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UPDATES FOR AT-HOME HAPPINESS

Reimagining spaces for the new normal.

BY JOAN TAPPER

Most people have been looking at their own four walls much more than usual for almost a year. One happy result? Interior designers have thought about related lifestyle trends and concerns and come up with innovative and stylish ways to improve everyday life—both physically and mentally. Here are a few observations from local design pros.

An Imagination-Igniting Kids' Space

With remote teaching a fact of life, it's an opportune time to make sure that a kid's room is conducive to learning. Start with what's all around them. "I love this wallpaper," says Christine Alderman, principal at **Alderman Bushé Interiors** (aldermanbusheinteriors.com), of the City Maps pattern from York Wallcoverings' Rifle Paper Co. collection. She considers culture and traveling gifts to children. And having "the desk facing the window, looking out to trees and greenery, allows them to be creative and daydream," she says.

Alderman suggests a clean, clutter-free counter to promote focus and primary colors for a bright and happy feel. "A wood floor with a beautiful rug lowers the sound level," she says, "and having a desk light is essential, along with a comfy chair for reading." Another idea: add a couch made with Crypton fabrics. "They don't fade, and you can spill chocolate fudge on them," she says.





A Spot to Toast the Future

When clients wanted to upgrade a dated sunroom, Karen Shoener, CID, ASID, president of **Designs of the Interior** (interiordesignwestlake.com), came up with what she describes as “a petite lounge for small gatherings.” These days, she notes, “We need a fun place to go. We can’t travel. Why not feel like we’re in a hotel in London, Paris, or downtown L.A.?”

To mix intimacy with a bit of pizzazz, Shoener says, she “added mirrors to make the space seem larger and glass shelving with brass accents to give it glam.” For lighting she hung understated pendants of brushed brass and crystal. The back bar itself is flanked by black marble with brass inserts, while the freestanding bar, made of porcelain slabs, is open on both sides for comfortable seating. “The stools add a touch of playfulness with faux fur seats,” she says. “People want to lounge and have a glass of wine. Here you feel like you’re in a classy bar.”

A Private Haven

“Never has home meant so much,” says Caroline Thompson, co-owner of **Cabana Home** (cabanahome.com), who says that the pandemic has driven people “to find space and ways to become creative.” A quiet spot outdoors, Thompson says, “where you can be by yourself, is restorative.”

A spot under a tree is ideal. “It suggests shelter,” she says. Or set up under a porch or on a covered terrace. A seat from the Rush collection designed by Janus et Cie founder Janice Feldman “is like an overstuffed armchair,” Thompson says. “It conjures up ‘cozy.’ The beauty is that the materials can withstand the weather.” An ottoman can hold a tray for a drink, or place a small table, ceramic drum, or garden stool nearby and bring out pillows or a throw, she suggests. “You’re creating a resort in your own home,” Thompson says. “It purifies your mind.”



A Game Hub

“There’s a huge interest in games right now,” says Karen Shoener. “You can’t always watch TV or stream Netflix. You want to have a fun activity.” A billiards table became the focus of a client’s room that was adjacent to a great room with seating and a TV. “The table was custom made,” says Shoener. “We chose the finishes and the color of the felt—not green. One side of the table pulls out for the cues. Above it is a Kelly Wearstler fixture that’s like a hanging sculpture.” Against the wall Shoener placed two ledges for drinks and added leather-topped stools in front. “It feels like a little sports bar,” she says.

Another version of a game room might center on a Ping-Pong table. “The choice is driven by what the family wants,” says Shoener, “but the main message is to imagine something comfortable and relaxing. The space should be inviting and entertaining.”



