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Create a personal space

Gone are the days of neutral, formulaic interiors as we move towards a more sentimental, idiosyncratic approach to design, writes **Andrea Jones**.

Slow down, savour life, seek out the handmade and reject the mass-produced and disposable – these are some of the directions shaping design, says the influential trends forecaster Genty Marshall. And after a decade of beige, we're set for a new era of becoming fearless about surrounding ourselves with objects, patterns and designs that have real meaning to us. It's a time of design confidence, to go with a new, more social way of living than we've experienced, Marshall says.

Marshall is the resident trends forecaster with *Decoration + Design 2011*, a trade-based event for the design community being held this week at Darling Harbour, together with the annual Australian International Furniture Fair. There, she is showcasing to decorators and furniture buyers the four key areas where these changes will affect design in the next few years. Here's a sneak peek.

Connect – the shift from living alone

The notion of the matched set of objects – whether it's a dinner set or dining chairs – is about as outdated as antimacassars for nanna's armchairs. Instead we're seeing the rise of a more individual and confident way of grouping things. Take the wrought-iron chairs

(pictured below right): they're not identical but they comfortably work together because they're all wrought iron.

This way of pulling your home together is a lot like the less traditional households we're living in, which are increasingly moving away from the idea of the nuclear family and are instead made up of collections of individuals – multi-generations, married, blended – who are somehow all linked.

And it's going to become more pronounced in the next few years, Marshall says. "We're moving towards this new way of sharing. People don't really want to be alone."

So, while almost one in four of us lives alone at present, according to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, this is probably the last generation to operate that way, she says.

"Kids of baby boomers don't really want to go and live on their own, so there's a lot of exploration happening with new forms of shared housing." As a result, our furniture requirements are changing, too.

"We're seeing the growth in popularity of casual seating like stools and benches that really encourage interaction," Marshall says. For example, the standard coffee table is giving way to the rising popularity of lightweight stools, which work as coffee tables for two one minute and instant seating for 10 people the next.



Savour – shared stories

As part of our new-found confidence, kiss goodbye to all those neutral, characterless interiors and say hello to bright and decorative textiles and designs.

Marshall says we're going to surround ourselves with objects that confidently assert what we hold important – she calls them our new “sacred objects”. They show the world what we hold dear, just as traditional religious icons did in times gone by.

Take, for example, this extraordinary South African textile that features US President Barack Obama. It's indicative of the new bold and lively textiles that are emerging that draw on social or individual totems of meaning – memories from childhood, people or places that have significance to us.

We're also making more mindful choices – consciously choosing products that are made using artisan traditions (the antithesis of Chinese mass-produced factory fodder) and seeking out quality that will last a lifetime.

You'll find it in the many hand-printed and hand-blocked fabrics coming onto the market, made the same way for generations.

And from centuries-old mills come heirloom-quality natural wools and linens now being reinterpreted by interior designers in less traditional ways.

As part of this new search for meaning, you'll also find a resurgence in homewares made using artisan traditions. In furniture, Marshall describes the rise of a movement called

“bodging”, where designers go into the forest and create a chair on site. “It's about trying to get back in touch with how things are produced,” she says.

Seduce – the new intimacy

When you're living in a crowd, privacy takes on a new meaning and it's driving a trend towards tactile textures and shapes, which Marshall describes as “quite primal”. So decorative pieces become increasingly less perfect-looking, celebrating their handmade rough-and-readiness. “It's almost Tarzan and Jane,” Marshall says of the new homewares. “We're looking at things such as organically cut glass, felt, raw leather, bone and stone.” It's turning up on furniture and homewares, especially accent pieces such as lamps and cushions.

Not surprisingly with such a natural feel, neutral shades of stone, clay and hide will remain modern classics for these looks.

Meanwhile, bedrooms and intimate spaces will take on a new, luxe mood in colours such as deep blues and violets. “The effect is sensual yet androgynous,” Marshall says.

Create – the family-style workspace

Even our workspaces are not immune to this trend towards a more social approach to living. “There's a new humanism coming into work spaces,” Marshall says. So, along with



The new “set” of objects, as defined by trends forecaster Genty Marshall (left), is less about perfect matches and more about finding individual pieces with a common link, such as these wrought-iron chairs, \$1099, from Tolle 'n Crowe.



