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HOME COUTURE

Like a fine textile, interiors and fashion are tightly interwoven, with designers and decorators often eyeing the catwalks for inspiration. Interior design has had its defining moments, as well as its equivalent of the little black dress, the classic that endures. **Chris Pearson** canvasses Australia's leading interiors commentators, to round up the people, trends and objects that have made their mark.

- 1 Knoll Studio Wassily chair by Marcel Breuer, 1928.
- 2 Main bedroom in a private house in Singapore, by Thomas Hamel, 2009.
- 3 Hotel Palazzina Grassi, Venice, Italy, by Philippe Starck, 2010.
- 4 Leaf print textile by Terence Conran, 1954.
- 5 Putman Style by Stephanie Gerschel (Assouline), 2005.
- 6 Ivy room, Maison Moschino, Milan, Italy, by Rossella Jardini, 2009.



The names that count

With a chain of London stores in the 1960s and a series of inspirational books that reached across the globe, Terence Conran pioneered accessible design – he advised ‘Joan Aveyard’ how to decorate.

“Conran streamlined our lifestyles through clean lines that spoke of fun and family, as well as form and function,” says Perth interior designer Judith Barrett-Lennard. “He showed us what was possible by setting up room displays – groundbreaking at the time.”

In the ‘70s, fellow Englishman David Hicks shook up the higher end of the market with his sophisticated take on mix and match, which still influences today’s designers. “His swish, tailored style and use of geometrics are recognisable today,” says former *Australian House & Garden* editor and interiors contributor Rose-Marie Hillier. “Hicks brought about a modern look, mixing groovy, upbeat Italian furniture with traditional British style,” says David Heimann, co-director of Sydney retailer Orson & Blake.

Across the Atlantic, Michael Taylor pioneered West-Coast style in the ‘80s.

“He invented the California look and made white fashionable,” says Hillier. “His rooms were often spare and, to compensate, he over-scaled his furniture. You could recognise his rooms by the huge sofas, upholstered in crisp white.”

Heimann cites the influential work of a more recent designer, Frenchman Christian Liaigre. “He dominated the ‘90s and beyond with minimalist warmth. His furniture designs inspired hundreds of manufacturers around the world with its timeless, restrained elegance. He made chocolate and wenge fabulous for years.” Says style doyenne Jean Wright: “He warmed up minimalism and made it friendlier.”

But it wasn’t only designers shaping our style. In Sydney, retailer Marion Hall Best championed the Scandinavian look from the ‘50s to the ‘70s, her shiny ceilings and bold patterns giving the dusty English drawing-room style a shake-up. “She showed a revolutionary use of colour, bringing in great European contemporary design, as well as textural silks and grass weaves,” says interior designer Babette Hayes.





Accessories, all areas

Whether complementing or contrasting, the accessory provides the final flourish. "Primitive textiles are like a white t-shirt or sneakers – they ground a stitched-up interior," says fashion and homewares designer Stuart Membery. Similarly, an oriental rug sits as well within traditional decor as it does in a modern scheme.

"The simple cushion is the most cost-effective way to change a room," adds Prue Royle, founding director of the International School of Colour and Design (ISCD). "By having a wide range of covers, you can change from formal to casual, romantic to minimalist, highly coloured to neutral in 10 minutes."

"A touch of faux leopard," says Sydney interior designer Maggi Eckardt. "It creates a feeling of luxury and has stood the test of time."

The chandelier, too, has been dusted off for a new century: "With the breeze clinking the crystal on my chandelier, I feel I could be in Venice," says interiors writer Nerida Pigginn. Wright's lighting choice is a little more contemporary – Castiglioni lamps, including the Toio she owns: "They light up a room, in more ways than one".

A vase, like the evergreen Iittala Savoy (above), designed in 1936 by Alvar Aalto, works every time. "It is so sophisticated: the squat size is good with short-stemmed blooms; the large with a full arrangement," says Hillier. For *H&G* Style Director Janet James, it's the flowers themselves that count. "Whether a large bunch or a single stem picked from the garden, flowers make a room come to life," she says. No one does colour like Mother Nature." >

CLASSIC COLOUR COMBINATIONS

White can do no wrong – for some. Fashion and homewares designer Stuart Membery's favourite colour combos are white and white; blue and white; black and white; brown and white; and the "ever-fresh green and white".

Prue Royle of ISCD, goes for an off-white background, introducing colour through "artwork and accessories that can be changed."

But for colours whose appeal will never fade, you can't beat nature. "I look to nature for what works," says interior designer Judith Barrett-Lennard, such as white on white; neutrals, such as greys and woody tones (they "remind me of wild birds"); blue and white ("tones of the sea and sky, soft and muted"); ochre and sage ("tones of the desert"); and faded grey, greens and yellows to chartreuse ("think juicy kiwifruit").

Says Orson & Blake's David Heimann: "Honey tones, tan, camel and a mix of timbers with accents of black; neutral on neutral; and blue with white accents are all timeless choices."

"I love Georgian colours. Smoky tones, such as latte, stone, Armani blue and lilac, are all very chic," says interiors writer Nerida Pigginn. "Take a gelato shade and put a bit of dirt in it. In Australia, we need these moody colours – white is too bright."

Interiors expert Rose-Marie Hillier ventures into stronger contrasts, such as red, white and blue; black and white; yellow and white ("young, lots of energy, fresh"); and red and green.

