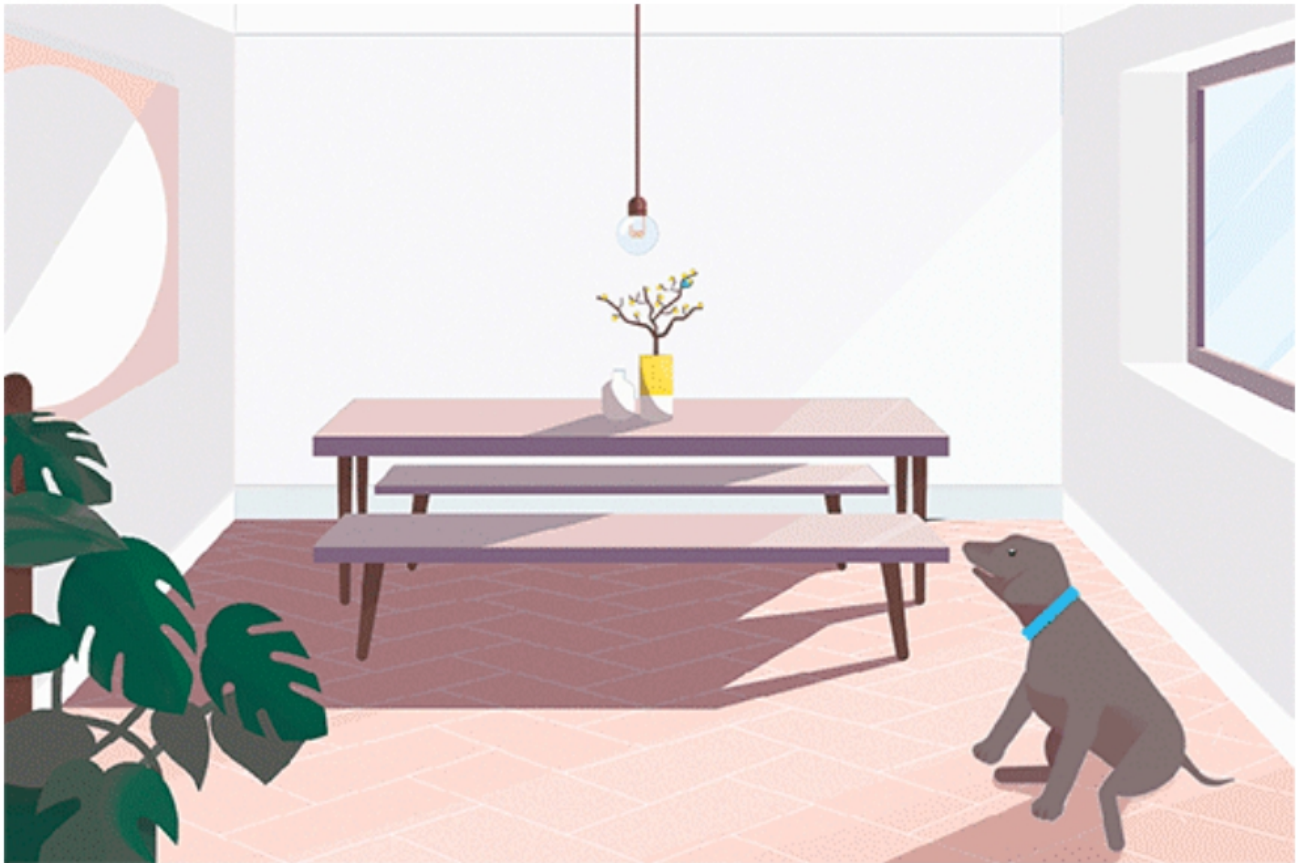


REAL ESTATE | DESIGN

9 Decorating Mistakes That Date Your Home

Accent wall, be gone! Designers name 9 décor trends—from yellow oak cabinets to Jacuzzi tubs—that (yawn) may be making your home look long in the tooth



DOG TIRED Design trends like the once-popular, pop-of-color 'statement wall' bore even aesthetically sensitive pets. ILLUSTRATION: JOSH MCKENNA

By Catherine Romano

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IF YOU TOOK the advice of 1990s interior-design TV shows and painted yourself an “accent wall,” you might want to get out the rollers and brushes—at least according to roughly 10% of the 50-odd designers we surveyed about passe decorating trends, the sort of thing that makes an interior look sadly long in the tooth.

Nina Magon, of Houston’s Contour Interior Design, noted that accent walls—a strategy originally hyped as high-impact, low-cost—don’t fool anyone. “It gives the impression the budget could not complete the design intent and looks unfinished,” she said. New York designer Richard Rabel added that you can get the same vaunted pop-of-color effect in less cobwebby ways with “rugs, pillows, window treatments and art.”

Here, a list of several other once-sound design decisions that have not aged well, plus advice on how to bring tired rooms into the third millennium.

