

# 2016 Aurora Award Winning Homes Reveal 5 Popular Elements of Modern-Day Style

by Karen LeBlanc

Today's codified interior design elements are texture and pattern in neutral and monochrome color palettes that add depth and drama to a space. Arguably, these elements of style arise from our current fixation on unadorned features; simple, clear forms; and clean-lined décor filtered through our regional lens.

The 35th Annual Aurora Award Winners, presented by the Southeast Building Conference and the Florida Home Builders Association, interpret this consumer penchant for simple, chic elegance in a mix of architectural styles and home interiors that embody unexpected finishes, softer geometric forms and minor flourishes that make each living space warm, inviting and entirely original.

Classic colors of white, gray and blue in new and nuanced hues define interiors while purely Mediterranean facades are less ubiquitous as a Florida version of modern architecture of flat roofs and walls of glass gains popularity. Unpretentious yet luxurious, these Aurora award-winning living spaces embody the latest looks in interior design and architectural style with five popular elements.



## THE STAIRCASE STEALS THE SCENE:

The staircase is no longer relegated to the back of the house or hidden from view. The latest floor plans place the staircase front and center as an architectural centerpiece. Phil Kean Design Group treats the staircase as a sculptural element in its multiple Aurora award-winning home, *Sloane Modern*. The two-story modern home draws curb appeal from its flat roof with varied heights and stucco and ledge-stone exterior. The Orlando custom home won: the 2016 Golden Aurora Award, Best of Show; Grand Aurora Award Winner of Best of State — Florida; Grand Aurora

Award Winner Best Custom Home 6,000-8,000 sq. ft.; Best Interior Merchandising of a Home \$1,000,000-\$2,000,000; Grand Aurora Award Winner Best Interior Detailing \$1,000,000-\$2,000,000.

Located in the home's foyer in front of a two-story glass wall to enhance curb appeal, the walnut staircase with glass balustrade and metal handrails stands in dramatic contrast against a feature wall of white ledgerstone. The second level from the landing appears to float adding visual intrigue.

Designed as a low-maintenance, "green" and smart home for empty nesters, all main living areas reside on the first floor



with guest en-suite bedrooms, a guest loft and large balcony on the second floor. The open, streamlined kitchen with high luster white acrylic cabinetry and a large pocketing pass-through window has a custom walnut counter-height table and a large kitchen island. Other features include a walk-in pantry and bar area that connects to the kitchen and faces the dining room.

The home also earned a Gold Certification from the National Green Building Standard certification program.

The staircase entry steals the scene in the *River House* in DeBary, an Aurora award-winner for Best Renovated House from the team of Hardwick General Contracting, Inc., The Design Studio and interior designer John McClain. The 3,800-sq.-ft. Southern-traditional home pays homage to its horse farming days and is located on five acres on the St. John's River.

The home features a floating circular staircase with a railing design that mimics the flow of the river behind the house. "We kept the staircase completely open underneath so that the view of the river was uninterrupted as you enter. The treads for the stairs are made of 100-year-old barn wood reclaimed from a Tennessee barn that was torn down," says John McClain, who describes the design theme as "Sophisticated Farmhouse."

"I wanted a design concept that held true to the home's surroundings while bringing in elegant, textural and sophisticated accents," John adds.



STEPHEN ALLEN

River House



Sloane  
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The Grand Award Winner for Best Interior Merchandising \$1,000,000-\$2,000,000, the Edge B model home in Alton, a Palm Beach Gardens community by Kolter Homes with interior design by Masterpiece Design Group, showcases a staircase of glass panels and dark wood handrails that plays off the dark wood cabinetry visible from the open-concept kitchen. Above the staircase, a cluster of sculptural light fixtures installed at various heights commands attention as the stairs lead to a loft and the master suite. Affiniti Architects also worked on the two-story, 4,127-sq.-ft. home, available in three architectural styles: island, contemporary and Spanish.





## MIXED TEXTURES CONVEY STYLE:

All of the award-winning homes draw style from a skillful interplay of luster and matte, rough and smooth, Mother Nature and man-made materials. Envision large format tiles that mimic marble, mixed with leather couches, shag fur rugs and mohair ottomans and you get an idea of how texture plays out in today's living spaces.

