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from runways to hallways

fashion designers lead the
way...to home décor

Home interiors are gradually shifting from ornate Tuscany to more contemporary looks. Room designed by Nancy Slane, ASID; photography by Scott Sandler.

By Kathy King

According to Nancy Slane of Nancy Slane Interior Design, “Whatever is in fashion eventually comes into the home.”

It's all the rage: Tuscany-style home interiors. Taken from the Old World looks of cracked paint, chipped plaster and distressed wood; deep, rich tones of sage green, burgundy, eggplant and gold; architectural details of crown moldings, arches and stonework; wood and stone floors covered with patterned rugs; luxurious fabrics and ornate finishing touches of tassels, fringe and beads, today's home décor reminds us that

what's old is new. But, just as in the fashion world, cycles never stop.

“Although Tuscany interiors are currently in style, there is a gradual shift toward a retreat from life's hectic pace,” says Greta Guelich, principal and primary designer at Perceptions Interior Design Group in Scottsdale. As president of the American Society of Interior Designers (ASID) Arizona North Chapter, she has a birds-eye view of home fashion trends. “We're standing on the

threshold of ‘less,’” she explains. “less clutter, less ornate—and less maintenance.”

Popular Demand

Nancy Slane of Chandler-based Nancy Slane Interior Design agrees, noticing that furniture styles are gradually transitioning toward a more contemporary look with “cleaner” lines, using less skirting, narrower arms and showing more leg. Sound like fashion runway talk? Actually, runways and



Leather seats with fabric backs are popular in today's dining rooms. Photo provided by Razmataz.



This home office matches the rest of the home's elegantly furnished interior. Photo provided by Breuners of Arizona.

This dining room exemplifies Tuscan style throughout, from its faux finish block wall pattern and arched doorways to its rich color palette and dark-toned wood. The wood floors and chandeliers add an old world ambiance. Room designed by Donna Jantz, ASID; copyright by Dino Tonn Photography, Inc.



entryways are related, when it comes to style. "Whatever is in fashion eventually comes into the home," says Slane.

Design professionals from various industries closely monitor the public's interests and predict styles and color trends a couple of years ahead. Along with hip huggers pants, retro looks are bringing back citrus colors, lava lamps and shag carpeting, so popular in the '70s.

Slane credits architects, builders and manufacturers for listening and responding to buyers' demands in integrating innovative products, technology and intelligent space usage into everyday living. "Synthetic fabrics that resemble silk and suede, but are more durable and easier to care for, allow for luxurious yet affordable furnishings," she explains. "And now flat screen TVs are built into a portion of bathroom mirrors or can be hidden behind artwork that rolls upward to expose the TV, making double use of a single space. Products like these just weren't available five or ten years ago."

What used to be an afterthought, says Slane, is now being built into home interior plans. Instead of using bedrooms, plans now include such specialty rooms as appropriately sized home theaters with extraordinary acoustics and staged seating, placed away from sleeping areas. And closets are becoming more like elaborate dressing rooms, with seating areas and chandeliers.

"Overall, people want a richer look and feel for their homes, with lots of detail, yet comfort, too," says Slane. Hard shutters are



Citrus colors paired with the up-and-coming look of smooth, sleek lines add a whimsical touch. Photo provided by Breuners of Arizona.

now being softened with draperies. And just as comfy cashmere has overtaken itchy wool as the preferred sweater fiber, chenille, bouclé, suede, silk and look-alikes have become home décor favorites. Similarly, beading and other trims that add glitz to sweaters are now decorating lamp shades and other home accents.

Accessories, says Slane, can make or break the room and should be included in the decorating budget. But don't overdo it. "One great item is better than five tiny, unmatched ones," she says, suggesting a mirror above a table with a vase of fresh flowers to welcome guests as they enter and to allow a last minute

look before leaving the house. "Accessories can be fun and functional!"

Decisions, decisions

For many homeowners, deciding what to buy, how to arrange the pieces and accessorize can present a challenge, and can sometimes cause costly mistakes. "Enlist the assistance of a designer," recommends Senior Interior Designer Steven Blaine Fruetel of Breuners' Arrowhead store. "Our eyes accept what we have. A designer has an objective eye."

Well-planned eclectic decorating, says Fruetel, is a nice way to use what you already have. "Seventy-five percent of the room should be dedicated to a theme," he explains. "Otherwise, it could look like there was no clear direction."

Even home offices can blend with today's Tuscan themes, says Fruetel. "Old World, hand carved-look production pieces—desks, book cases, file cabinets—can all blend with the home's décor."

Master bedrooms, however, can be decorated in a style of their own, he says. "Ensembles are out." Instead Fruetel suggests using an oversized table on one side of the bed and a chest or bookcase on the other. "And no matching mirrors!" He recommends substituting with a unique piece of art. Add a chaise or overstuffed chair and matching ottoman for reading and an iron bench at the foot of the bed to complete the room.

