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The Art of Home: Floral patterns are the new flower power



Kathleen DiPaolo in her Newport Beach home. (Don Leach / Daily Pilot)

By KATHLEEN LUPPI

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The sun is out, produce is at the peak of freshness and bold blooms offer a range of vibrant colors.

Bring on the bouquets.

And I'm not just talking real flowers to dress up your dining room table, but also floral prints.

The petal power trend started on the spring 2015 runways, with metallic blooms at Louis Vuitton and floral applique by Simone Rocha. The floral patterns blossomed into home decor in the form of fabrics, art, accessories and tableware. With the current popularity of pastels and more saturated colors, floral patterns are being considered the perfect pairing with geometric-inspired prints.

And interior designer Kathleen DiPaolo assures that the emerging trend has a "no rules" attitude, allowing for the mixing of modern botanicals with large abstract patterns.

"No one wants to think of florals as something found in a grandmother's house," DiPaolo said in her family's Newport Beach cottage, built in 1952. "You want it to feel fresh and young. It's like using antiques. You add layers of the old and new."

The wife and mother of three, who runs Kathleen DiPaolo Designs at Stonemill Design Center in Costa Mesa, has flipped over 300 homes in Los Angeles, Orange County and San Francisco. Today, she updates clients' properties and conducts major renovations.

DiPaolo, who reconfigured her family's cottage and furnished it with artwork and finishes from her global travels, continues to fly around the world, visiting Hong Kong, India and Morocco to seek inspiration from colors, textiles and architecture for her clients' homes.

Florals, she said, are about balancing the masculine and feminine elements in a home.

The easiest way to achieve the look is with floral fabric that can be used to upholster just a pillow or two, she said.

Think big, bold prints, bright colors and contemporary designs to keep the decor current. But be careful not to overdo it.

“I don’t like to have the same scale and patterns, because if they’re all like this, it would be too matchy,” DiPaolo said. “Make it a mix, but when in doubt, just use one.”

Think art. Take samples of floral wallpaper and put them in small or large frames for positioning in a kitchen nook, bookcase or cabinet, she suggested.

Florals don’t have to remain indoors. Pillows with large patterns can accessorize patio furniture, DiPaolo said. Pair one with a second pillow depicting stripes or checks for a masculine accent.

Using pieces depicting geometric patterns and clean lines is a good way to balance florals to avoid making a space look outdated, said DiPaolo, who hunts for vintage floral objects at auctions and estate sales.

The florals used in her home, she said, are a mix of her antique finds and new designs from Laura Ashley, a British fashion label that dominated American decorating and clothing up until the late 1990s.

With changes in scale, tweaks in colors and refreshing new patterns, Laura Ashley revitalized its brand, which after more than 60 years has made a comeback with an online presence showcasing its latest designs.

“English florals have always enjoyed a presence in home design, witnessed by the many British brands who are famous for their florals,” said Laura Ashley President Penne Cairoli. “As a global brand, it is important that we continually pull from our history but do it in new and fresh ways that appeal to today’s customer.”

Cairoli said the company’s signature florals have evolved to oversized designs. The design team pulled designs from the brand’s archives and reworked the formats, adjusting sizes and

prints.

“Emma,” a floral design that was inspired by a contemporary artwork influenced by 1930s modernism, was first launched in 1984 as a fashion print. The pattern was then used as a home furnishing design two years later, but has since been relaunched in new shades of amethyst, camomile and duck egg blue.

Updated or not, florals can breathe new life into antiques, DiPaolo said, especially with real flowers placed on a center or side table, above a fireplace or on consoles and cabinets.

“You have to have something that has a soul and character, because that will make you happy,” DiPaolo said. “And I want someone to come home and feel happy.”