

Building Scene

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Monday, December 4, 1989 O&E

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Bashar Kallabat (standing) and Kennice Hoffmann see their salon's decor as a statement

against the "cut and go" style that they say characterizes many salons.

Updated classical for salon

By Janice Brunson staff writer

For Kennice Hoffmann, 29, and Bashar Kallabat, 25, a vision of nearly five years assumed life earlier this fall when the Birmingham couple launched their much talked-about Salon Kennice Bashar on Northwestern in Farmington Hills.

Graceful swirls of drapery in earth tones, splashes of brilliant sea-colored flooring, faux cobblestone walls and cool slate work tables combine to achieve the classical look they sought.

"We're satisfied," the couple agreed simply.

Hoffmann is a Redford Township native, and Kallabat, born in Iraq, was reared in Farmington Hills. They take obvious pride in their creation, particularly since the salon's decor is their own, based on extensive research and visits to other establishments.

"THEY'RE BOTH very artistic. They knew what they wanted. I helped them find it," said West Bloomfield decorator Hilary Bell, who coordinated the couple's efforts.

"We wanted to make the salon look different, classical but different," Hoffman said.

IN ACHIEVING their look, high-tech assumes a comfortable position with ancient Greece.

Salon patrons eye videos of the latest styles from Paris and Milan, while hairdressers fashion tresses at nearby work stations that have been outfitted in faux stone and walls painted with cracks, tears and rips that are meant to duplicate ruins from a thousand years before.

Eleven work stations, eight for styling and three for technical work, are placed for easy access to other areas and to utilize best the 1,700 square feet of the salon.

Brilliant turquoise and emerald tiles, imported from Italy and dubbed Thames River Green, complement urns and faux marble that has been applied to the reception area by craftsmen employing ancient techniques.

Oxidized metal rods, barely visible under yards of upholstery fabric, add to an overall ancient, neoclassical feel.

The entire effect is enlivened in incandescent lighting with halogen bulbs, the closest thing possible to natural lighting.

Retail design moves toward specialty look

By Janice Brunson staff writer

Subtle yet sizzling, natural but noticeable — these will be the design trends in retail decor for the 1990s.

That's according to area designers, who also say "visual communication" is the key to commercial success in an increasingly competitive market.

Natural sizes is exemplified on a terra cotta wall in a fashionable area boutique. Reminiscent of an ancient era, the wall is complete with a painted break of stone that is gingerly touched by shoppers who are momentarily transfixed by the realistic crack.

"The retail environment has to communicate with the customer. It has to talk directly to their interests, to their tastes, whether they are shopping for clothes, furniture, gifts or business supplies," said Tony Camilletti of Jon Greenberg and Associates in Berkeley. The firm has specialized in retail decor since 1971.

CURRENT TRENDS, according to Camilletti, reflect a return to the "specialty atmosphere" of yesteryear, when the individual taste of shop owners dictated decor.

Such trends are in direct contrast with the "generic decor" of the past 20 years, described by Camilletti as the "homogenization of retail space."

"Today's shopping ambience is more upscale and opulent. It's a more beautiful environment, and there's a lot more excitement in merchandise representation, the A-1 star of any store," Camilletti said.

DISTINCTIVE window fronts in an area mall are geometrically angled and filled with mannequins, attired in ready-wear womens clothing and positioned in unusual poses.

The prototype, designed by Greenberg and Associates for T. Edwards, is intended to set the chain apart from other mall retailers by fashioning a distinctive and memorable entrance.

Such window treatment exemplifies "visual communication" with a flair, according to Marc Bear, a Troy-based retail consultant who last year launched The D'Bear Group after nearly 20 years of display work for Hudson's and Crowley's.

BEAR SPECIALIZES in merchandise representation or display, now known in the trade as visual communication, a retailing specialty that emerged earlier this decade.

"As we roll into the last decade of this century, packaging is the name of the game. Today's shopper is very sophisticated. Image is a very special component in appealing to them," Bear said.

Visual communication is expected to assume even greater importance as retailers vie for customers from a glut of shops facing look-alike competition or stores offering similar merchandise.

