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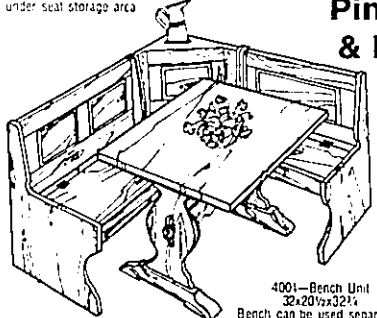
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Color explosion:

By Susan Steinmueller
special writer

ABOUT SEVEN years ago, were you wearing primarily beige, brown and navy?

And today, are you wearing tropical oranges and greens that would have seemed garish then?

Chances are, says award winning designer Sally Morse, that those same colors you are wearing will eventually make a change in the color of your home decor.

"We know that if people are comfortable wearing something, they'll be comfortable living with it," she said. "It used to be, that if a woman is wearing a color today, it will be in her home in two years. Now, if she is wearing a color today, it will be in her home tomorrow."

MORSE, FROM Bourbonnais, Ill., was in the area recently to give a seminar in Southfield called, "Color Trends and Design," a "fun look at interior decorating trends and colors." The seminar was sponsored by Decorating Den, a 16-year old interior design franchise service that started operations in Michigan last year.

Morse, a consultant to the company, is also an owner of one of the 300 Decorating Den franchises around the country, and was Decorating Den Franchise Owner of the Year in 1984.

The concept of the company is, at least in Michigan, almost as new as the color trends.

Rather than a store, Decorating Den is a free decorating service and shop on wheels. Or, as they bill themselves, "the colorful store that comes to your door."

Franchise owner consultants, who include professional designers as well as talented amateurs such as Morse travel to clients homes in vans emblazoned with the "Decorating Den" name.

THEY bring with them thousands of samples and swatches of name brand materials from wallpaper to carpets. They will take measurements, create a master decorating plan, and do the ordering.

Part of the boom in service franchises, the service cuts out the time required to go from store to store searching for an item, allows one to see what a material would look like under ones own lighting conditions, and provides competitive prices because of the lack of overhead that franchise owners have to pay.

There are now 12 of the fast-growing franchises in Michigan, with regional headquarters based in Lathrup Village.

Franchisees participate in company-sponsored training sessions and seminars.

COLOR IS something that Morse probably knows more about than most, through her involvement in CMG, or Color Marketing Group. Composed of members of various industries, CMG studies trends in American life to predict colors up to two years in advance — colors that industries that subscribe to CMG'S service of providing color forecasts use as guidelines in selecting new colors for products.

"There is an awful lot of thought that goes into what the color trends are going to be," Morse said.

There is a reason behind their color forecasts she said. For instance, the popularity now of sea blues such as Regatta Blue reflect an increased interest in boating and the marine world.

And, the bright, clean colors that are popular are a reflection of the improved economy and more optimistic outlook.

"The biggest change right now is color," she said. "Color is a direct reflection of how we feel about ourselves. Seven years ago we were beige to death — it was beige, beige, and 'garbeige.' At that time, we were pessimistic about our future. The economy was bad.

"But right now we're optimistic. People have started buying homes again. And the first big trend is bright colors."

THE POP CULTURE may also set color trends, Morse noted, citing the tropical colors of the television show "Miami Vice" as an example. However, colors such as those tend to have "a short interest span," she said, while most color trends last seven to eight years.

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— Sally Morse
Decorating Den
designer