

# WAKE Living



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Spring 2019





# Designing for 2019

Simple Designs, Dynamic Colors  
& Decorating with Light BY HEATHER LEAH

PHOTO: WHITNEY FURNITURE GALLERIES

Modern decor trends vary based on individual taste, but 2019's styles have a few common threads: it's all about clean design, devised to be functional, breathable, and livable. Look for soft lines, neutral colors on enduring performance fabrics, open spaces punctuated by minimalist elements, and using natural light as a design component. The overall priority is functionality, with the goal of using function to compose an impactful design element.

"Design and architecture are following shifts in our culture and everyday life. We're building design concepts around individuals," says Brittany Roux, co-founder and owner of Roux MacNeill Studio in Raleigh. "If there are spaces that feel too fragile to live in, then you need to change it."

Regardless of your personal aesthetic—farmhouse, industrial, contemporary, or traditional—the overall goal is still very similar. Open, organic, minimalist design is in vogue. To explore how this is trending, I spoke with local interior

designers who serve a wide spectrum of demographics.

## CULTURAL SHIFTS IN MODERN DESIGN

I grew up in grandma's house, with heavy curtains and wafting dust, intricately embellished stitching on rose-colored cushions, and delicate crushed velvet on dark antique wood. While somehow these fragile pieces of vintage decor survived the generations, modern trends have come a long way in the past 80 years.

"Entertainment is shaping the way places look," says Robert MacNeill, co-owner of Roux MacNeill Studio. Instead of small, closed rooms, newer homes typically offer open-concept floor plans which allow for larger gatherings. This architectural shift altered home decor, helping push the contemporary trend of minimalist, well-lit spaces with neutral colors.

Older homes with separate rooms had a clear divide between spaces, allowing for different color schemes in each space. But in

open homes, neutral colors remain popular, as stark, sudden color changes could jumble the overall layout. "People are often confused on how to divide spaces in open concept homes. You want to keep everything cohesive, but still indicate separate rooms," says Laura Forrest, an experienced designer at Whitley Furniture Galleries.

True to the form-creates-function style, Forrest suggests dividing a room into conversation pits. Typically, at parties or gatherings, people break up into groups. "Let your room design help make it natural for people to break into conversations by indicating a visual barrier," says Forrest. "Perhaps a couch, a different rug, or a slight change in paint colors."

"For many of our clients, who live in urban lofts or near downtown Raleigh, going out is the new staying in. And when people do host gatherings, they're informal," says Roux. "Architects and designers respond by removing formal dining rooms, and instead making space for home offices or lounges."



Overall, lifestyle changes have shaped trends for 2019. We're less formal, and more desiring of organic, functional spaces that still look beautiful and comfortable. But how do you create a functional, contemporary design? While differing demographics have diverging style preferences, there are a few universal design elements trending in this era of functional home decor.

### COLOR YOUR WORLD

Neutral colors and greys are a fundamental trend that has lasted for at least five years. Most designers agree that clients often want a safe, neutral baseline color. Even if you love bold teal with orange accents, that vibrant color combination may not compliment your personal aesthetic in a few years. In an era where functionality is key, it's smarter shopping to buy clean, neutral colors—a soft beige, dove grey or shale—on your larger furniture pieces, then dress them up with less expensive accents.

Building a neutral backdrop ultimately allows more versatility, as you can interchange bolder colors on pillows, lamps, rugs, and blankets whenever the whim strikes. This year's colors are really bold, perfect for adding vibrancy to a beige room. According to Forrest, "Paint companies like Sherwin Williams and Pantone are showing emerald greens, deep forest green, eggplant purple, and saturated fuchsia."

"People in Raleigh are ready for color and we give it to them! We see our clients going for dramatic, moody colors," says Roux. "I've seen dramatic combinations, like a dynamic citron yellow paired with a deep navy blue or aqua," says MacNeill.

If you prefer a softer, peachy spring and summer look, go with terra cotta and powdery blushes, which look especially warm when paired with a stylish floral motif. These color splashes are perfect for a pillow, wall art, or perhaps even painted on built-ins. "Accent walls, however, are no longer trending," says Forrest. Instead, clean lines and simplicity rule 2019.