Nancy Dogra, owner of Phoenix-based Razmataz, sees reclaimed wood from old bridges and barns being brought back to life in such pieces as tables, chairs, credenzas, buffets and cabinets for use in every room, including the bathroom. Oversized hutches and entertainment centers catch builders' eyes as less expensive alternatives to custom-built cabinetry. Finishes are painted, stained or mixed. "Distressed wood is in and whitewashed oak out!" says Dogra. Also popular are round tables with leather seats and fabric backs, tapestries and canvas paintings hung on iron rods.

Craig Washington, general merchandising manager for Baker Brothers flooring, cautions against getting too caught up in trends, suggesting neutral tones for the safest selections, with jewel tones being somewhat safe. Surprisingly, he says, "Blue always sells and will never date your home."

To address the wood vs. faux wood debate, Washington says today's "engineered wood" with its diamond finish and cross-laminated layers will resist scratching and buckling for



Soft, comfortable furnishings and window treatments provide a welcomed respite at the end of a long day. Room designed by Nancy Slane, ASID; photography by Scott Sandler.



Tapestries blend art with the warmth of fabric—a nice alternative to pictures and mirrors, especially for large areas. Photo provided by Razmataz.

20 to 30 years, making it a strong contender against natural wood. Styles have advanced, too, with beveled edges and wide planks giving a more natural look.

Carpeting is often selected per the homeowners' footprint tolerance. Yarn densities, tightness of twists and integrated patterns determine how easily footprints show.

"Ceramic tile is bought on aesthetics," says Washington, adding that cost relates more to style than durability. And vinyl squares, now with "grout-fit technology" and natural-looking patterns, have evolved into a cost-effective alternative to ceramic tile. "High-end vinyl wears like iron," says Washington. "It's beautiful and very unique!"

The light of day...and night

Selecting the right light fixtures and window coverings allows total control of ambiance and space functionality. Tiny, colorful, sparkling pendants hang like jewels to brighten tables, bars, islands, sinks and other areas. And dimmer switches set the mood, from bright and assistive to soft and dramatic, while extending bulb life and saving electricity.

"A good lighting plan combines ambient (general), task and accent lighting," says Hacienda Lighting's General Manager David

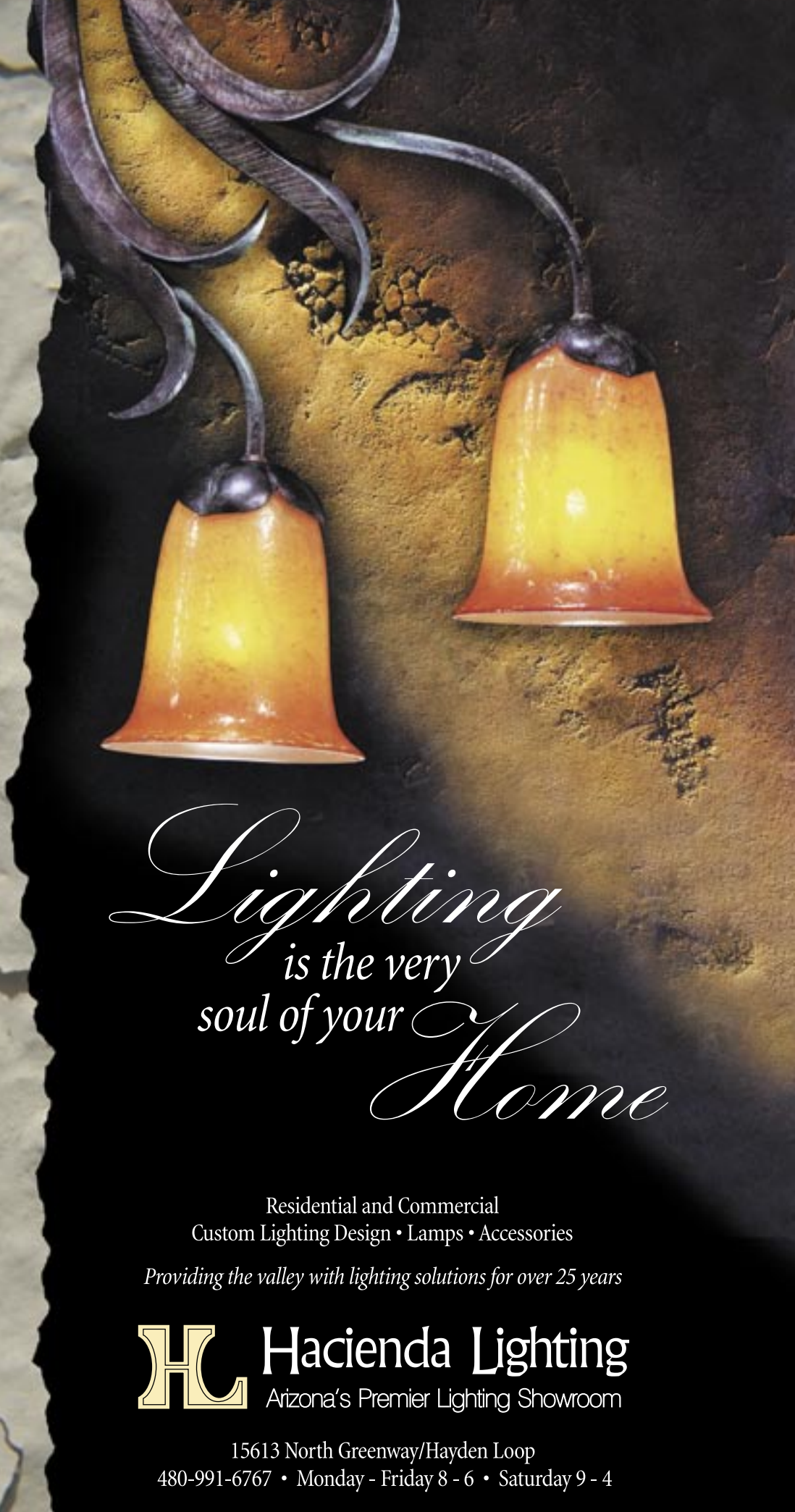
May. Its 9,600-square-foot, award-winning showroom in north Scottsdale displays all the ways lighting can enhance home interiors, and trained personnel can advise on usage and placement.