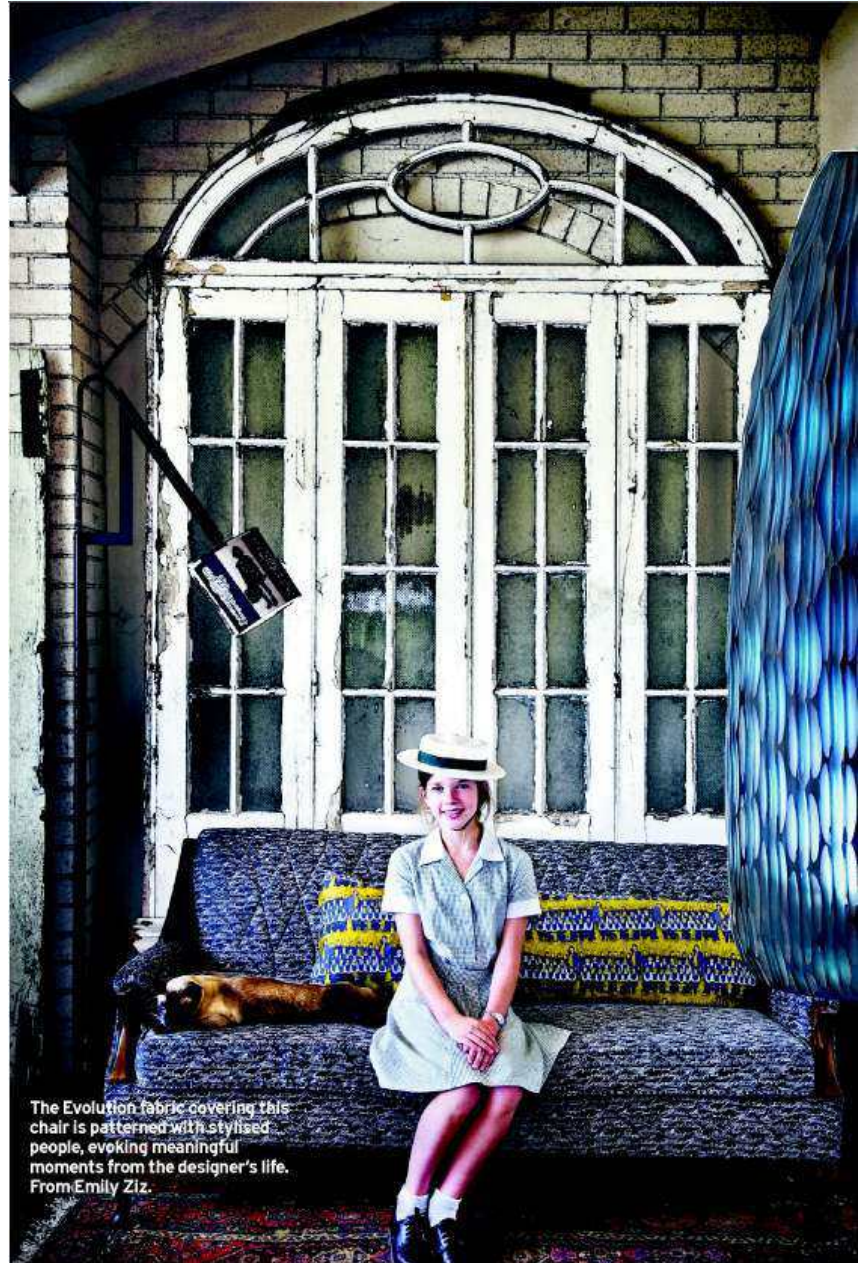
more flexible hours, she says the workspace of the future will be “a very friendly environment and it’s often a very flexible environment”. An office that will look, well, more like home.

Marshall reports that cutting-edge companies are abandoning traditional workstations for group tables. This creates a dynamic like that at a dinner party or family table.

Marshall says she is seeing “communal workspace hubs popping up all over the globe that enable people to have those ‘accidental encounters’ that don’t really exist when you’re working on your own.”

“We’re also seeing a growth in products that are greening the work environment,” she says.

So there you have it: more personalised, yet more communal living. It’s an approach full of warmth and connections that’s worth looking forward to.



The Evolution fabric covering this chair is patterned with stylised people, evoking meaningful moments from the designer’s life. From Emily Ziz.



Address book

Garden Life 357 Cleveland Street, Surry Hills, 8399 0666, gardenlife.com.au.
Tolle 'n Crowe 48 Sailors Bay Road, Northbridge, 9967 9111.
Emily Ziz 0433 881 414, emilyziz.com.
Tigger Hall (03) 9509 6456, tiggerhall.com, or view at trade showroom Garner Agencies, 36 Gosbell Street, Paddington.
Lazy Susan 9871 8362, lazysusanusa.com.

Fabrics such as these from Tigger Hall (above) are hand-printed using traditional designs on quality linens, illustrating the shift to the handmade and authentic.

Deep blues are an emerging colour trend and the organic cut-glass design of this ripple lamp from Lazy Susan, \$697, is in step with the move towards tactile, organic, bordering-on-primitive designs.

Where once we might have decorated with religious icons, we're now decorating with our individual "sacred moments - things of personal or cultural significance to us", says trends forecaster Genty Marshall. This Shine Shine upholstered chair (above right) from South Africa is from Emily Ziz.

Decorate boldly and surround yourselves with things of personal significance - this is the future of decorating, according to trends forecaster Genty Marshall. Here, hand-painted panels featuring lovebirds on distressed wooden doors found in an Egyptian marketplace add a whimsical touch. At the front are a tall bone-inlay cabinet in plumb, \$859.95, matching wide cabinet, \$1649.95, and iron hanging baskets, \$179.95, all from Vixen & Velvet. For stockists, phone (03) 9533 2777.

The future will bring a softer, kinder workplace, as seen in this installation, designed by Garden Life for Dedece's showroom in Darlinghurst. It shows the communal work table and use of lush greenery (in this case, Rhipsalis in zinc suspended planters).

Photo: Georgia Reid