

HOME DESIGN

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A FINE ROMANCE

SIX TRADITIONS UPDATED

WHERE TO SHOP TO GET THE LOOK

AT HOME WITH NORTH POND'S BRUCE SHERMAN

WHAT THE PROS KNOW

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DESIGNERS, ARCHITECTS TELL US HOW TO REKINDLE AN OLD FLAME

There's a new romance in the air, a softening of traditional design that's blended with a hefty dose of modernism and creativity. We asked design professionals coast-to-coast how they're incorporating this fresh take on romance. Their edited responses go far beyond scented candles, chintz fabrics, lacy pillows and white upholstery, all of which have been used—and still can be—to create a romantic atmosphere. These are newer, fresher ideas that better match today's pared-down, faster-paced lifestyle. So take your pick, pop the bubbly and turn down the lights. Some things never change.

FLORAL RUG DESIGNS

Lynn Basa, owner, Basa Design, rug and tap-
stry weaver, Chicago. Look for rugs with floral
patterns. My Flower Mill series of silk and wool
tapestries—Gladiolus, Euphoria, and Spurge—
are probably the most consciously romantic
pieces I've done. I wanted to create a visual walk
through a garden of abstract, modernistic flow-
ers without using traditional, realistic florals.
The palette is a combination of soft, floating
shapes in the background to create a feeling of
dreamy distance and bright shocks of color in
the foreground—like what you'd see in a flower
garden that has become slightly overgrown.

ORIENTAL RUGS AND SUBDUED FABRICS

Heather Wells, owner, Heather G. Wells Ltd.,
design firm, Chicago and Boston. Narrow your
range of colors. Traditional Fortuny fabrics and
an antique Oriental rug take on a serene, modern
and romantic mood when paired with fabrics of
pale gray, smoky blue and linen white. Combine
traditional detailing with modern furniture
shapes. A fabric border applied at the base of
cube ottomans dresses them up. Mix textures.
Luxurious finishes of cashmere, limestone and
gold and silver leaf can be combined with natural
linen textures and a sisal rug for romance. Less is
not always more, so don't forget the accessories:
layers of comfortable pillows, piles of reading
books and fresh flowers.

SCANDINAVIAN FURNITURE

Andrew Wilder, president, Svenska Möbler, furni-
ture gallery and design firm, Chicago. Furniture on
the cusp of traditional and contemporary design
from Scandinavia, mixed with bold wall colors
such as saturated yellows and mid-century-
inspired blues to take things out of a traditional
context. We want clients to add contemporary

or traditional elements to give their spaces
their own take.

PALE TO HOT, HOT COLORS

Jeffrey Bilhuber, owner, Jeffrey Bilhuber &
Associates, design firm, New York, and author
of "Jeffrey Bilhuber's Basics: Expert Solutions
for Designs for the House of Your Dreams"
(Rizzoli, \$39). Color. When you ask clients
for their favorite colors the subject gets them
excited, talking and choosing. But there's little
agreement about what's the most romantic color.
Some prefer soft parchments and celadons; oth-
ers go for hot vermilions and pistachios.

CRYSTAL AND BEADED CHANDELIERS

Sheila Bridges, owner and president, Sheila
Bridges Design Inc., design firm, New York. A
modern palette of browns paired with pale blues
or pinks to give a softer, more sensual feeling.
Upholster a modern club chair in dark, espresso
brown velvet, but accent it with a feminine
pink mohair throw or silk pillow. Use beaded
or crystal chandeliers in places you wouldn't
necessarily expect them, such as bathrooms.
The combination of sunlight or candlelight and
water reflected in the crystals creates a soothing,
relaxing place to unwind.

SPECIALIZED DIMMERS

Daniel Du Boy, president, Daniel Du Boy Interior
Design Inc., design firm, Chicago. Specialized
dimming systems, which control light sources
throughout a room. Lutron makes systems
called Radio RA and Graphik Eye, where light-
ing scenes are pre-programmed. At the touch of
a button, homeowners can create an ambiance
geared for cocktails or dinner. One of my prefer-
ences is to set one scene so that the light level
emulates candlelight.



Above: From Heather Wells dressed-up ottomans and of gray, smoky blue and Left: Sheila Bridges mixes and pale blues



Above: Lynn Basa's "Euphorbia" rug. Right: Svenska Möbler's 1940s wingback sofa. Below: Jeffrey Bilhuber's softened color palette

