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SWEET PEAS DESIGN

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## BEYOND TRENDS



Photo courtesy of: Sweet Peas Design

***"Si fractum non sit, noli id reficere."***

This quote sounds so much more refined in Latin, but the basic message is the same in English - "If it ain't broke, don't fix it." Furnishings vendors took that motto to heart at High Point Market in North Carolina, embracing the best of last year's ideas and applying them on a much broader scale. You could see this as a lack of creativity and spunk, but I'm a "glass half full" kind of gal, so I look at it this way - when a trend is good enough to go viral and survive beyond a season, it's on the path to becoming a timeless classic!

In the meantime, some of you might be wondering, what is High Point Market? High Point is the largest home furnishings industry trade show in the world, with over 2,000 exhibitors throughout 10 million square feet of exhibition space in roughly 180 buildings. The Market is held in April and October each year for six days and attracts up to 80,000 design professionals, including me, senior designer Angela LaVista and junior designer Lauren Benditzky. It's the Paris Fashion Week of the furnishings industry, though the sofas and chairs don't sashay down runways lined

with paparazzi! I always come home refreshed and looking forward to incorporating what I've seen into our interiors. You might say it's the high point of the season, pun intended.

Sincerely,

**Susan, Angela, Jennifer, Lauren, Laura, Caitlin and Lauren**  
*The Sweet Peas Design Team*

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## WHAT'S IN



*Clockwise from upper left photos courtesy of: Vanguard via Sweet Peas Design, traditionalhome.com, Kravet via Sweet Peas Design, Vanguard via Sweet Peas Design, Louise Gaskill via Sweet Peas Design, emporiumhome.com*



### 1) GEOMETRY 101

No doubt about it, octagons are this year's go-to shape. The iconic stop-sign configuration is making a statement on tables, ottomans, lighting, chair backs, mirrors and side tables. The sharp angles can truly be a focal point in a room, mixed with softer angles and curves. It's all geometric to me!

*Photo courtesy of: kravet.com*

### 2) LEATHER-WRAPPED FURNITURE

Leather is nothing new in furnishings, but I've never seen so much of it before. It seemed as if every manufacturer had a leather-wrapped piece this year, so count on this trend to have legs. My advice - limit yourself to one or two leather pieces in a room or it may start to look like a convention hall for Harley owners!

*Photo courtesy of: Sweet Peas Design*



### 3) LINEN-WRAPPED FURNITURE

Last fall we raved about finding two vendors for linen-wrapped furniture at High Point; this year we were practically tripping over them! This is another trend that's becoming a standard. It's a textural treatment used mostly on chests, but I saw it on buffets, occasional tables and headboards too. We've been so



excited about this new finish that earlier this year we selected a linen-wrapped dresser for a client's master bedroom. It's gorgeous!

*Photo courtesy of: creativemetalwood.com*

#### 4) A NEW LEAF

Last year it was silver leaf; this year gold leaf is the metal of the moment. Gold leaf was applied in simple, elegant ways to cabinet door hardware, tables, lamps and lighting fixtures, mirrors and lots of chests. No need to pack away your silver leaf treasures. Just layer in a gold leaf piece with silver and other metallics and avoid matchy-matchy boredom. It's time to turn over a new leaf.

*Photo courtesy of: dwellstudio.com*



#### 5) VELVETY VELLUM

It looks textural, but isn't. It seems worn and vintage, but it's not. Vellum is one of the hottest leathers in furniture making, and designers are falling head-over-hooves for it, so to speak. The name vellum comes from the early French word for calf - vélin - and it typically comes from a calf or goat. I love its richness and texture, and that no two pieces are ever alike.

Natural variations in the skins make each piece

unique. Vellum is beautiful when contrasted with other materials, such as metals or wood. And here's a fun fact: Vellum is so durable that since 1497, British Acts of Parliament have been printed on it for archival storage. Jolly good.

*Photo courtesy of: aldenparkes.com*

#### 6) LIFE ON THE EDGE

I'm so happy to see that live-edge wood furniture continues to put down roots in home furnishings. The natural wavy, rough edge of a piece of wood is incorporated into the design of a piece - often a table - giving it an organic look that is rustic and engaging. The latest update - pairing live-edge wood with acrylic, metal or resin elements, such as table legs, to create an eye-catching contrast between materials.

Be daring, live on the edge!

*Photo courtesy of: luxesource.com*



#### 7) UPHOLSTERY, MEET METAL

There's a new twist to upholstered furniture with metal frames, legs and/or feet - it doesn't have to be modern and contemporary any more. Furniture makers are introducing mixed-media pieces that work in transitional and traditional homes, if you choose wisely. The blend of soft and hard, shiny and matte, rough and smooth are very appealing combined in one piece.