The Aurora award winner for Interior Detailing over \$2,000,000, *Blue Water Run* in Chuluota, built by DeVoe Custom Homes with interior detailing by Phil Kean Design Group, mixes various textures for its signature style. Phil Kean Design Group worked on the ceiling details, wall treatments, room elevations and specified materials, including tiles, paint colors, cabinetry, ceilings, surfaces and floors.

"*Blue Water Run* is an excellent example of the emerging trend of mixing styles,

finishes and interior architectural elements. Within this grand home is the use of the latest technology of porcelains from Italy used in a way that engages the architecture on the inside as well as flowing to the outside. The porcelain is juxtaposed against clear-coated Teak wood, celebrating its natural color. Extensive use of indirect lighting defines the interior architectural elements, which in turn make this dramatic lakefront home spectacular," says Rob Turner, president of interior design at Phil Kean Design Group.

Aurora award winner for Best Interior Detailing \$1,000,000-\$2,000,000, the Edge D model also in Alton, by Kolter Homes with Interior Design by Masterpiece Design Group, conveys modern Mediterranean glamour through an interplay of pattern, texture and color. "The interior detailing of the home reflects the latest trends by presenting a unique look, neutral colors, variety of styles, and eclectic

interior with emphasis on quality and detail," says Chris Popovich, senior designer, Masterpiece Design Group.

The 5,149-sq.-ft. home features coffered ceilings that complement greige wood-panel walls with decorative trim. Rough-hewn beams and wrought iron accents add a Mediterranean flair while large format marble-look tile floors accented with cappuccino oak inlays add luster to the living spaces. "The style is classic and sophisticated for a traditional buyer. It was achieved with the use of layered trims, and a combination of fabrics and materials, such as velvet, linens, sheers, mohair, metallic finishes and wallpaper," Chris says.

The dining alcove drinks in natural light through five oversized windows configured in a curved wall. The bonus room draws inspiration from travel motifs with a large world map mural and ceiling design featuring an oversized compass





and globe chandelier.

"My favorite part of the project is the bonus room. The built-in combination with the leather panels and compass ceiling detail are the reflection of the world travel feel," Chris adds.

A neutral color palette in the Aurora award winner for Best Custom Home 4,000-6,000 square feet, a Via Tuscany residence in Winter Park, also creates visual interest mixing texture and pattern. Designed by architects at B&A Design Studio, Inc. and built by Waizman and Waizman Builders, the home showcases textured wallpaper on accent walls, bold decorative light fixtures and bright abstract artwork. "We love to add a unique element into every home by creating a couple of custom light fixtures that cannot be found anywhere else," says interior designer Shawna Waizman, Waizman and Waizman Homes, LLC.



Edge D model home



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Mansfield



In the Laureate Park neighborhood at Lake Nona in Orlando, Minto Communities' Aurora award-winning model home, the *Mansfield*, is described as being "ahead of the curve in lifestyle as well as design style trends." Classic touches and detailing have cross generational appeal with innovative outdoor living spaces and unique architectural statements.

The two-story *Mansfield* single-family home, Grand Aurora award winner of Best Single Family Detached Home 2,500-2,999 sq. ft., is designed with the contemporary family in mind. The model home's "classical contemporary" styling features natural finishes such as wood, stone and marble in highly designed spaces with architectural moldings, high ceilings, clean lines and livable indoor and outdoor spaces.

According to the Minto design team, "Gray continues to be an important element throughout interior finishes including flooring, fabrics and woods. 'Gray plus one' color schemes are very popular and can be adapted to both contemporary and more traditional schemes."

Minto Communities Florida President Michael J. Belmont notes that, "Because of Laureate Park's location near the impressive and growing Lake Nona Medical City, we have experienced significant interest

from medical and other professionals as well as families and retirees. Minto homes at Laureate Park are designed to accommodate and appeal to this wide range of homebuyers."

Minto Communities also won Aurora awards for its *Mariner* model at Minto's Harbour Isle community in Bradenton and two models in The Isles of Collier Preserve community in Naples.

## RECLAIMED MATERIALS IN MODERN DESIGN:

Reclaimed materials, such as woods sourced from old barns, bring soul and character to contemporary-styled homes. Hardwick General Contracting and John McClain reinterpret rustic and repurposed materials to create their "Sophisticated Farmhouse" Aurora award winner. The *River House* gets its signature style from the modern treatment of classic materials.

