

# INSIDER knowledge

Two of Australia's top interior designers explain current interior design trends and how to turn your space into a well-designed home

WORDS Luisa Volpato

**R**enovating or building is a great opportunity to design a home that is a true reflection of your style and lifestyle. But with so many colours, materials and options on the market, the interior design part could easily end up in the "too-hard basket" as you take the easy route towards safe and simple, four walls and a roof.

Don't risk bland or boring being the words that best describe the interior of your new home. We quizzed two of Australia's top interior designers, Greg Natale and Revy Bryce-Browning, for their take on current interior design trends and how to transform your space into a well-designed home.

"There's a strong school of thought at the moment about a shift from the really modern interiors that we were seeing five to 10 years ago where everything was super streamlined and contemporary," says Greg Natale from Greg Natale Design in Sydney. "We're going back to romance and detail. I'm not saying that minimal architecture and design are out, there's just more creativity and more detail now."

## My kitchen rules

"For example, the way we are approaching kitchens, even in modern homes, is to treat them more like a piece of furniture, rather than being super integrated and streamlined so that they seem to disappear into the wall or background," says Greg.

"Similarly, island benches are more sculptured and interesting features such as legs and other details are being added to them. The kitchens still have clean lines but the whole approach to them is more like an object or piece of furniture that becomes a display feature of the home," adds Greg.

The kitchen has become an integral part of the design of a home, says Revy Bryce-Browning from Brisbane-based Design Vision. "It is the heart of the house and has many demands. Gone are the days of the kitchen being hidden, instead it's now in the front of the house and is the entertaining and social space.

"The design of kitchens is getting bigger and cleverer with the concept of the European scullery (which includes a walk-in pantry plus cleaning area) which allows the general mess to be contained out of the main open space," adds Revy.

**Left** Kitchens are being featured more like another piece of furniture, complete with details such as the legs on this island bench. Photo courtesy of Greg Natale Design.





The home's heritage features were respected and celebrated within a contemporary interior. Photo courtesy of Hare + Klein.

### Space for living

The typical open-plan living space is also taking on a different look, Revy says. As less land is available, there is a new trend to layer and step the floor plate of a house over multiple levels.

"This approach to floor space and planning provides more variety, more privacy and smaller spaces," says Revy. "This transition is also occurring as we adapt to the ever-changing family structure which allows for teenager or parent retreats, granny flats, home offices, media rooms, theatres and gymnasiums. This adaptation also means there is more time at home, with more facilities to enjoy, and more entertaining."

Creating a space you'll love to live in also comes down to the colours and finishes you surround yourself in, probably one of the most confusing aspects of interior design for most people. Luckily, the current trend towards two timeless colour schemes will ensure your home doesn't date.



No longer hidden, these days the kitchen is the entertaining and social hub of the home. Photo courtesy of Design Vision.

### Black and white

"There is a really strong trend towards black-and-white interiors," says Greg. "I think it works because it is strong, but also quite neutral, and it works whether it's a modern or contemporary house. A black-and-white palette can make a traditional home look fresh and bold. You get a lot of contrast with black and white but you can also add more neutrals or bursts of colour to it, too," he says.

Along with black-and-white schemes in other rooms, Greg says it is also becoming more of a trend in kitchens and bathrooms, along with an injection of colour, a definite shift from the idea of all-white wet areas of the past. "We're seeing a lot more colour in bathrooms, in features, tiles and textures as well as in the use of marble," he says.

"The design of off-the-shelf bathroom vanities is also getting much better," says Revy, "which adds creativity to the bathroom without the hassle, risk and time involved in custom designing all joinery."

"Tiling also seems to be getting bigger, especially wall tiles and glass mosaics are always beautiful, but they are now being incorporated into a mix of glass and marble mix strips. The wide glass splashback is considered a little too slick now as there is shift towards more texture being used which adds impact," she says.



**Above** The 2011 Residential Decoration Award went to a Federation revival project by Hare + Klein Interior Design. Photo courtesy of Hare + Klein.

**Right** A black-and-white colour scheme suits both traditional and contemporary renovations. Photo courtesy of Greg Natale Design.





## Inspired design

Looking for inspiration in interior design and decoration? Look no further than the winners and short-listed entries in the 2011 Australian Interior Design Awards.

As one of the judges of the awards, Greg Natale says it was good to see a move away from a really modern, clean and minimal look being the norm, with the revival of a Federation home being awarded the residential decoration award. The judging panel also recognised how, as a whole, the project pays homage to tradition within contemporary interior decoration practice.

“I think we’re going back to more of a purist idea where a modern house has modern interiors and a traditional one has more traditional interiors,” says Greg.

“The other award winner, for residential interior design, was quite industrial but also with a mix of modern and traditional. While it’s industrial-looking it also has interesting character, detail and layers. There is a strong shift to industrial interiors at the moment, which I believe is a reaction against minimalism and eclecticism. It’s no doubt part of the next design evolution.”

For more information on the awards, visit [www.australianinteriordesignawards.com](http://www.australianinteriordesignawards.com)



## A splash of colour

Colour and texture is a great way to add personality and interest to the other popular colour trend of the moment — the neutral colour scheme. A neutral palette tends to have a calming effect on people, says Revy, and helps create a retreat-like environment within the home.

“Today life is so fast-paced, busy and stressful, it has become so important for a house to become a place where you can retreat, relax and revive,” she says. “We often use a neutral colour palette inspired by nature with a burst of a bright, quirky colour drawn from the local area or from colours our clients like, to add some unique personality.”

“For example, the magic view of the sunset over the beach from an apartment we worked on recently inspired the pop of orange colour featured in the otherwise neutral scheme,” explains Revy.

Taking inspiration from the environment, a colour, pattern or interesting texture, will go a long way to injecting some personality into your interiors. Give bland and boring the boot and get creative with interior design and love the space you live in. **R**

**Top Left** The colour orange is the accent colour featured in this otherwise neutral interior. Photo courtesy of Design Vision.

**Top** Space planning now features more small spaces with specific uses such as a home office or media space. Photo courtesy of Design Vision.

**Opposite** Forget all-white schemes and get creative in the bathroom with pattern, texture and colour. Photo courtesy of Greg Natale Design.