*Photo courtesy of: bradley-usa.com*

## WHAT'S OUT

### MASS PRODUCED ART

After spending many soul-satisfying hours at SOFA earlier this month - Sculpture Objects Functional Art and Design Fair in Chicago - I am more convinced than ever that mass produced art is out and one-of-a-kind art is in. I always recommend that our clients collect original pieces that call their name - they don't have to be super pricey - rather than fill their walls with pieces produced by the thousands. Art should elicit a personal feeling or memory in us, or it may just be soothing or encourage us to contemplate its nuances and complexities. For years I have been developing a source book with a wide variety of artists who I can recommend to my clients, but the final decision is always up to the individual. What feeds your soul?

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### FABU FABRIC



*Clockwise from upper left photos courtesy of: vkvisuals.com, elledecor.com, Wesley Hall via Sweet Peas Design, ladolcevitablog.com, Barrymore via Sweet Peas Design, bykoket.com*

### VELVET

From the Paris runways to furniture, so many designers are under the spell of this luxurious, plush fabric that I wouldn't be surprised to see some of Chicago's most pampered pooches sporting velvet coats this winter! It's even stronger this year than last. During the past few months every upholstery rep at the studio has shown us velvet samples - cotton, poly, linen, silk. It can be cut, crushed, burnished and standard. The pile can be deep or short, depending on the fiber content, it can be incredibly durable and the color range is impressive. We're seeing vivid jewel tones through soft pastels. Angela and Lauren, my senior and junior designers, love it; me not so much. Velvet still says "black tie" formality, in my opinion, and I don't think it transitions well for daytime living at home. Admittedly the fabrics have been updated and improved, but I still worry about crumbs, spills and grime on those thick naps. Angela and Lauren would argue that today's velvets can be dressed up or down depending on the type of fibers. Silk velvet is shinier and more glam while cotton velvet has a casual, matte finish. They also point out that the fibers are extremely durable and don't crush the way they used to. While I would limit velvet to pillows or a side chair in the living room or master bedroom where it won't get a lot of wear-and-tear, my colleagues would recommend it more widely for sofas, chairs and ottos that get normal use. I guess we can agree to disagree on this one, but I must admit, I bought a pair of leggings with velvet fronts and I'm still trying to decide whether to keep them!

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### SPOTLIGHT ON A FAVORITE



*From upper left photos courtesy of: ellenkennon.com, dimtryco.com, barrymorefurniture.com, beautifulfurniture.com*

## NO ROOM FOR FUSSBUDGETS

As the queen of clean-lined, simple designs, it was a pleasure to see that less is more in the world of upholstery these days. Instead of multiple pleats, or shirred and ruffled pleats on sofas, I saw crisply tailored, "waterfall" skirts - flat panels of fabric along the bottom edge of a sofa or chair, divided into sections in some cases. For a custom look, I like adding a touch of elegant trim to a waterfall skirt, but just at the corners. Sofa and chair arms are less elaborate too - they're often thinner and square-shaped versus rolled and thickly stuffed. As for details, a simple top stitching in a contrasting color adds just the right amount of interest. The advantage? If your major pieces keep a low profile you can have fun layering in texture, mixed materials and other details with accessories, which are easy to change out or rearrange when the mood strikes.

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## WHAT'S UP

### WE'RE GROWING!

I'm going to be kicking off the New Year with an exciting new addition - we will be opening the doors to a second, full-service studio in Chicago at 1242 N. Wells in Old Town in mid-January. My talented and trusted Junior Designer Lauren Benditzky will be on site full-time and I will divide my time between Libertyville and Chicago. Senior designer Angela LaVista will continue to contribute her creativity and energy to the Libertyville studio full time. Our new studio will allow us to provide the same kind of client service and expertise to our growing Chicago client base as we've always given to clients on the North Shore. I'll be announcing a grand opening party in the weeks ahead as well as additional new members to our team!

### MILLION DOLLAR ADVICE

After a slight delay for the World Series - way to, Cubs! - my interview on "Million Dollar Decorating" podcast went live November 20. Thanks again to interior designer and host James Swan, who invited me on his program. You can find our conversation at <https://is.gd/BYDwng>, but here's a quick sample:

James: What is your favorite piece at home?

Me: My 19th century paint palettes and paint brushes, which I purchased at the Paris Flea Market a few years ago. I always wonder what works of art they helped create.



