

# True colors

## Interior decorators make bold statements as 'perky' hues gain favor with homeowners



The Oakland Press/TIM THOMPSON

A room in Tom and Kathy Rose's home in Independence Twp. is anything but bland

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INDEPENDENCE TWP. — When Tom Rose passes through the doorway of his home office each morning, he walks into a sunrise.

And a cloudy sky can't kill the effect. The color is bursting from bright, yellow walls.

If that doesn't fit your mood, try the 5,300-square-foot home's dark-blue dining room, its lavender laundry room or the raspberry office used by Rose's wife, Kathie. Splashed with 16 shades of paint, the home on Walters Lake is a bold example of the return to color that's one of today's biggest interior decorating trends.

"I can't imagine a white house now" said Tom Rose, confessing the color scheme was the creation of Kathie Rose and interior decorator Michelle Biondo. "You just feel better. You feel perky."

### Sign of vibrant times

Use of color is one of the only decorating strategies homeowners are agreeing on, interior decorators and designers say.

"There are no rules in decorating right now," said Biondo, a decorator who owns Interior Attitudes in Independence Township. "Now, it's like things are much more fun in decorating. So what if it doesn't match your sofa? People are buying it anyway, because it's cool."

The movement toward color is a sign of vibrant economic times, said designer Sandra Johnstone, owner of Sandra Johnstone Design Associates in Birmingham.

Studies have shown people are more conservative, using neutral colors, when times are hard and switch to brighter colors when things are going well, she said.

But which colors they're using is strictly a matter of taste.

"We're seeing a revival of the blue tones," said Linda Thomas, president of the Troy-based Michigan Chapter of the American Society of Interior Designers and a designer at Hudson's in Westland. "For the longest time, it was the greens."

### Mixing and matching

While using prominent colors in prosperous economic times is likely a psychological phenomenon, another trend — the use of natural materials — is more about not sweating the cost.

People are using more expensive wood, marble and granite for floors, cabinets and countertops.

"When the economy is poor, they select laminates," she said.

Some homeowners are choosing those materials, which can resemble natural products, for flooring now for durability



The Oakland Press/BRANDY BAKER

Gorman's Gallery interior designer Barbara Guzman settles into a crushed velvet chaise in a client's home; she designed the marble fireplace and mirror behind her

and easy cleanup. The use of wood recalls the past, part of a retro look some homeowners are trying to achieve.

"I feel a lot of vintage things are being reinvented and reused in homes today," Biondo said. "A lot of people are collecting used furniture and reupholstering it just to get the shape."

Barbara Guzman, a designer with Gorman's in Southfield, said homeowners are mixing and matching their periods.

"Being eclectic is still totally in style, where you mix contemporary upholstery with antique (chests or armoires)," Guzman said.

She said she's seen track lighting fall out of favor and cable systems — in which lights are suspended from a cable strung below the ceiling — are becoming popular.

### Setting the mood

While Guzman said she's seen the use of light increase, Johnstone said she tries to downplay it in clients' homes.

"I use an awful lot of recessed lighting," she said. "The lighting should set the mood rather than be the focus."

When it comes to windows, shades still are popular. But valances are being used to soften the look and draperies also are gaining favor, Thomas said.

Homeowners are trying to give their castles a relaxed feel.

"People use their homes — they're not museums," Thomas said. "We all live very busy and hectic lives, so when we come home, we want to have a space where we can feel real comfortable."

One way to achieve that is by arranging furniture in a way that creates several "conversation areas" in one room, Biondo said. One area may include the television and stereo and be for entertainment while other areas could be for reading or working on the computer.

"Some of these rooms are huge that they're building now," Biondo said. "A lot of large rooms don't cater to intimacy. I get the furniture off the walls and set it at different angles."

### A price for comfort

In the home of a Southfield client, Guzman created a focal point for the living room with a 54-inch high mirror over a gold, marble fireplace. A nearby chaise helps soften the look of the room.

Guzman's client wanted her home to have a mixed contemporary-classic look. Most important was comfort.

"I wanted you to feel comfortable if you had on jeans or a black tie," she said.

So how much are homeowners spending to achieve that comfort? It depends, of course, on how much of a makeover they're seeking.

A \$30 can of paint can change the look of a room, while spending \$100,000 can dramatically alter a home's appearance.

A home's look also depends on who's doing the decorating. While designers and decorators try to cater to their customers, personal styles come into play.

### Making it personal

When selecting a professional to work with:

■ Consider whether to hire a designer, who holds a four-year degree, or a decorator. Both can get certification by