

Decorating Trends

It's All About Black And White

(NAPSA)—What's black and white and popular all over? Just about everything—from sweaters to sofas and everything in between. Contrast is cool and black and white is hot, decorators declare.

An elegant change for rooms full of color, black-and-white furnishings provide visual balance and are equally capable of acting as the focal point or the background. From contemporary to traditional styles, this classic color combination is versatile and can be used as an overall theme or just for dramatic accent. What's more, while all-white was once reserved strictly for upper-end furnishings, high-performance fabrics are making this hue practical—and popular—at upper-middle and middle-price points, as well.

This dynamic color duo can be seen in a variety of prints and textures. Black-and-white checks, polka dots and houndstooth patterns have become increasingly



Ebony and ivory are together in perfect harmony in furnishings such as this dazzling zebra chest by Laneventure, about \$1,969.

popular accent fabrics. Animal motifs such as zebra stripes and cowhides in this stark combination are making waves as well.

Taking cues from the worlds of fashion, photography and home accents, home product designers are embracing the stylish sensibilities of black and white. "The black-and-white color palette is a major influence in today's furniture," says Jackie Hirschhaut, vice president of the American Home Furnishings Alliance, the largest association of home furnishings companies in the world.

"The combination of black and white is timeless, enduring and essential. It's one of the few key trends that transcends furniture style and price point."

Before you go out to buy your new black-and-white furniture or accessories, however, there are a few things you should consider:

- First, identify your personal style. Is it casual, contemporary, country, traditional or eclectic? Look at how your wardrobe, your car, your magazines and favorite movies reflect your personality.

- Next, examine your preferences. Make a list of your favorite colors, textures and patterns. Do you prefer bold colors or pastels? Solids, stripes or plaids? Soft, light fabric covers or rich tapestries?

- Also, consider your lifestyle. Do you plan to have a family or already have children? Pets? Will you move soon?

- Prioritize your purchases. Decide what pieces you want or need most. Buy those first and build the room around them.

- Determine your budget. You



The rectangular geometry of this leather chair lends itself to contrasting buttons and black welt detail by American Leather, about \$2,520.

can find good values that suit your style in any price category.

- Budget your time to suit your shopping style. Do you enjoy doing lots of research and browsing or are you an on-the-spot buyer? Shopping for furniture can be as simple or as involved as you want.

- Explore available resources. Look to home programs, books, magazines, catalogs, Web sites and furniture showrooms to provide inspiration. Keep a scrapbook of furniture styles you like.

- Take advantage of free services. Many furniture stores offer such benefits as interior design consulting, room-planning guides and product brochures.

- Trust your own judgment. Buy what you like and don't be afraid to be bold or different.

- Finally, have fun and enjoy the process. Furnishing your home to express your personal style can be one of life's enduring pleasures.

For more information, visit www.findyourfurniture.com.