From upper left photos courtesy of: Sweet Peas Design, Design Trust, chicagoideas.com, milliondollardecorating.com, Sweet Peas Design

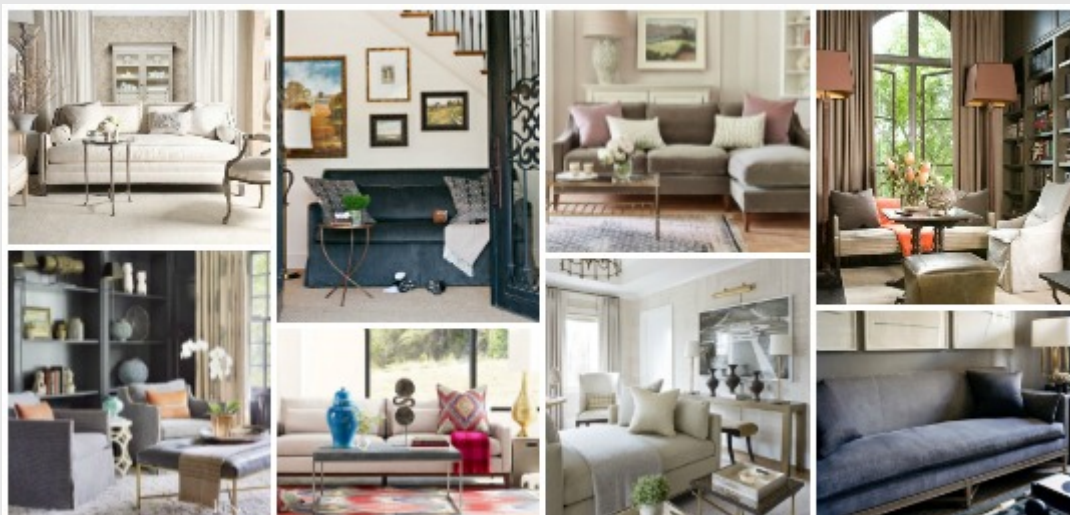
## PEARLS OF WISDOM

As much as I love designing homes, I'm really into the business side of my work, too, so I recently spent three days in New York with The Design Trust Ltd., absorbing information and sharing tips of the trade with my fellow members. Design Trust is a national think tank of 21 designers working to make the design experience better for our clients, vendors and ourselves. It was great to be with old friends and learn new things, but I'm always glad to be back in the studio, brainstorming with my team!

## HERE'S AN IDEA

I know it's reeeaaaly early, but if you've got your 2017 calendar, make a note to attend next October's "Chicago Ideas Week." This blockbuster event is packed with smart people sharing their wisdom on an exciting range of topics. In the lineup this year was Jessie Itzler, co-founder of Marquis Jet, offering its members access to private jets. I loved what he said about creativity and his thought-provoking questions: "If no one taught you how to do your job, how would you do it?" I liked this advice, too - "You need to get comfortable being uncomfortable. That is how you become creative." Now there's a good idea.

## GET THE LOOK



From upper left photos courtesy of: schreitershome.com, homebunch.com, sofa.com, thefrenchtangerine.com, luxesource.com, kravet.com, ompossiblychicdc.blogspot.com, paloma81.blogspot.com

## SLIMMER, TRIMMER FURNISHINGS

One of the biggest trends in the housing market is smaller homes, fueled on two major fronts - a flood of boomers who are downsizing for retirement and millennials who prefer small, urban spaces, or don't want/ can't afford a huge mortgage on a McMansion. So it's no surprise that furniture manufacturers are putting some of their sofas and chairs on a strict diet so they'll fit into their new skinny jeans, so to speak! I'm happy to report that going slimmer doesn't mean sacrificing style or comfort. I "test-drove" some of these down-scaled pieces from one vendor to another and they are consistently comfortable and attractive. Instead of over-stuffed cushions and arms these pieces look like they have been working out with a trainer - tight back cushions and more delicate legs and arms, too. Just make sure you don't over-feed them.

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## SWEET TIP



*From left photos courtesy of: sarahsarna.com, zsazsabellagio.blogspot.com, owensanddavis.com*

## MIX MATERIALS AND TEXTURES

For a professional look at home, be sure to mix materials and textures in the same space, especially when purchasing cocktail and end tables. Matching sets of furniture are not as interesting or creative as pieces that work together but aren't clones. I saw so many options at High Point in glass, resin, acrylic, shagreen, leather, fabric, stone, metal, and of course wood. Try mixing a leather-wrapped cocktail table with a wood chest that has brass pulls. Or try a rustic wood block coffee table with shagreen end tables in a contemporary, curvy shape, finished with a brass base. Crystal-clear acrylic tables can partner with so many other materials, too. Then sit back and wait for the compliments to pour in!

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UNTIL NEXT TIME!

susan



LET'S CONNECT

Studio

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## CARE TO SHARE?

*Most of our clients come from referrals. Please tell a friend about our studio and share my email address with them. [susan@sweetpeas-inspired.com](mailto:susan@sweetpeas-inspired.com)*

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