### PERFORMANCE, STAIN-RESISTANT FABRIC

"Home should make you happy!" says Roux. "A room should have a general sense

of ease, so designers encourage choosing items that are easy to maintain." One huge trend is stain-resistant fabric. MacNeill says they've incorporated it into every project they've done.

Most furniture manufacturers have some form of performance fabrics, so having functional designs doesn't have to limit your style. "Many of our performance furniture pieces are made for high-traffic areas. They can handle wear and tear," says Forrest.

Whether you live in a suburban home with three kids, or you're raising a dog in a trendy urban loft overlooking downtown, this trend crosses all demographics. "Everyone deals with stains. Whether you have kids tracking in mud or friends spilling red wine," says MacNeill. These fabrics protect every lifestyle, and that's why they're hot.



### DAYLIGHTING

Updating window treatments is key to your overall look. "In the last couple of years, we haven't seen as many heavy, ornate designs," says Ted Browne, owner of Gotcha Covered Blind and Decorating Center. "Now, people want more simple panels, lighter fabrics, just a touch of softness around their windows to get rid of that hard edge." Simple, clean lines that allow more light are the rage. Trade out those linear, sterile two-inch blinds which often create a harsh glare for a softer window covering. Fabric treatments create ambient lighting and diffuse the glare, creating a gentler form of natural light.

"Light comes in and plays with that fabric and creates some cool things inside of your space," says Browne. This process, called daylighting, is a simple way to



“Particularly in houses with huge walls, this can make a good interest piece,” she says.

Textured wallpaper is also making a resurgence. Anaglypta, a textured paper with swirling and spiraling patterns, can be painted to create texture and add interest to walls. This kind of decor was popular in powder rooms and bedrooms of the late 1800s, and is now making an appearance in more modern homes.

While most antique rugs can be hundreds of years old and quite pricey, this antiqued look is also currently in style. It’s especially popular with millennials who want something that looks like it’s been handed down to them. The blending of old and new is a trendy way to bring antiques back to life and create an eclectic look for your home.

## INVEST IN QUALITY

It seems like only purchasing “items you love” would be a no-brainer. But it’s very easy to get caught up in the functionality and forget that style is also a part of function. Aside from being easy to maintain, your home decor should make your home feel comfortable and relaxed. That’s why it’s important to invest in quality items when they catch your eye.

“A family with three kids and two dogs will shy away from purchasing expensive, quality items,” says Forrest. “They’ll often, for example, avoid buying a nice rug. However, cheaper rugs can’t stand up to regular maintenance and cleaning. The glue will break down.” She suggests investing in a quality piece. “Look at

antique rugs—they’ve lasted generations, because they’re built to endure.”

Likewise, someone with young children may look to purchase less expensive furniture with descriptors like ‘high-performance,’ ‘functional,’ and ‘durable.’ But just because an item is function-friendly doesn’t mean you have to sacrifice your sense of style. “No one should settle for furniture items they don’t totally love,” says Roux. “We can do a performance piece in a trendy, edgy shape, or pick a bold color on a treated fabric. We can all choose items and shapes we love.”

## ASK THE PROFESSIONALS

Whenever a client visits Whitley Furniture Galleries, Forrest recommends getting the guidance of a professional designer. “It’s worth it to get that advice,” she says. “It’ll save you a lot of headaches.” A designer can help you pick items, encourage you to step outside of your comfort zone to get that one bold item that really pops, and even help with basics like space measuring. It’s easy to stay too safe in your design choices, and in trying too hard to avoid making a mistake, you end up with a bland palette.

“Once I had a client, and she said she loved animal prints, but she was nervous about being too bold. I pulled out a fabric of cheetah print in a soft grey, and I suggested putting it on top of the ottoman. She was nervous about making such a permanent pop piece. But in the end, she trusted me, and you know what? It’s her favorite piece,” says Forrest.

Having a professional guide you might be the difference between picking too many contrasting colors, or picking that one unique statement piece that pulls your whole room together. Take a risk. You should always have at least one piece that just makes you smile. 🍷

*Heather Leah is a fifth generation North Carolinian who loves exploring all the nooks, crannies, and mountaintops of her state. Whether tasting food at a historic Southern mom and pop kitchen, or drinking coffee at the trendiest new hot spot, she’s passionate about helping readers discover the Carolinas through her storytelling. She’s appeared on CMT’s Southbound, writes for ABC11 WTVD, and manages a local adventure website called Candid Slice.*

