

Rising Design Star JOHN POMPEII

Talks Style, Trends and How To



Crisp, clean lines create a contemporary yet comfortable feel.

INTERVIEW BY YARAN NOTI
PHOTOS BY MARGARET SINGER

As avant-garde new constructions and ultra-modern decor pop up all over town, Boston is clearly in the grips of a design renaissance. John Pompeii, the principle designer at the South End's Pompeii Design Group, is helping to lead this "charge toward trendy" as he and other style mavens give the city a modern makeover. The Rhode Island native offers his advice to those who are ready to trade in grandma's rocking chair for something a little more hip.



An open and airy kitchen can be perfect for a simple family meal and for entertaining a large number of guests.



More traditional designs can still feel new and modern when placed in the right setting.

How do you approach a space?

It's my job to help clients determine their own style. When beginning a job, I stick to the four "c's": *Contemplating* the space as it is in its raw state; *cleansing* the space of unnecessary items; *clarifying* the client's goals, needs and desires; and *creating* a space that's uniquely his or her own. My personal style is fun and funky, contemporary and comfortable. Lots of neutral tones with some color. But sometimes the job calls for something different, something more traditional. I have to listen to my clients and see how they live and look at their personality.

What are some of the most common design mistakes people make?

One of the biggest mistakes everyone makes, and I've been a victim of it myself, is a mistake of scale. Scale of furniture is so important in your room. Always do a floor plan first. When you draft it out, you'll know if certain pieces are going to fit or not, and you'll know when the room starts to get overcrowded. When you are in a showroom, you can say 'That's a great sofa. Love it. Have to have it.' Then you spend the money, it gets delivered, and it can't even make it up the stairs. Scale is a big deal.

What are some of the hottest trends right now?

Boston brownstones, with all the swags and tassels and trims, give Boston a stodgy reputation. I don't want to disrespect that at all; it's great looking. But I see Boston turning a leaf with buildings like the new InterContinental. You see these buildings going up in a style that was not here even five or six years ago. I definitely think we are slowly moving to a more contemporary look. We are trading in ornately carved furniture and fussy upholstery for cleaner lines. You can easily see this in stores like Adesso. It's all about staying simple. The organic look is great to work with. Monochromatic colors, simple lines. Lots of chocolates and browns. Also, organic materials like lotka paper, grasscloth and resin create the possibility for a million different styles and textures. You can mix materials and colors to warm and soften the contemporary lines, which can appear cold to some.

Where will design be going in the near future?

"Green design," or design that keeps an eye on environmental concerns, will only get more and more popular. The new Macallen building is a great example of that, using everything from recycled materials to fresh-air ducts. More and more clients are requesting products that are not only aesthetically pleasing, but durable, safe and made from materials that will not unbalance the ecosystem. One example is bamboo, which grows 20 times faster than traditional hardwoods. It is therefore renewable, and not going to be

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This arrangement of furniture encourages conversation and brings the space together.



