new paint job or a tile installation. "Right now, my clients like jewel tones more for accents," says Sobash. "There's always a transition period for colorful trends, where some clients are not fully ready to jump in just yet."

Looking for an even trendier way to bedazzle your space with jewel tones? Anthony and LaCourte say wallpaper is back in a major way. So get swatching!



Natural accents

Lush greenery and pops of warm wood are of-the-moment, our designers say. “Properties in Bergen County have beautiful backyards and outdoor areas, so I like to include that element in my homes,” says Lyons. She and Anthony say live-edge wood is the hottest varietal to go with this season, and Anthony adds that reclaimed wood from fallen trees and previously built structures is being used more often these days for sustainability and style. “Greenery brings a dead room alive,” says Mahwah-based designer Barbara Ostrom. “You don’t feel lonely in a room with plants.”

The designers are no strangers to requests for flowers either. “Florals soften a family or living room, and they can even be incorporated into a kitchen,” says LaCourte. “Ivy was in five years ago, but simple boxed arrangements or even a single orchid can introduce greenery to a space.”

While florals add softness, Anthony points out that her clients, who are often away on business trips or traveling on well-deserved vacays, in many cases can’t keep up with daily watering a masterful arrangement of blooms. Her solution: succulents and “air plants” (Tillandsia). “They’re great for clients with allergies, and they’re low-maintenance for homeowners who are always on the go,” says Anthony. “Plus, they lift the spirit.” Sobash agrees, noting that succulents are hot right now with her clients because “they’re beautiful, they’re trendy and they last a long time.”

{ PROS’ TIPS }



Acrylic furniture

Whichever name you use of the several this trend goes by in the design world (“ghost chairs,” “Lucite,” “plexiglass”), the designers can’t get enough of it. Lyons expresses amazement at the comeback this material has made in her clients’ requests. “Back in my mother’s time Lucite was in, but it used to yellow easily,” she says. “Now, thanks to modern tech, it’s the hottest thing.”

For homeowners eager to try this trend, Lyons suggests pairing an acrylic coffee table or end table on top of a gorgeous Oriental rug or tapestry to show off its ornate beauty. Ostrom agrees, adding that she often opts for acrylic furniture to contrast with a furry-textured throw pillow or a bold paint color such as striking hot pink. And it’s not just tables that have been going acrylic. LaCourte’s clients have asked for window treatments and statement pieces of the material to “make a room feel very light.”



Maximalism

For the designers, this chic trend is all about adding drama. The first thing Lyons suggests to clients who are looking to embrace today’s “more-is-more” tendency is a museum-esque gallery wall. “I’ll find art that’s different, but where each piece tells a story,” she says. Anthony and Ostrom agree that this eclectic trend is fueled partly by young homeowners inheriting antiques and wanting to show off their beauty in a contemporary way that fits with the rest of their updated homes.

“My clients are getting braver with mixing old and contemporary design,” says Ostrom, who has designed politicians’ homes, notably the late former President Nixon’s. “They’re going into their attics and basements where their grandmother’s furniture lives, and I tell them that I’ll have it lacquered and use it.”

As popular as this look has become, Sobash warns that a designer must use “lots of restraint” when mapping out a maximalist room. “When the client is a collector, there is a fine line to observe in making the space not stark, but also not suffocating,” says Sobash. “You need to design maximalist spaces with a good eye and strategy.”

Ridgewood-based designer Tess Giuliani agrees. “I embrace the idea of ‘more is better’—not cluttered, but engaging,” she says, adding that when clients approach her with the task of maximizing a space, she often encourages them to “be daring, have fun, use colors and textures and display art.”

{ PROS' TIPS }



Bold backsplashes

Goodbye, subway tile and neutrals—this year multi-colored mosaics and art-inspired motifs are all the rage. Anthony says her clients are all about patterns these days. “I’ve done mirror tiles and mosaics to the ceiling that are so elegant, they look like [kitchens you’d find in] hotels,” she reports. She also advises homeowners who are looking to spice up their kitchens to opt for a bright 1940s-style Mexican cement tile, as it’s become popular and adds personality.

For kitchens that are “too white,” Ostrom says she’s manipulated the elements a bit and used wooden and marble backsplashes. Because bold backsplashes are difficult to replace but categorically “in” right now, she likes to remind clients to choose an artistic design that’s “fun, funky and forever,” while being mindful of combining rather plain tiles with statement-making bold ones. “It’s all about mixing,” she says. “That keeps it interesting.”



Mixed metals

Whether it’s brass and bronze or platinum and nickel, combining different metals in a space adds a chic touch of variety to any home. And this flair, the experts agree, makes for a much more dynamic design. “Each room should have its own personality, but good design will have a connecting thread throughout a house,” says Giuliani. “Too much of the same element, no matter how wonderful, gets boring.”

So which metals meld well? Lyons is a fan of an oil-polished bronze in a mid-century modern design paired with a glistening stainless steel. LaCourte suggests teaming antique brass with modern chrome for a stylish juxtaposition of past and present. And Anthony says she has grown fond of “new metals” such as rich honey bronze.

So, what’s out?

Some notions do reach their sell-by date, and our designers spoke right up about them. Lyons believes tried-and-true plain gray “is getting old”; her clients are looking instead for variations of the color that give it more personality, such as soft lavender.

Anthony has grown tired of seeing what she calls “fish-tank fireplaces”—those lined with fire-resistant glass beads that arguably inspire more confusion than awe among guests. Giuliani says low sofas, though still chic, are seen as less functional—they can be uncomfortable and are slowly moving out of her clients’ spaces.

For Ostrom, “dull design” is out. (Was it ever in?) “I don’t like boring rooms,” she elaborates—but she’s actually saying more: “When I walk into a home, I want to get a sense of who lives there.”