TOP: COURTESY OF JANUS ET CIE; BOTTOM AND OPPOSITE: GARY MOSS



A Bathing Sanctuary

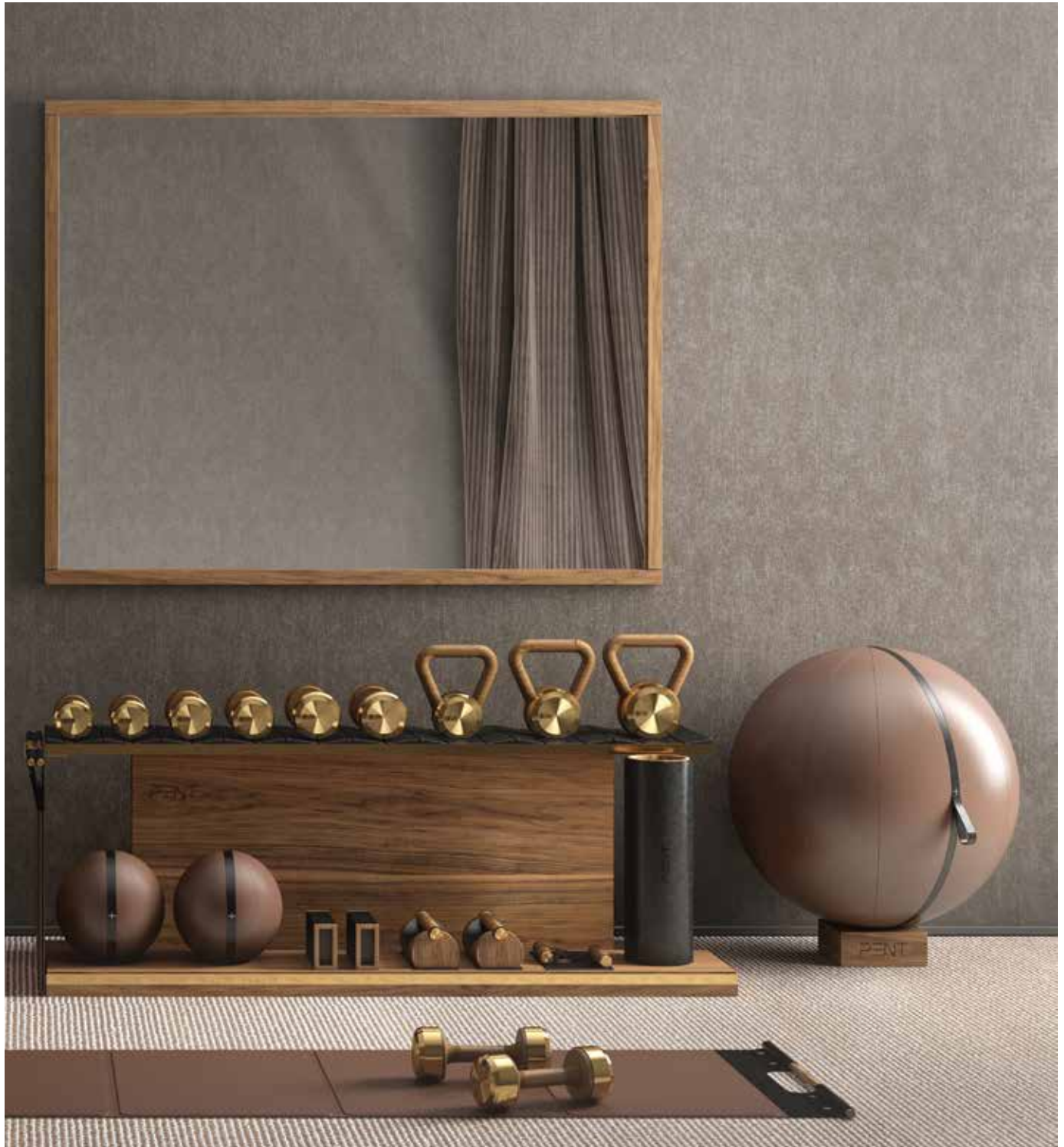
“More people are looking at homes as a refuge,” says Ariana Afshar Lovato, owner of **Honeycomb Home Design** (honeycombhomedesign.com). “They want their space to be calm and meditative.” As an example, she points to the Toto Flotation Tub, which is available at WDC Kitchen & Bath Center (wdcappliances.com) in Agoura Hills, in which bathers can feel completely weightless. “The tub is very ergonomic,” she says, “and it has LED light on the bottom that resembles candlelight. The tub looks like something in nature.”

It’s part of a trend toward spaces inspired by Earth, “like shower pans that resemble pebbles,” Lovato says. “And since people are not going to gym saunas, we’re putting in steam showers. You can put in aromatherapy or sync the shower with music.” Another way to add a feeling of serenity to a bathroom is with layers of light: “We use recessed cans, a vanity light for makeup, and a toe-kick light that allows you to see without turning on an overhead light,” says Lovato.

Room to Get Moving

So that we stay healthy and more resistant, “it’s important to keep our bodies in shape,” says Steve Thompson, co-owner of **Cabana Home** (cabanahome.com). During the pandemic “most people have just been exercising on a yoga mat,” he says. “Now a home gym with workout equipment is fast becoming a priority.”

The Pent (pentfitness.com) luxury fitness equipment system includes elegantly designed dumbbells, kettlebells, an exercise ball, a stretching roller, and push-up bars made from stainless steel and naturally antimicrobial walnut. Beyond choosing weight, however, there are other considerations, Thompson says. Is this a dedicated space or a corner of the living room? For sweat, think about a rubber mat or antimicrobial carpet on the floor. For good lighting, more than a desk lamp will be necessary. What about music? Wireless ear pods may be desirable if other people will be nearby. “A home gym can be a sanctuary for your physical and mental health,” he says.



A Place for Boomers or Boomerangers

The pandemic has meant that millennials who once had apartments of their own have moved back home. If the idea of young adults returning to their childhood bedrooms doesn't appeal, a prefabricated accessory dwelling unit (ADU), like the LightHouse LivingHome designed by Alchemy Architects for **Plant Prefab** (plantprefab.com) may be the answer.

"People are thinking of this a lot more," says Steve Glenn, founder of Plant Prefab. That includes boomer in-laws. "We've seen a significant increase in these units in the past year," Glenn says. "They're generally one bedroom, 400 to 800 square feet." Plant Prefab's ADUs are not only compact—including a kitchen, a bath, and living and sleeping spaces—but they are also efficient to build and sustainable. "Happy coincidences make this easier to do," says Glenn. "There are policy changes on the city and state level, startups are focused on designing them, and the vast majority of people who want one don't yet have one. There's a market."





An Indoor Garden

“A lot of people don’t want to go to the grocery store these days,” says Ariana Afshar Lovato. “We reimagined the way people could grow food in the kitchen.” The result was the Hydroponic Sliding Herb Wall, with panels that are not only plumbed for plants but also slide to hide a storage area.

The unit was part of Lovato’s envisioned kitchen of the future for *Seasonal Living Magazine’s* Virtual Designer Showhouse. The design also addressed concerns about health and safety. “Surfaces were easy to clean and antimicrobial,” says Lovato. “There were slab backsplashes and an island at 38 inches, easier for someone to stand at and prepare a meal. We used an induction cooktop, which has a minimalistic design, is kid friendly (since it doesn’t feel hot), and is easier to clean.” As for the finishes, Lovato opted for darker colors to create what she calls a “cocoon-like environment. It grounds you and gives you a feeling of security,” she says. ♦