



OUT WITH THE NEW, IN WITH THE OLD

WRITTEN BY: BECCA NELSON SANKEY | PHOTOS COURTESY OF:

Old trends always seem to make a comeback, and that is the case with bathrooms, which are becoming less of an afterthought in home interior design. Retro and mid-century modern elements are making a comeback, with décor elements in shades of avocado green, mustard, and rust—colors typically associated with the ‘70s—and even wallpaper regaining popularity. It might seem counterintuitive to revive an outdated space with old styles, but that is precisely what Heidi Houdek, founder and owner of Modern Hippie Design Studio in Austin, is seeing in her interior design work. “I’m definitely seeing a lot of color—definitely a nod back to the ‘70s, which is a personal favorite of mine,” Houdek said. “All of those colors are beautiful, but they’re also what we think of as stereotypical ugly colors. I feel like I’m seeing all the [colors from] my kitchen growing up.”

Kitchens and bathrooms have become the focus of remodeling or redesign projects because they offer the most bang for one’s buck if eventually selling the home is a consideration. Houdek said those rooms also tend to be the most outdated. “If you can change just those spaces, it makes a huge difference in the feel of a house,” she said.

Revamping your bathroom or bathrooms does not have to break the bank, either. “If you have outdated cabinets, the yellow-orangey oak, paint them; it’s an easy fix,” Houdek said. “Also, I’ve seen a ton of lime wash on the walls lately, and I love that. It’s like a watered-down paint, and you can put it over any color, but I love grey. It dries to a dull tone that looks like concrete, so it creates a spa look in the bathroom, like what you would see if you were to go to Tulum, Mexico. It’s very earthy and natural and kind of timeless.”



Houdek said she is a firm believer that homeowners should go with whatever feels right to them in terms of design, regardless of whether it is trendy.



Plants can also add a sense of calm to a bathroom. “I love plants in any room,” Houdek said. “Bathrooms can be tricky because you don’t always have a ton of light, but succulents and snake plants do well in low-lit places. You have to pick something that doesn’t need a lot of sunlight.”

Runner rugs, typically reserved for foyers or hallways, are also showing up in bathrooms. “They’ve come a long way with bathmats, where they’re more of a rug [with] different patterns, and incorporating those makes a bathroom space feel more elevated,” she said.

Houdek said she is a firm believer that homeowners should go with whatever feels right to them in terms of design, regardless of whether it is trendy. Still, large, frameless mirrors glued to the wall and stretched across the length of the vanity are an immediate indicator that a bathroom has not seen an update. “It dates it and makes it feel more builder-grade,” she said. “That’s really an easy fix to pull those down along with the traditional light fixture that goes above those.” Houdek prefers a 24-inch by 26-inch rectangular-shaped mirror above his and hers sinks; if those sinks are close in proximity. Pendant lights work well when adding light between mirrors or the use of three vertical light fixtures is pleasing as well. “And again, wallpaper is great for covering up with you took down,” reminds Houdek.

Avoid placing wallpaper above bathtubs or close to showers where steam can affect how they stick and do not go the DIY route. “I would definitely hire someone to do wallpaper,” Houdek said. “I’m not a fan of the stick-on, removable wallpaper. I feel like it tends to have a sticker-type finish, and it creases easily.” Houdek recommended wallpapering one wall instead of the whole room. “You can almost never go

wrong with doing an accent wall in the space,” she said.

Houdek’s team combined the old with the modern in one redesign by mixing hardware. “Let’s say you have a brushed nickel faucet, and you don’t want to scrap it, but you want to incorporate brass,” she said, “you can get hardware that has both in it, so it looks intentional instead of adding something that does not necessarily flow with what you have.”

Houdek advised a more extensive overhaul on bathrooms from homes built or decorated about fifteen years ago, when the Texas Tuscan style was trending. Bathrooms from that time tend to have granite countertops, travertine tile floors in an orange tinge, and curvy, bronze light fixtures. “That’s the most common thing we get that we’re trying to adjust lately,” she said.

For new builds or complete bathroom overhauls, go green. “We see green walls. Green cabinets are very popular, and even green quartz is starting to become a trend. Mixing and matching the cabinets is popular too; if you have green on the bottom, do white on the top,” Houdek said. Tile in the shower can be mixed as well. For example, a hexagon tile pattern can be incorporated with another shape. “Textured tiles are another example of the intentionally unintentional trend, with pieces that have an uneven finish and clay that does not go together seamlessly and might not even be the exact same color because of how it is glazed and fired in the kiln,” she said.

Bathrooms are no longer tucked away, nondescript spaces. Whether your revamp is simple or large-scale, do not be afraid to incorporate retro designs and elements that make these rooms statement pieces all on their own.