DAVID HEIMANN'S PALETTE

Dulux Pale Clay

Dulux Fresh Clay

Dulux Brassed Off

Bauwerk Brown
110/74

Dulux Luck

NERIDA PIGGIN'S PALETTE

Taubmans Berkshire

Wattyl Princess Satin

Bauwerk Coffee Set
12/12

Bauwerk Greys
20/20

JUDITH BARRETT-LENNARD'S PALETTE

Taubmans Truly Teal

Dulux Candela

Wattyl Dream Space

Bauwerk Muted
Blues 46/63



< How to set trends and influence people

Leading US, UK and European designers have influenced their down-under counterparts, but some locals are also signalling the way.

Members' favourites include Naomi Leff, who set the decorative style for Ralph Lauren Home, and Angelo Donghia and Michael Taylor who "created the California look, which resonates with our firm." Meanwhile, the New York influence is felt in the work of Vicente Wolf - "he creates eclectic minimalism" - and, adds Hillier, "does the city apartment look to perfection."

A fresh approach to colour among UK designers resonates here. "Since the '70s, Tricia Guild has had her finger on the pulse regarding vibrant colour and pattern," says Hillier. Nina Campbell's take on the English classics has been hugely successful too. "Campbell has a great eye for colour and mixing fabrics with unusual wallpapers," says Piggin.

Barrett-Lennard is a huge fan of Philippe Starck: "His hotels are smart and pared-down with witty touches. His designs are also accessible, he gives common objects a quirkiness."

French design doyenne Andrée Putman is renowned for her minimalist, avant-

garde furnishings. "Putman demonstrates elegance and femininity without being overly feminine," says Barrett-Lennard.

Then there's wunderkind Marcel Wanders. "He pushes design boundaries," says James. "He produces products for all prices, from Christmas decorations for Target to showpieces made from Bisazza tiles. His rooms are just dazzling and really lift the spirit."

Hayes lauds local interior designer Iain Halliday of BKH "for his exquisite aesthetic and detailing", while, for Hillier, Sydney designer Thomas Hamel "is able to translate the high style of New York and Europe into Sydney homes." >

1 Bolland apartment in Ikon Building, Potts Point, Sydney, by Iain Halliday, 2008. 2 Marcel Wanders Dream Due bed for Poliform, 2006. 3 Apartment in Manhattan, New York, USA, by Vicente Wolf, 2009. 4 Designers Guild Trevelyan fabric and Zephyrine wallpaper collection, 2010.

< Decorating and design by the book

Boasting inspiring images and tactile qualities, a good design book can become an accessory in itself. Hayes' collection includes: *Shaker - Life, Work and Art* by June Sprigg and David Larkin; *Putman Style* by Stephane Gerschel; *Starck* (Taschen); *Houses of the Century* by Anatxu Zabalbeascoa; and *The House Book - a Global Survey of 500 Houses* (Phaidon). Hillier's library, meanwhile, has an English slant: *The House Book* by Terence Conran; *Tricia Guild's Painted Country* and *Tricia Guild's Country Color, Sensual Home* by Ilse Crawford; and *In Touch* by Kelly Hoppen.

Barrett-Lennard prefers more immediate media. "I subscribe to magazines from around the world - they give far more insight into lifestyle and global trends than most hardback reference. I often use fashion magazines to tap into colour palettes and styling, because fashion and interiors go hand-in-hand."

The wonders of technology and design

Computers have had a massive influence in all areas of design, not least in the production of fabrics, such as elegant sheers interlaced with metal slivers. And laser cutting has given us wonderfully ornate patterns - think Tord Boontje's wonderful lampshades.

But technology has impacted design in other ways. "Long gone are the days of a single light bulb hanging from the centre of a room," says Eckardt. "Now lighting is used to orchestrate mood with dimmers and complex lighting programs."

"Technology has defined interiors with interesting lighting techniques," says Heimann.

As Hayes points out, one eureka idea can have far-reaching results. "It's amazing to think that bicycle handlebars inspired Marcel Breuer to design the Wassily chair in 1925, followed by Mies van der Rohe's elegantly curved MR chair and more tubular-based concepts from Le Corbusier. They all came to Australia from the '50s."

H&G

SEATS OF INFLUENCE

Chairs that conquered the world combined good looks and practicality. "The campaign chair, traceable to the Egyptians and Greeks, became symbolic of military authority right through to the 21st century," says Membery. "And it's available at Ikea."

Just as evergreen is its close cousin, the deck chair. "Everybody has done versions," says Piggan, "in canvas or leather... Conran even did one in rattan."

Also for endurance and adaptability, it's hard to beat the Thonet bentwood chair, first made in the 19th century. "The bentwood chair was revolutionary for its ability to be mass marketed," says Hayes. "And it's still in production."

The Arne Jacobsen timber chair, on which Lewis Morley famously photographed ['60s model] Christine Keeler, resonates with Eckardt. Today, we know it as the stackable Fritz Hansen Series-7 chair, arguably the most copied chair in the world. "It has simple lines and is as popular today as it was in the '60s. It's so classic; you can fit it in with any style of decor."

"Not sure it changed others' lives," adds Royle, "but the bean bag is one of my favourites because it was oh-so comfortable, relaxed and hippy-trendy in the '60s, and has never really gone away. It just gets harder to crawl out of as you get older!"



FROM TOP Knoll Studio Wassily chair by Marcel Breuer, 1928. Fritz Hansen Egg chair by Arne Jacobsen, 1956. Pisces chair by Coco Republic. Fritz Hansen Series-7 chair by Arne Jacobsen, 1955. Thonet Ply bentwood chair by Michael Thonet, 1859.