The boom is witnessed by the significant increase in "neighborhood shopping" or strip malls that have been constructed at nearly every suburban intersection.

"It's very difficult being unique. How are retailers

going to stand out? By offering an identifiable product," Bear said, citing a holiday marketing package he recently coordinated for The Coffee Beanery, a Michigan-based firm with 30 shops nationally.

The package contains a distinctive "signature," a holiday ornament attached to a single pine bough that is included in such store decor as tablecloths, in a brochure on various holiday gift packages and on a limited edition of coffee mugs.

THE KEY TO SUCCESSFUL retail decor is its compatibility with the product to be sold, according to Hilary Bell, a free-lance interior decorator from West Bloomfield who specializes in store and space planning.

"Decorators aren't selling decor. They're helping retailers sell merchandise. Decor can't fight what is being sold," she said.

A recent project of Bell's is a Farmington Hills hair salon whose decor is the talk of the town. (See accompanying story.)

THE LOOK of the future, according to Bell, is a "natural look" achieved by a profusion of stone, oxidized metal, pickled wood and speckled paint.

"We're moving away from the heavy Deco look of chrome and lacquer, and moving into natural finishes, a tasteful atmosphere of subtle elegance that is welcoming, comfortable and relaxed."

She particularly likes the use of Zolatone, a high-tech paint pioneered in the 1950s. The speckled finish is especially suited to speckled Formicas and marbles, according to Bell, who prefers sparse furnishings in a retail setting, she said.

RON REA, CO-OWNER of Peteransree interior design in Birmingham, also favors simplicity, "the simple white store with high tech lighting and rich wood tones inspired by the European and Japanese models, or the traditional American image like Polo or Jacobson's that is very rich in feeling," he said.

"Tradition with a flair."

Individually also rates high with Rea.

"The most exciting shopping in the world is street shopping, street after street of individual shops, neighborhood pockets like in New York, Chicago and San Francisco. The sights and sounds of the street set the shopping ambience."

Birmingham, Royal Oak and Grosse Pointe exemplify Rea's concept of street shopping, "individually owned and operated shops that are creatively presented. Decor is approached as a vehicle for sales," he said.

SUCH SHOPPING "appeals to the shopper in the know, the more seasoned shopper," he said.

This shopper is also demanding better service.

"Service, service and more service," Bear said.

"There is a tremendous amount of effort on a return to craftsmanship and the return to service."

"Architecture and decor will play a pivotal role in providing good service."

Advise ex-wife of condo rules

My ex-wife is continuing to maintain a residence with a live-in contributing to her rent and other expenses. I continue to have an ownership interest in the house and am concerned about my children and whether she is going to get in trouble with her homeowner association regarding a violation of the restrictions. She has threatened to rent it to others if I force the issue with respect to her live-in. Can I get rid of the live-in and protect my investment in the home, which is to be sold when our children reach 18?



condo queries

Robert M. Meisner

the association help, and should I bother going to them?

My experience has been that the community association can assist a co-owner under certain circumstances in remedying this problem. Most condominium documents provide that no immoral or illegal activity may take place in the condominium unit. The condominium association can try to evict the services of the local police department and retain the services of a private investigation force to rid the condominium of prostitution, drugs and the like. You should attempt to contact the association, but be prepared to assist it, including testifying. If necessary, should the association be willing to help you in regard to your particular problem.

Approximately one year ago I purchased a new lower unit condominium and was assured by builder's sales representative that the builder used adequate sound conditioning materials during construction. In addition, the sales brochure included a statement mentioning "sound conditioning in walls and ceilings." Once the upper unit was completed, sold and occupied, I found the overhead noise to be excessive. Other lower unit owners have also complained about the noise levels. I did some investigation and discovered that the builder had eliminated the sound conditioning materials specified in the original design. When confronted

with this finding, the builder said that the sound conditioning was removed because the materials proposed did not meet city fire code regulations. Other condominium complexes in the same city have sound conditioning materials included during their construction that obviously were not deleted due to fire code violations. My question is, what possible recourse is available to an owner in this situation?