"Today's homes exude a contemporary, simple elegance instead of overdone architecture and décor. We used reclaimed woods as contemporary design elements for flooring, stair treads, kitchen shelving, and ceiling detail in the master bath to add character to the home," says Greg Hardwick, president, Hardwick General Contracting Inc.

In the kitchen, a subway tile back wall with hand-glazed metallic finish showcases reclaimed walnut slabs with iron brackets. The master bathroom's punctuation point is a wall of reclaimed poplar wood that extends across the ceiling.

"I wanted to create a focal point in the room that was a bit traditional and a bit



River House

STEPHEN ALLEN



modern. The juxtaposition of wood against the modern rectangular tub and the octagonal brass pendant all work in harmony to create a visually interesting moment,” John says. A neutral color palette engages the senses with textured fabrics and metallic accents.

“Metallics, particularly brass and gold tones, are really big now in décor and you will see touches of these elements throughout the home. I have always loved geometric shapes. They are a big design trend at the moment so I incorporated them with light fixtures, bathroom wall tile/flooring and even accessories,” John adds.

The home theater is a stylistic departure from the rest of the home. “Our client wanted a proper theater where he could watch movies with his family, but also use it on a daily basis to simply watch TV. Aesthetically, we designed this room in a classic

Art Deco style with elaborate gilded woodwork and rich red accents,” John explains.

Certified as a Gold Level Green Home under the Florida Building Coalition, the *River House*, with its metal roof and front

and back porches, has many energy-efficient and sustainable features including LED lighting, Energy Star appliances, tankless gas water heaters, spray foam insulation and thicker Nichiha siding.



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## THERAPEUTIC BATHROOMS:

The latest master bathrooms create multisensory, therapeutic experiences with programmable colors, lights, sounds, smells and water pressure. Smart app connected tubs and showers, at the touch of a button, summon user-customized chromotherapy, acoustic and hydrotherapy features. Music can sync to the shower or tub via Bluetooth-enabled wireless speakers for a massage of sound-wave water vibrations. Chromotherapy can display color sequences that soothe or invigorate, while hydrotherapy uses digital thermostatic valves to control multiple shower sprays, including rain-heads with air induction technology, mixing air and water to produce large drenching droplets. Many modern showers also can morph into steam rooms while the latest luxury tubs have temperature-controlled heated back rests.

The Grand Aurora award winner Best Bath \$1,000,000-\$2,000,000 exemplifies much of this therapeutic technology in a master bath remodel of a Windermere home. Hardwick General Contracting, Inc. and interior designer John McClain also worked together on this award-winning project.



"It is the most technically advanced bathroom I have ever designed. Every aspect of this room, from lighting to the shower, can be controlled by a wall panel or phone app," John says. The shower and tub both have chromotherapy and aromatherapy features that use color, lighting and scents to create a serene ambiance.

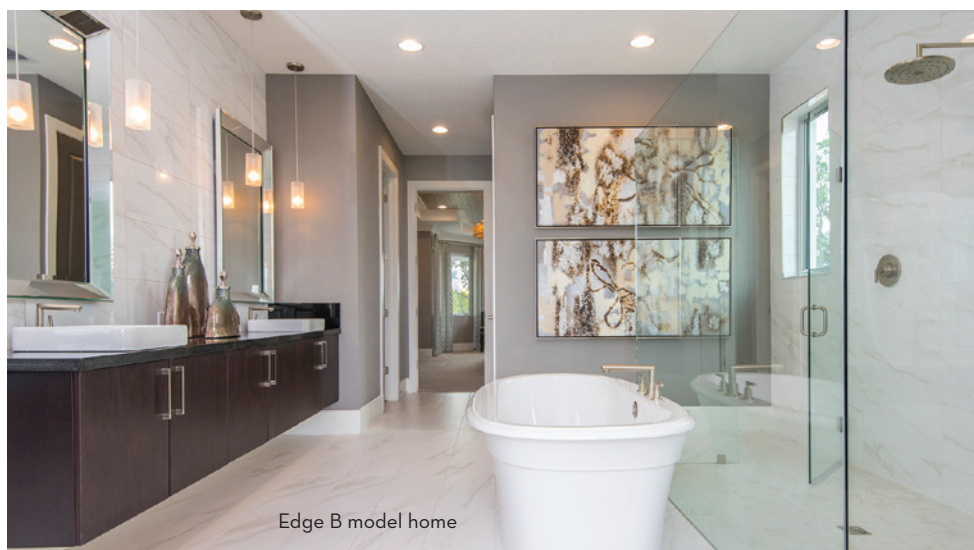
"We installed in the shower a new digital valve from Kohler controlled by a smart device app or a touchpad. The user can set the temperature and calibrate the multiple shower head sprays for customized hydrotherapy or steam therapy," explains Greg, whose team expanded on the home's existing Crestron automation system. "We added accent LED lights also

controlled by the smart device to complete the bathscape.