DATED: In the 1990s and early 2000s, tubs with built-in jets were a must-have luxury item for home buyers, said Kirsten Larson, a designer with Manacá, a firm in São Paulo. “Think candlelit bubble baths of romantic comedies,” she said. Ms. Larson cites a few reasons the tubs have tanked: They’re too bulky, tough to clean and call for up to 80 gallons of water.

UP-TO-DATE: Ms. Larson prefers to install large standing showers with water-efficient shower heads and space for a built-in stool or wood bench. “They can be enclosed in floor-to-ceiling glass,” she said, which keeps steam and heat in during use, instead of visually heavy granite.



ILLUSTRATION: THE ELLAPHANT IN THE ROOM

DATED: Brooklyn architect Alexandra Barker considers vessel sinks—which appear to sit on counters like bowls—past their expiration date. “Water gets in where the bowl meets the counter,” she said, and because the faucet needs to be as high as your hands, the counter gets pushed below standard height.

UP-TO-DATE: “I like undermount sinks,” where there’s no lip between the sink and countertop, she said. Even better: Sinks that are actually part of the countertop.

DATED: Baton Rouge, La., interior designer Rachel Cannon sees a lot of faux finishes attempting to replicate the golden tones of aged Tuscan-villa walls. “When the [2003] movie ‘Under the Tuscan Sun’ was released, people went bananas with Tuscan-themed interiors,” she said. Walls were sponge-painted or rag-rolled. “Some were plastered, then faux finished on top.” Designer Nancy Charbonneau, based in Conroe, Texas, sees the provincial Italian style played out in artificial painted-stone finishes. “They add a heaviness to a room and really devalue a space.”

UP-TO-DATE: Today’s palettes are much lighter and airier than the Tuscan style’s muddy hues, noted Ms. Cannon. “We typically paint over sponged or rag-rolled walls and try to convince clients to sand down textured walls.”



DATED: “Midrange yellow-toned oak has gone out of fashion in a huge way,” said Jess Cooney, a designer in Great Barrington, Mass., of a common type of house-cheapening kitchen cabinets. “People wanted the oak to match the furniture around it, but we now like to mix up different materials and finishes.”

UP-TO-DATE: “We always suggest lighter and brighter cabinetry and color for a clean and sophisticated space,” she said, “and I would mix reclaimed wood with painted wood to give more interest.”

ILLUSTRATION: THE ELLAPHANT IN THE ROOM

DATED: “We are so tired of seeing overdyed ‘antique slash vintage’ rugs,” said designer Julie Massucco Kleiner, half of Los Angeles-based firm Massucco Warner Miller. “The worst offenders are the ones overdyed in neon hues and constructed of synthetic fibers like nylon or polypropylene. Nothing says vintage like a hot pink, coated-plastic rug.”

UP-TO-DATE: “We love real vintage and antique rugs that come in their own, authentic colors,” said her partner, Melissa Warner Rothblum. No room in the budget? “Try a fail-safe sisal or jute that you can layer a smaller vintage rug [over] later.”



ILLUSTRATION: THE ELLAPHANT IN THE ROOM

DATED: Los Angeles designer John McClain has never understood the **trapezoidal kitchen island** or countertop peninsula, which has an angle on one or both sides, typically at 45 degrees, he explained. “I think it was appealing to homeowners in the ’90s and early 2000s because they felt they were getting more than just a simple island.”

UP-TO-DATE: “Rectangles and squares give an uninterrupted workflow, an easy-to-navigate traffic path and will play well with anything else you put into the space,” explained Mr. McClain, “and it will be as relevant and attractive in 30 years as it is today.”

DATED: “Twenty years ago, the rush to automation in the tech-centric Bay Area was intense,” said interior designer Jeffrey Weisman, a partner in San Francisco’s Fisher Weisman. “Clients with the means and a passion for electronics spent a fortune buying banks of transformers, sensors and cameras, speakers and audio components, bulky screens and even bulkier lifts to hide them in furniture and ceilings, all of which looked like hell before they were dusty.”

UP-TO-DATE: “One hundred percent of these clients regretted going overboard with these digital flourishes and in subsequent projects opted for the simplest and most discreet of household systems,” said Mr. Weisman.



ILLUSTRATION: THE ELLAPHANT IN THE ROOM

DATED: “Interior plantation shutters often cost as much or more than gorgeous custom drapes,” said interior designer Mel Bean, in Tulsa, Okla., “and I dislike the bulk of the shutters, and the busy “striping” of light they produce distracts from the design.”

UP-TO-DATE: “I would replace plantation shutters with drapery or roman shades, or both,” said Ms. Bean. “The softness of the fabric instantly improves the space, and drapes can make a ceiling feel taller and a room larger.” For light control, layer drapes over hidden blackout roller shades, she suggests.