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Home & Garden

Good show: Design house ideas

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It's show house season, when designers pull out the stops to create concept rooms for charity tours. We took a look at major show houses around the country and brought back a little decorating inspiration:

Color blast bath

Powder room, Kips Bay Decorator Show House, New York, designed by Andrew Swalsky, swalskydesigns.com

Power up with rich color. Fresh, cool shades of Aegean blue anchor the space (with a pale sea-foam ceiling). High gloss adds liquid-y sheen.

Circle it. Repeat round elements for impact: See the overscaled gilt framed mirror, interlocking circle pattern on rug, hardware.

Go for the gold. The metal of the moment adds warmth, even in faucets, and a jewel

box effect. If you can't change hardware, look for an accessory or two.

Dramatic flair. Offsetting the "syrupy" with solid black anchors the floating vanity door.

Mirror images. Mirrors as wallpaper make a small space live large and glam. Use multiples in your space to get maximum reflection.

Luxe, loungey library

Library by Michael Fullen and Lynsey Greive, michaelfullen.com. Pasadena Showcase House of Design, Pasadena, CA

Cool contrast. Grass cloth lining a glossy charcoal cabinet (painted with Rust-Oleum) visually lightens the space and lends textural dimension. Look for places to tuck contrasting elements into cupboards or shelves.

Show off. Removing the bookshelves creates a place for modern art. Spacing out shelves and placing books in neat horizontal stacks hones the visual interest.

Riff of old. A spin on the house-appropriate 1940s coffered ceiling — adding textural grass cloth cut into octagons finished with automotive lacquer is an unexpected touch.

Embrace geometry. Repeating shapes are chic, as shown in the black tin cube and patterned fabrics.

Sunny touches. Gilt tassel on neoclassical chair, gold and citron fabrics offset rich chocolate velvet on sofa and dark cast-stone table.

Cool, graphic living room

Living room by Soledad Zitzewitz, sz-interiors.com. Lake Forest Showhouse & Gardens, Lake Forest, IL

Ebony and ivory. Crisp high contrast palette provides a strong, classical look, with dark furniture frames, lamp shades and mirror accentuating creamy upholstery and cocktail table.

Go for symmetry. Pair it up: chairs, tables, stools, sofas, lamps, floor lamps, sconces are in perfect harmony, channeling

architect David Adler's passion for symmetry. Large mural and art beautifully break up the balance.

Make it modern. Wide stripes on the floor are a kinky touch. Go beyond the graphic rug by adding high contrast color.

Subtle color. Watery pale blue drapes lend soft color, drawing from the lake outside the windows and echoed in an uber-scale tapestry. Natural color drawn from the view is an easy upgrade to your room.

Add shimmer. Low-key bling is shown here in a luminous hand-painted silvery wall — reminding us that shine doesn't have to be so aggressive to be effective.

Cottage-style nook

Breakfast room, Junior League of Greensboro show house sponsored by Traditional Home magazine, Greensboro, N.C. Designed by Jason Oliver Nixon and John Loecke, Madcap Cottage, Brooklyn, N.Y. madcapcottage.com

Play up architecture. Refreshed original paint color (from late 1920s) on the window frames fashions a dramatic backdrop.

Moxie in the mix. Hallmark of the designers' style: A mashup of patterns — florals, damasks, chevrons — in different scales, linked by hue.

Ground it. An inexpensive jute rug from World Market lends texture, makes it livable. Look for a casual detail to bring cottage style down to earth.

Curve appeal. Flea market finds channel global and baroquey vibes. Look for pieces with plenty of detail to add to your mix.

Trim it. Raspberry borders on draperies and welting on love seat provide an exclamation point. Find one punchy detail to add interest.

Go for the surprise. Ombre stripe pillows in brights dish an unexpected punch. Adding a modern element brings a traditional look into the present.