Design and manufacturing innovations in today's lighting fixtures combine Old World styles with state-of-the-art technology to produce beautiful, yet affordable, pieces. "There's never been a broader assortment of styles," says May. "Unique materials, like colored crystals for pendants and wafer-thin shells set in a mosaic pattern on a fiberglass bowl, create a traditional, yet exciting, sophisticated atmosphere."

Mark Kerzner, general manager of Lumature, considers each piece of interior lighting a work of art. Every item carried at his store is a one-of-a-kind original, designed and manufactured in Italy, a culture he says is known for unmatched quality and perfection. Though bright, bold colors are popular, he prefers neutral tones. "White matches everything and brings the best out in every room," he explains. "We should use light as nature intended it."



Pendant lights with dimmer switches can add sparkling color, function and style. Room designed by Nancy Slane, ASID; photography by Scott Sandler.



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Natural light does need taming, though, when it comes to everyday activities. “To decide which window coverings work best for each room, ask yourself some basic questions,” advises Jerry Levinson, owner of Gilbert-based Blind Devotion. “Ask ‘Why do I want to cover that window? Do I need insulation? Darkening? Will I be opening and closing the shade or blind? How will I cover arched windows? Do I want a consistent look from the front of the house?’” Consider, too, color, texture, style and durability.

Levinson measures the quality of new products by how they hold up under the intense Arizona heat. He stands firm on the comparison of wood vs. synthetic blinds or shutters, saying that wood never fails. Other new products, however, have added practical solutions to challenging windows. “Hunter Douglas (HD) is the master of innovation,” says Levinson.

HD’s newest product, Alouette LightLouvers®, function like 3” wood blinds



Combining natural pennisshells with today’s manufacturing technology makes for an exotic style at an affordable price. Photo provided by Hacienda Lighting.

but are made of a lightweight fabric—perfect for French doors and moveable windows. Duette Honeycomb Shades® offer privacy, insulation, room darkening and moisture resistance for any style window, including arches, skylights and patio doors. Even extreme window height is addressed with the use of a remote control. Levinson says, “There’s a solution for every window.”

How to Work with an Interior Designer...and Use the Professional’s Time Wisely

1. Before beginning, determine what space you are going to design, who will be enjoying that space and how.
2. Find your interior designer by referrals or by websites, phone interviews and portfolio reviews.
3. Have your wish list prepared prior to your first meeting with your designer.
4. Determine a realistic budget and share that information with your designer. Working as a team saves time and money.
5. Agree on a plan with your designer and stick with it. As work progresses, changes can be costly.
6. Let the designer do his or her job. Professional interior designers are not only trained in colors, styles and space planning, but are also educated in health and safety issues, such as child-proofed items, railing heights and light fixture positioning.
7. Enjoy your newly decorated space to the fullest. Today’s easier-care fabrics allow for more relaxed living.



Colored crystals, ornate iron and candle-like lamps with shades remind us of old world charm and grace. Photo provided by Hacienda Lighting.



Lightweight Alouette LightLouvers® are the perfect solution for taming the light that streams through French doors. Photo provided by Blind Devotion.



Duette Honeycomb Shades® offer a top down/bottom up feature, allowing total control of scenery and light in any combination. Photo provided by Blind Devotion.



Lighting can be considered an accessory, adding style and color while stating the mood of the room, from sophisticated to fun.

Photo provided by Lumature.

It's all about you

“The key to any design project is understanding how the space will be used,” says Nancy Slane. “The home is where people should feel most comfortable and at ease. What could be more important than that?” ■

Pros and Products

Greta Guelich: www.ASIDAZNorth.org

Nancy Slane: www.NancySlaneInteriorDesign.com

Steven Blaine Fruetel: www.BruenersAZ.com

Nancy Dogra: 480-991-6767 (No Website)

Craig Washington: www.BakerBros.com

David May: www.HaciendaLighting.net

Mark Kerzner: www.Lumature.com

Jerry Levinson: www.BlindDevotion.com