I would first check with the city to ascertain whether the excuse provided by the developer has any reasonable basis. Even if it does, presumably there are other sound conditioning materials that could have been used in order to substitute for the original sound conditioning material set forth in the specifications. Your problem is becoming more frequent as a complaint which may ultimately be the responsibility of the association if the developer is not held to account for the situation. You should first advise your association of the problem, assuming that the developer is not in control of the association and to also advise the developer of the problem in writing. Failure of the developer to meet his responsibilities should result in your seeking legal counsel to pursue the developer or the association, if necessary, depending upon the condominium documents and other agreements. You do have recourse.

Robert M. Meisner is a Birmingham attorney specializing in condominiums, real estate and corporate law. You are invited to submit topics for this column by writing Robert M. Meisner, 30200 Telegraph Road, Suite 467, Birmingham 48010. This column provides general information and should not be construed as legal opinion.

By Janice Brunson staff writer

When Richard Guyn and Kim Robertson purchased a small 54-seat restaurant in Farmington Hills a year ago, their first priority was redecorating the diner into a "new-age" establishment worthy of chef Guyn's French-style cuisine.

"We needed a new look to match the type of food we serve," said Guyn.

The result is Pot Pourri. Guyn turned to Robertson, an artist who dabbles in pottery and oils, to translate paper napkins, plastic

table cloths and feminine decor in varying shades of pink and green into a sleek, modern setting befitting of bordelaise sauce with Madeira wine and hollandaise flavored with Apple Jack brandy or Dijon mustard.

Working within a limited budget, Robertson had one week during a slow period in August to affect the transformation. She quickly learned it was precious little time for such an ambitious project.

"YOU CAN ONLY do so much in a week," Robertson said, adding she experienced several false starts at-

ter learning certain fabrics and fixtures originally selected were impossible to obtain in the short time frame.

She envisioned a white interior, seat cushions covered with cobra print and elongated, fluted light fixtures.

The white interior ultimately gave way to a soft gray, and cushions were upholstered in contrasting patterns of gray, black and white after a zebra pattern proved impossible to find. An antique oak table, originally a floral frenzy, was repainted black with matching chairs.

White wire shelves lining the walls were ripped out, but glass block dividers were left in tact, made more interesting with the addition of live green plants that also decorate slender windows. Fresh flowers and liners adorn each table.

Most notable are hanging light fixtures, delicate "space ships" imported from Italy that are mounted to slender chords. Neon L's, complete with dimmer switches, punctuate walls.

Equal attention also has been paid to china service. Each entrée is served on a plate of black amythest, green flint or heavy dark plates speckled with lighter colors.

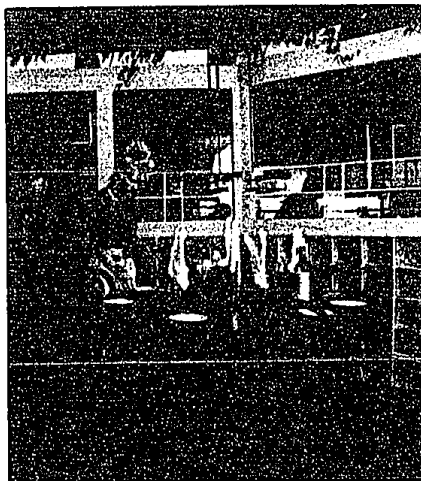
"I match the china with the food. It's art," Guyn said, citing such examples as baked brie that is served on a plate of deep green or salmon served on black amythest.

FUTURE PLANS include fabric awags to provide diners more privacy and wall art to flesh out the single modern work of colorful oil splatterings by Robertson.

"We've got the base. Now we'll keep adding and accumulating until we've got it all just right," she said.

Guyn muses aloud, "Maybe we could knock out the wall and take over the store next door."

Pot Pourri, 34637 Grand River, is open 11:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. and 5 to 11 p.m., Tuesday through Sunday. Menu change daily. For more information, call 478-4464.



Kim Robertson's place settings at Pot Pourri are coordinated by color with the entire.