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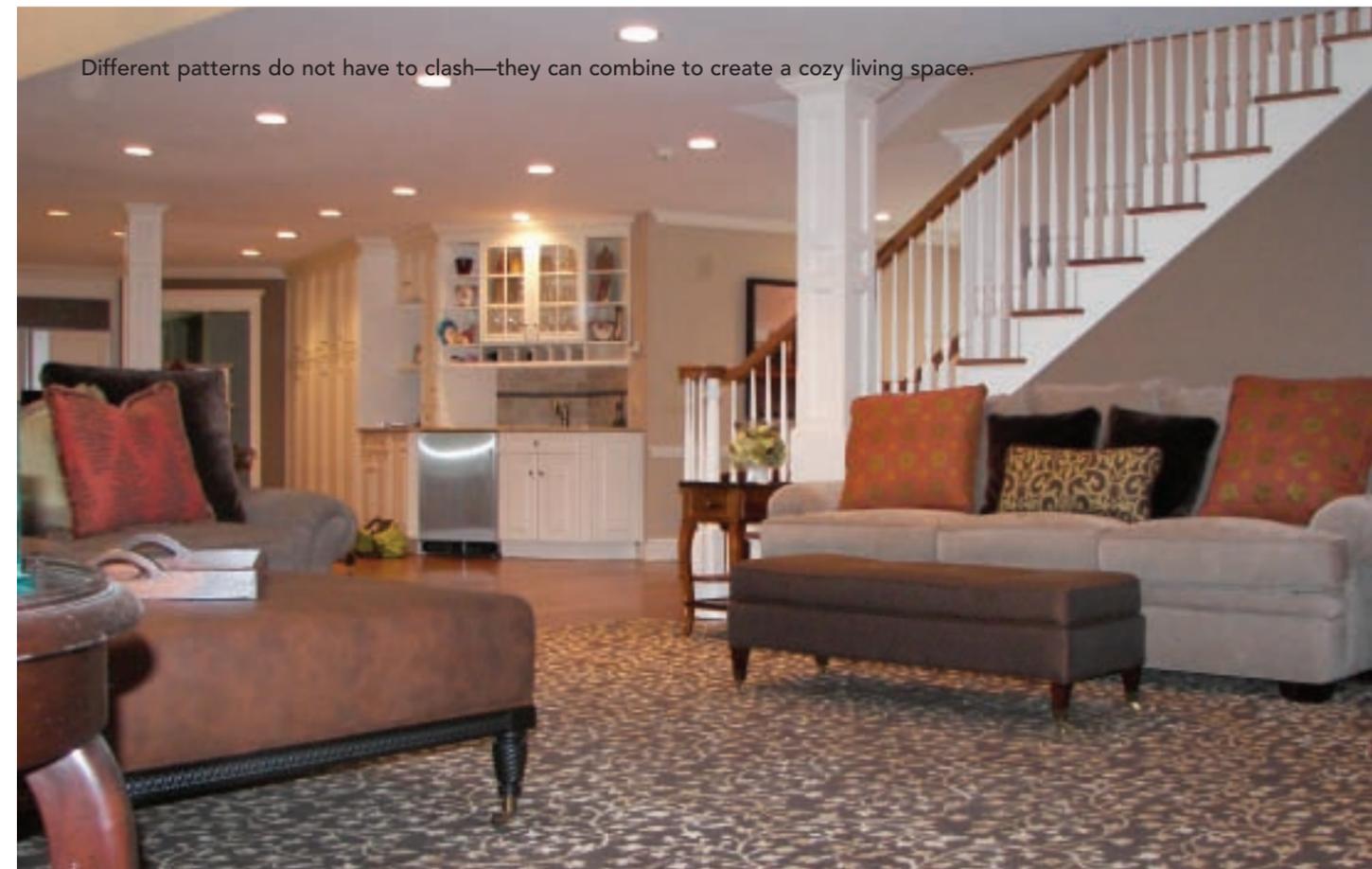
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"Decorating is All About Bringing Your Personality Forward," says designer John Pompeii.

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depleted. It is also more durable than oak and maple and it adds a more contemporary look. And like other woods, you can stain it to fit your style choice. Also, as technology invades our lives more and more, we are going to have to look at how to successfully fit gadgets into our homes. People are going to want to go wireless more and more, and media rooms with theater-like technology are becoming more and more common.

What are some tips you can give people who don't have much space to work with?

There are lots of tricks to making a small space seem larger. For one, go with light and cool colors. Lighter colors always open up a space and cooler colors, like blues and greens, give a feeling of openness. Warmer colors, like reds and browns, bring the walls in and make a room feel cozy, which is sometimes great but not if you are trying to make a small space seem bigger. Using a monochromatic color scheme definitely makes a space seem bigger, as does getting rid of knick-knacks. Editing your knick-knacks to what is suitable for a room will definitely enlarge it simply by getting rid

of clutter. Also, if you are dealing with a tight space, use the same flooring throughout the house. That way, your eye gets drawn into a continuum and the rooms flow into one another.

What can you say to budget-minded people who want an up-to-date look?

Anyone can have a great-looking home. There is West Elm, Ikea and a lot of affordable alternatives for younger people who are starting up in their new spaces, or young professionals who can't afford a lot. These less-expensive alternatives are stylish. Look at Target with Phillippe Starck. I think good design is being brought to everyone. It's great. Anyone can afford good design.

Do you have parting advice for the do-it-yourselfers out there?

Decorating is all about personality. Nothing should be chosen just for its value. It's definitely about how the pieces are related to your lifestyle—how you live your life and what you want to complement it.



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John Pompeii is a champion of simple, clean clutter-free living.