The remodeled shower was updated with Universal Design features including a curbless entry and linear drain, two of the latest trends in bath design.

The focal point of the master bath is the freestanding tub framed by an arched ceiling, tiled in a tungsten-colored glass mosaic and backlit with LED color-changing lighting. "The result is a modern and glamorous alcove that seems to envelope you as you bathe. To crown this jeweled area, I designed a custom crystal chandelier to softly light the tub and illuminate the tile," says John, who recently launched a new furniture line *Gilded Home* at High Point Furniture Market.

Edge B model home at Alton won the Grand Aurora Award for Best Bath \$500,000-\$1,000,000, built by Kolter Homes with interior design by Masterpiece Design Group. The master bath exemplifies a popular configuration that places the freestanding tub in front of a pass-through shower. The color palette of gray, white and dark brown reveals itself with large-format tile that mimics marble and extends up the wall of the seamless glass shower and backsplash of the floating double, dark wood vanity.





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Grand Aurora Best Kitchen award, Winter Park residence

MICHAEL LOWERY

## URBAN TRANSITIONAL KITCHENS

Open-concept kitchens become the social heart of the home replacing formal dining rooms as the central entertainment space. The latest looks have an urban, transitional vibe and artistic edge, a far cry from the Tuscan and French country styles just a few years ago.

“No matter what colors or styles are in, everyone wants an open space. It not only makes the home feel bigger, but it allows you to interact from anywhere, without really being sectioned off by walls or doors. It is truly amazing how 30-plus years ago, the living room/dining room was the focal point of every home and the way things were designed... more rooms meant more wealth. Yet, nowadays, it's just one big room with the ‘feel’ of rooms being created with furniture and décor,” notes interior architect Dylan Serra, part of the Cabinetry Creations, Inc. team, including lead designer Sandra Agurto who worked on the two Aurora award-winning kitchens.

The Grand Aurora Award for Best Kitchen over \$2,000,000 in a Winter Park home built by Liberty Development is a collaboration between the Cabinetry Creations, Inc. team and interior designer Abigail Rizor, Wolfe-Rizor Interiors.

“Today’s kitchens are part of the entertaining experience. The formal dining room has been abandoned and in its place is an eating space in the kitchen that is used for everyday family meals as well as entertaining friends,” Abigail explains.

“The owners of this home wanted a really bold space, but something that would not go out of trend in the next couple years or so. To accomplish this, we wanted the kitchen to feel more like pieces of art, rather than a flowy type of run-of-the-mill space. We ended up breaking up the kitchen into sections on three separate walls. With each way you turn, you have an area of the kitchen to really look at and admire its details. Each section is its own piece of art, but at its entirety, feels *complete*,” Dylan adds.

Sleek, soy-stained, flat black cabinets

crafted of rift-cut oak wood interplay with the dark wood floors while a copper hood visually commands attention blending tones and textures.

“At first, we could not find a door style that matched the vision we had for this space. Standard shaker doors felt too blah and any type of beading or intricacy in trim work automatically dated the look and feel of the kitchen. Being inspired after art, the kitchen had to be timeless. We contacted Elmwood, one of our favorite manufacturers, and worked with them on creating a custom-style and rail door to ‘paint’ our picture,” Dylan says.

“The client loves to cook and wanted top-of-the-line appliances using a Wolf range and Subzero refrigeration hidden behind the cabinet fronts along with the Subzero wine column,” Abigail adds.

The copper hood is anchored by a backsplash of Sandalus Quartzite with a leather finish and cues the home’s color scheme. Other interesting textural elements include an upholstered pantry door that leads to a small catering area with a coffee workstation. Four oversized ceramic light fixtures cast a soft glow over the breakfast table and the island table with a countertop of absolute black granite with a leather finish.

