

L A K E N O R M A N

# CURRENTS

Smoke blows  
into Birkdale

Kris Batchelor  
provides peace

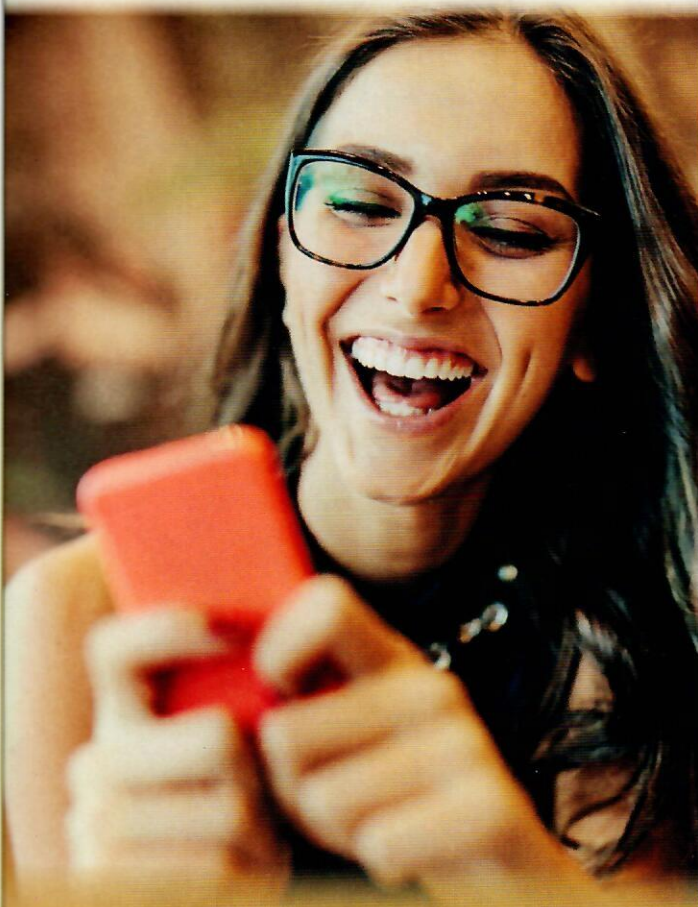
Kathleen Baker  
swims to win

# Home Base

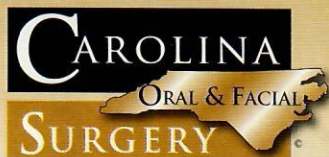
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# Marsala? Really?

The design world was a bit surprised when Pantone selected Marsala as its color of the year. We asked local interior designers what they think about it.

Marsala  
18-1438



Marsala being Pantone's color of the year for 2015 is a little unexpected but reminds me of a glass of fine wine, very rich and flavorful. There is lots of depth with this color and a lot of opportunity. Last year's color of the year was Radiant Orchid, so I think Pantone was trying to choose a color with more versatility, that appealed to both women and men.

Most clients are going very neutral with lots of gray and white in their homes, so to add a pop of Marsala in an antique rug, pillow or piece of original artwork would be stunning against a neutral backdrop. I also love the idea of pairing it with teal or cool blues. The key is going neutral with a pop of color, so when you're tired of it, it's as simple as switching out a few pillows, rug or throw, rather than having to replace big-ticket items.

**Jody Kurtz, Principal designer and owner of Kathryn Lilly Interiors, Davidson**



The importance of color changes in the fashion world is twofold. First, the consumer wants something fresh to contemplate and imagine in their lives, and second it is a bit of planned obsolescence in the industry. A slight under-tone change can make the wardrobe or home decor you chose last year look all of a sudden dated.

As any design professional, I embrace change and am excited by the new, however my position is to guide my clients to the timeless applications of what's available that enhances their home for the long-term.

Pantone has forged a new alliance with one of the top fabric manufacturers, Kravet. They have also started alliances with Sephora, and several other companies to insure that the color of the year is available and wide spread. While I love their drive, I believe that this also starts to move us into a world of sameness.

So, Marsala. It works great with the grey tones that have been strong over the past few years. It is warm and bold and the antithesis of the clear bright colors we have seen most recently paired with grey.

