

To Market, To Market!



By Vicki Flores

In the home furnishings industry, it's all about tracking styles and knowing what trends are in and what trends are coming. To accomplish this, decorators don't look to the runways of the

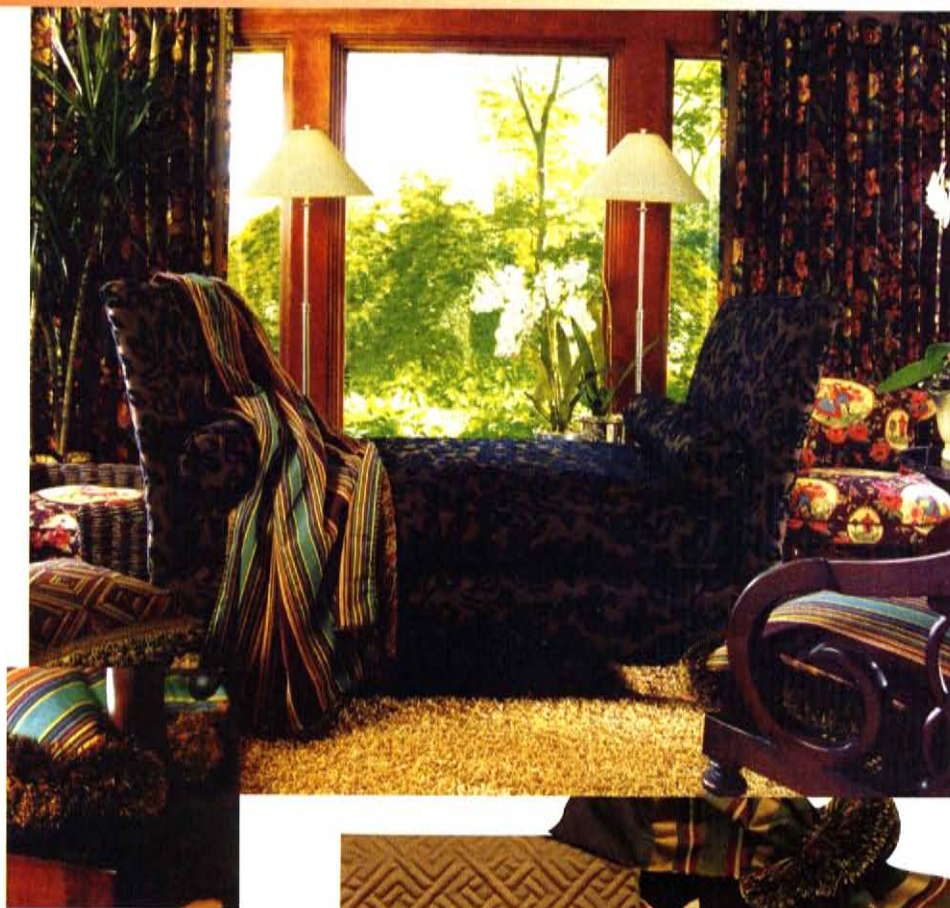
fashion houses of New York; they attend the High Point furniture market. Every April and October, 75,000 industry professionals—buyers, exhibitors and sales representatives from the USA and 110 other countries—converge on the beautiful Piedmont Triangle of North Carolina to see the newest products, concepts, styles and finishes from over 2,200 manufacturers.

Since the market is only open to buyers twice a year, the small city of 85,000 often finds itself short on accommodations for 75,000 visitors. Long-time attendees have standing reservations at local hotels or rent entire homes from residents who are only too happy to vacate their abodes and use the time for a profitable vacation. Every one else stays in the neighboring cities of Winston-Salem or Greensboro and rides shuttle buses to the market area.

The market boasts 11.5 million square feet of exhibition space in an area about the size of downtown Wichita (including Old Town and Century II). At 3.5 million square feet, the International Home Furnishings complex is almost one million square feet larger than any other market anywhere in the world. There is much to see, and a lot of miles to walk to if you want to see it.

All of these obstacles only add to the excitement and energy generated by this mix of creative folks, anxious to show the newest of the new or to judge and procure it. Buyer response determines which items actually go into production, so the stakes are high on both sides of the transaction.

Many designers merely tweaked their contemporary, minimalist case goods and upholstered pieces, but others were adding design details with an arts and crafts flavor; many of the collections had the



word "prairie" in the title. Much of the style is very "urban chic," a style that combines traditional with contemporary and can encompass all things in between.

The greatest changes of the coming changes seem to be in pattern and color. The Color Marketing Group has finally decided that we've had enough of the safety of beige and earth tones and are allowing us to test the tides of color again. I'm sure that you've heard that brown is the new black; but that's not the half of it. The great thing about chocolate (aside from the obvious) is that its color pairs so well with the other hot colors of the new pallet. A mix of browns with warm reds and earthy greens gives new dimensions to the combination. An elegant and tranquil color scheme is created when mocha combines with aqua and sea glass—just add turquoise and dark chocolate for a splash of fun and sophistication. All shades of brown compliment coral, the new fashion forward color, and with it comes other distinct and



pleasant hues like peach and tangerine!

Upholstery frames are becoming a little less oversized, but fabric patterns are super-sizing. Look for 6-inch stripes and huge damasks along with large-scale floral and paisley patterns. In contrast there is a resurgence of the mini print, and there are still plenty of the patterns and colors that we all know and love. Some of these colors and styles are making their ways into showrooms now, but most will start to appear in mid-August or early September—just in time for 75,000 industry professionals to gather in South Carolina and help decide what the next season will bring. ■



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