



Styling revolution pts carpet center stage

Carpet and rugs have stepped to center stage as the focal point for interior design.

Today's distinctive textures and patterns are pushing carpet and rugs to the forefront as an integral focus of an overall design scheme rather than as a neutral backdrop for other furnishings.

"Today's shopper is looking for freshness and innovation," said Pam O'Toole, carpet fashion coordinator for Shaw Industries. "The perception of carpet is changing as more styling options with unique textures, patterns and colors are available. There are literally thousands of different 'looks' on the market today."

Carpet with texture or soft patterns offers more fashion appeal and distinctive styling. Layered color and texture mark a major shift in developing unique products for the future. Texture and pattern are most popular in style because they minimize soil and vacuum marks.

"When combined with chenille and velvet fabrics, styles like nubby loops and tonal patterns bring softness and comfort to the home," said O'Toole.

Distinctive applied and woven patterns are gaining a wider audience. Soft layered patterns in designs of leaves, trellises and flowers are im-

portant because they are organic shapes that coordinate easily with other interior patterns. Today's weaving technology allows woven patterns to be rendered economically.

Multicolored loops, cut/loop surfaces and Berber-flecked styles feature strong colors borrowed from commercial palettes that become flecks or accent tufts. Traditional saxonomies and textured saxonomies offer the broadest selection of colors for consumers who prefer to make a "wall-to-wall color statement."

Neutral carpet doesn't have to be "middle of the road." While some consumers are choosing more "daring" carpet and rugs with floral, plaid, even houndstooth patterns, neutral carpet, especially Berber, is still a popular decorative floor covering choice. However, unlike the more simple, subdued Berbers of the early '90s, traditionally neutral carpet is stepping out with more pizzazz.

The carpet styles of today have evolved to be in keeping with consumers' interest in neutral design while addressing their growing love for texture and pattern. These modern textures are allowing for height variation and sculptured effects once only associated with plush or velvet carpet.

For those not comfortable choosing a bold, colorful floor pattern, today's Berbers can provide visual interest underfoot with more extreme differences in pile cut and thicker, deeper loop textures. Geometric squares featured at multiple levels, diamond shapes and even waves create surfaces that are pleasing to the eye and softer than ever.

And color does not have to be so subtle to still be neutral. Many carpet manufacturers are producing Berbers and sisal look-alikes with the added flair of color sprinkled against a neutral background to add more dimension and help mask spots and spills. Carpet even is being flecked with many different colors to create a tweed-like appearance that is practical yet stylish. These flecks of color are not only being found in tan, beige and cream backgrounds, but also in "new neutrals" such as soft greens, pale yellows and shades of blue.

Soft, liveable, comfortable, texture - the decorating focus for today

Americans, at last, are not primarily thinking about resale value in their homes when they decorate. We are yearning for simplicity and casualness and want to make our homes

softer and more livable and to express our own individuality in color and texture. This yearning will translate into both neutral colors for a calming effect, and into strong accents of red, blue, and purple. It will also translate into heavier textures for casual looks to counterbalance smooth textures on other surfaces.

Because carpet is a foundation of decorating, it is an important consideration in the overall scheme of color and texture. Carpet can be one of the easiest ways to personalize an environment, and yet, it can still be flexible and versatile, allowing a gentle blending with fabrics and other surfaces. Its color can be a neutral foundation or a vibrant focal point. Neutral beige can have a yellow or pink tint and blend with many fabrics. A more vibrant color, such as the blues or greens of water and the environment, can tie together many different decorating styles and be an exciting personal statement.

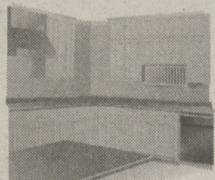
Currently, neutrals may appear as a peach or other softened ethnic skin tones, such as browned orange. "Interest in colors of various skin tones is evidence of increased acceptance of cultural blending resulting from glob

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