If this is your favorite color — embrace it. However, I believe that this is a great secondary or tertiary color choice. It brings depth and interest to a design. I would keep it to accessories and items that can be easily changed. The year goes by quickly, and the Pantone color for 2016 may be just as fun and new.

**Starr Miller, President & Principal Designer  
Starr Miller Interior Design, Cornelius**

It was love at first sight. Me, a soon-to-graduate young business professional relocating without furniture to Charlotte and her, a black leather couch displayed prominently on a High Point furniture showroom floor. As soon as my eyes met her fluffy arm rests and overstuffed cushions, I knew she was the one for me.

Ms. Black Leather Couch liked me right back and immediately sweet-talked me into buying her friend, Ms. Matching Black Leather Loveseat, too. I caved, and within the hour the three of us were heading to our new Lake Norman condo together.

Once home, it didn't take long for Ms. Black Leather Couch and Ms. Matching Black Leather Loveseat to become the center points around which I designed, finished and decorated my entire new condo. It was the 1990s, so I chose trendy black and white appliances to complement my living room pair. I selected black tile for the kitchen, front entry, bathrooms and closets and matched it with black speckled Berber carpet. Then I whitewashed every wall, door and trim board because Ms. Couch and Ms. Loveseat said it would make them stand out better. I chose black wooden chairs to offset a white dining room table. I even chose end tables and bookshelves based upon how their "noir and blanche" coordinated with Ms. Couch and Ms. Loveseat.

The final product was a stunning display of extreme visual contrast. So much so that at first glance after entering my bachelor pad, friends and family members regularly recoiled violently before wondering out loud if I had intentionally chosen to decorate for penguins and zebras instead of humans.

In hindsight, the place probably could have used more color.

So when I sold the Davidson condo and moved to a Cornelius house, the first thing I did was call a professional decorator. Having barely survived seven years of coming home to a black and white movie set for a home, and having grown sick of my friends showing up in black and white striped NFL referee jerseys whenever they came to raid my fridge, I felt it was the correct thing to do.

The lessons I learned helped me avoid failing on residence number two, and the lessons I learned while researching this piece can help the modern bachelor avoid failure, too.

Huntersville's Debi Thomas, an interior designer who works with Lake Norman clients (including guys), is someone I probably should have called decades earlier.

# R.I.P. Ms. Black Leather Couch

## There's more to function over form when it comes to interior design for guys

"Generally, men don't know what they want as far a décor as much as women do, so at first it's about helping them figure out where they want to go and articulating their ideas about what they want, before they make too many mistakes," Thomas tells me after I recount my story of black and white decorating hell.

"What I tell many people to do up front as they are beginning the process, no matter if it is a single room or an entire house, is to look through magazines and rip out pages of what they like, or take photos of rooms that appeal to them, then share them with me," she continues. "This helps me see so much — how much detail they like, if they like patterns and color, whether or not they are drawn to formal or casual or even if they like one certain look over another."

Then, Thomas says, it's all about helping the client envision the final product, educating him or her on different options, then working collectively until the last piece of furniture is set, curtains hung and plants placed.

Curtains? Plants? I never fathomed either in my condo.

I also called Cornelius' Starr Miller because I

had heard stories about her unique design approach and knew she had worked with a few prominent area males on their homes. Her advice made perfect sense. Miller told me that when working with guy clients, she first asks them about their hobbies, interests and lifestyle before beginning the process of educating them on looks, styles, options and price points. There is an art and science to the process, she says, and if done correctly, guys can design not only for function but also for form, as well.

"What I have found is that men like design if it makes sense to them," says Miller. "If it is going to be something like a lot of flowers, they will likely run. But if it is going to be more contrast, or a feel that is more manly, they feel comfortable in the process and may actually enjoy helping select fabrics, choose individual pieces and create a space they not only enjoy for themselves but are happy to share and show to friends."

Since nowhere in either conversation did the words black leather couch and matching loveseat enter, I have decided it just might be time for me to part ways with my first loves. I'm sorry my black leather ladies, it's time for you to go. ☹

