

# ULTIMATE ADDRESS

YOUR GUIDE TO LUXURY HOMES



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# Color is hot

Interior styles change with the times

If the Academy Awards fashions are any indication – notably a sea of red dresses and even a few blue tuxedos – color is making a comeback. That goes for interior design, too.

“People are making personal statements through color,” says interior designer Warren Sheets, who is based in San Francisco, but often works in Chicago. “Luxury home design always follows the clothing industry – all the more quickly in our now instant society.”

“This spring, fashions from Paris and Milan will demonstrate a color explosion, and similar trends and styling among architects and interior designers will naturally follow,” he predicts.

Chicago designer Don Raney of Civility Design in Chicago agrees. “We are known for our color, and we see that clients are embracing it more. For example, we just used a vibrant blue wall color with a pair of fuchsia silk velvet settees in one home and it is eye-popping.”

People tend to want to be neutral with furniture, and add a colorful vase,” Raney says. That’s not Civility Design’s style. “We encourage our clients to put at least one conversation starter in each room, and it should be one of these impact pieces. It’s the wow factor.”

What colors are hot now? Bright pink,



Civility Design is known for its use of color such as the fuchsia settees and bright blue walls in this home.

aqua and orange, Raney says. “Walls and furniture will now be colored, rather than grey.”

The change will mark a dramatic breakthrough from the past few years of starkly modern, minimalist interiors and white-washed color palettes.

What has been driving the change? Both designers agree: It’s the economy, stupid.

“Now that Americans see the economy – and their lifestyles – showing signs of improvement, they are looking for anything that represents something fresh and positive, such as color, which creates excitement in our lives,” Sheets says.

After 25 years in the business, Sheets explains the changing times with the scrutiny of a social scientist.

“The pendulum always swings because it is a rebellion to what is in style at the time,” he says. “You’ve got a style, people rebel, then the people on the forefront create a fashion and when that becomes popular it evolves into a style, then people get too much of it, and it starts all

over again.”

Case in point: When times were good in the mid-1990s through the mid-2000s, the grand and opulent style of the French country chateau or Italian villa dominated art, furnishings, architecture, and architectural detailing.

With the economic downturn, consumers have re-examined what necessities are required in their personal lives and that style vanished. They began distancing themselves from grandeur, and architects and designers immediately streamlined all forms, eliminating fancy curvatures, finishes, and complex designs or surfaces.

Because of the rapid change in thinking, there was little time to develop new styles, and it was easiest to reinvent the clean line styles seen in the 1950s, otherwise known as Modernism or retro design.

In making this change, designers and architects oversimplified, removing all aspects of color, Sheets says. Color palettes were increasingly based on dark weathered grey tones and frequently offset by varying tones of white.

Yet the new Modernism has begun to run its course, as reflected in both luxury homes and fashion.

“We went to traditional to modern, and now we will land in a more transitional style,” Sheets says.

That means enhancing a client’s personal style, not imposing one. He did this recently at a Chicago art dealer’s River North townhome. “Ultimately, we wanted to create an interior that was reflective of him as an individual and a collector,” he says. “We have the clean look, but more livable and colorful, with more energy and more personal. We’re getting away from gray and beige.” ■



Designer Warren Sheets says his clients are looking for fresh and positive designs punctuated by color.