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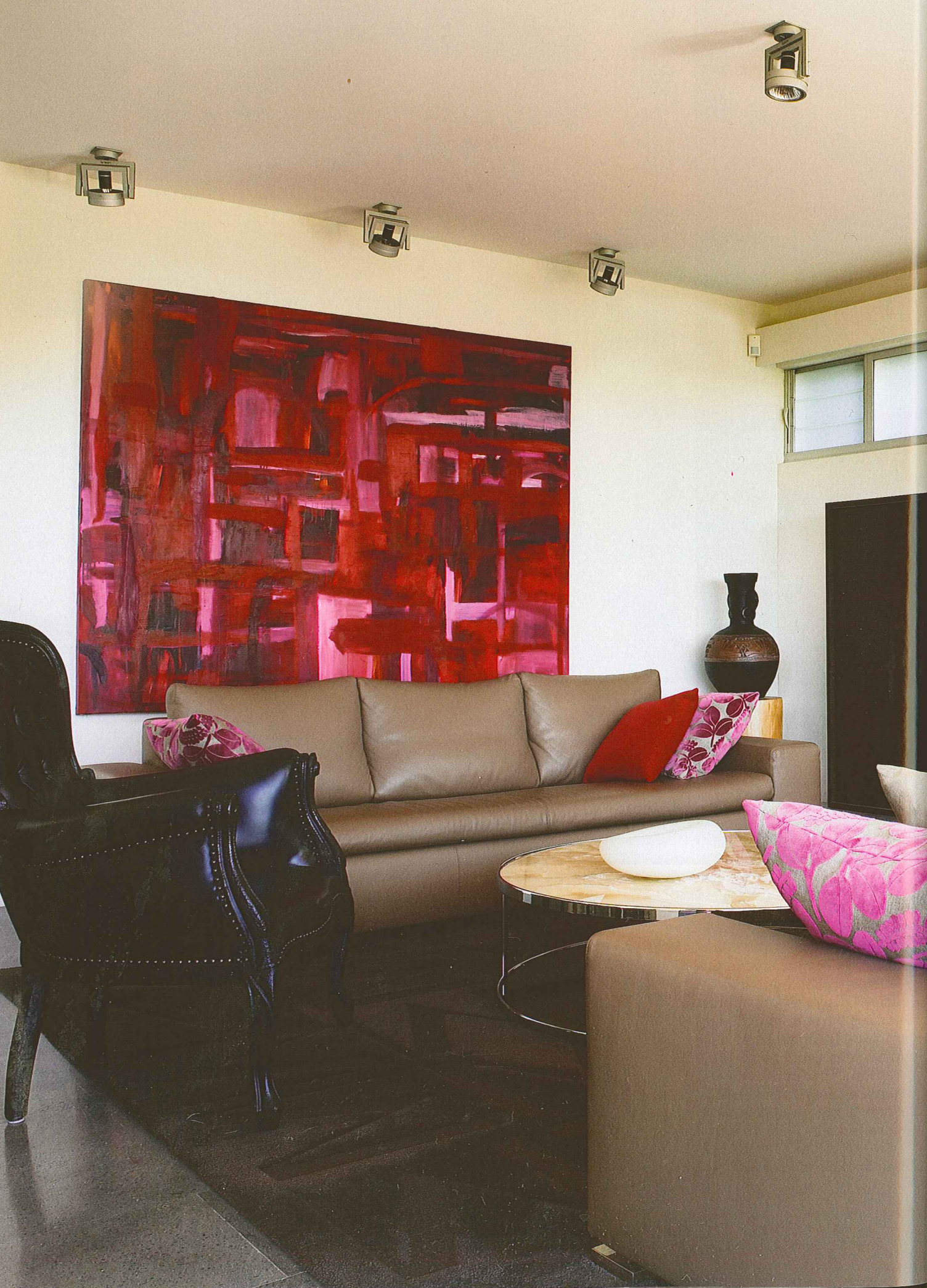
TRENDS



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Freestyle design

It may lack the conventions of other styles, but contemporary doesn't necessarily mean easy

Of all interior design schemes, a contemporary example should, by its very nature, be relatively simple to put together. Surely it's just a matter of taking a trip down to the local furniture showroom for a sofa and a coffee table, and applying the latest paint colour or wallpaper to the walls – surely.

Not so, says Sydney-based interior designer Greg Natale, who believes that by the time a look becomes mainstream, it is already passé.

"Contemporary design is, I believe, something that is continually pursuing innovation and new ideas – whether it be in architecture or interior design. It is this continual evolution of everyday objects that is the core of contemporary design."

Technological advances are helping push the boundaries of design further than ever before. However, for a design to be successful it has to play by the rules.

"As with any style, you need to look at proportion and light, but you have a bit more freedom. You're not tied to the necessity of symmetry, as you would be in a classical scheme, for example."

With such a fluid description and an almost unlimited range of possibilities, why is it that a contemporary scheme can go so wrong?

"You can't do contemporary design on the cheap," says Natale. "Classical you can do on a budget, but with contemporary design, where so much hinges on individual pieces, quality will always be key. Minimalism is a prime example. When everything is focused around a downlight, say, you must have really good furniture, or risk spoiling the whole effect."

Since the 1990s, contemporary design has favoured a streamlined look, combining metals and sleek surfaces. To successfully achieve this aesthetic, are there some materials that have an inherently contemporary persona?

"It depends on personal perception – traditional materials such as stone and timber can look really contemporary, whereas for some people there's more of an emphasis on man-made materials."



Left: The mix of textures and materials in this living room shows how contemporary design can be layered yet remain sleek.

Top: Interior designer Greg Natale of Greg Natale Design is well known for pushing design boundaries.

Above: This monochromatic scheme is an eye-catching contemporary design.