“The overall tones and textures ground the various materials and pull it together,” Dylan explains.

Texture teased out through simple materials defines the winning style of the Aurora Award for Best Kitchen \$1,000,000-\$2,000,000, a home in Winter Park built by E2 Homes with interior design by Kim Deddens, working with Cabinetry Creations, Inc. “The kitchen had to be





casual, functional and unfussy to meet the needs of this busy family, so there is no hiding its usage,” explains Kim, referring to the popular seamless look in kitchen design where appliances seem to disappear behind custom panels.

“The clients stressed the importance of obtaining rustic simplicity in an elegant form to create a well-balanced and ethereal space to live in. They also wanted a warm touch to the space to soften up the modern finishes throughout the home. To do so, we suggested the use of wood planking in a dark stain as well as a rough cement counter top on the island. This allowed a more natural and rugged feel that appropriately blended the tones and textures of the modern home,” Dylan explains.

Using a warm tone color palette instead of the ubiquitous white and gray, the design team created a contemporary twist on modern style using unique and sleek finishes in simple, clean, elegant forms. The fridge and freezer, clad in custom panels, showcase the commercial-grade range and hood while the thick concrete countertop further instills the “durability” of the space and wood-planked wall grounds the space.



Edge D model home

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“The dark-stained wall corresponds to the plane of the architecture taking the view to the outdoor living spaces. It is a structural feature and a bold design statement at the same time,” says Dylan, who notes that current kitchen trends are devoid of detail almost to a fault. “Frankly, I think the latest kitchens are all looking the same — perhaps too simple in style. Not everything has to be void of detail. There is a big difference between a white T-shirt and a white cable knit sweater. Both are important,” she adds.

“Kitchen and bath design, much like everything else, is always changing. This year, we are all about the whites and the grays, whereas next year, blues and blacks mixed with gold might be all the rave. It honestly depends on the fashion trends of home styling and the palette necessary to bring those case-goods and built-in fixtures together as one,” Dylan observes.

Two-tone cabinetry is another popular look in current kitchens. The Aurora award winner for Best Custom Home 4,000-6,000 square feet, a Winter Park residence, designed by B&A Design Studio, Inc. and built by Waizman and Waizman Builders, mixes white and dark wood grain cabinetry with three-inch thick, honed-Calcutta marble countertops. The kitchen also features high-end Thermador appliances with a custom-built stainless steel commercial range hood.

Other award winners in the kitchen category include the Grand Aurora Award for Best Single Kitchen under \$500,000, a “2760” floorplan by Kolter Homes with interior design by Design Environments, Inc.

The Edge D model home, also by Kolter Homes, in Alton won the Grand Aurora Award for Best Kitchen \$1,000,000-\$2,000,000 with interior design by Masterpiece Design Group. The kitchen has a



large entertaining island with built-in professional appliances and a hidden pantry with lots of storage.

“The kitchen was designed to be a perfect space for entertaining with high-tech appliances, an open floor plan to the living areas, and a dry bar. We took advantage of the height to maximize the space, using straight edges and natural elements,” says Chris Popovich, of Masterpiece Design Group.

All Aurora award-winning homes skillfully merge indoor and outdoor spaces, an in-demand floorplan feature for the Florida lifestyle that is now standard in most new homes. Grand Aurora award winner for Custom Home, One-of-a-Kind under 4,000 square feet, *Modena*, a Winter Park custom residence built by Arlington Homes with architecture by Jim Lucia of Phil Kean Design Group, skillfully merges interior and exterior spaces. “*Modena* demonstrates a level of sophistication approaching perfection in the merging of interior and exterior spaces. One of the extraordinary features of this home is the scaling and proportioning of the exterior elements and attention to lighting, especially exterior,” says Jim Lucia, senior

designer at Phil Kean Design Group.

Indoor-outdoor spaces, functional floor plans with less formal, more casual livable spaces and first-floor master suites are lifestyle necessities rather than trends. The Aurora award winners are standouts for embracing our modern day way of life while striking a stylish balance between what’s timeless and trendy.

“Of course, each designer is different and upholds their own style and taste, but when it comes down to the nitty gritty, we often find ourselves tweaking past movements and trends by simply making them more acceptable in design,” Dylan says.

*Karen LeBlanc is host of The Design Tourist series. She travels the globe attending some of the world's premiere design events in search of the latest trends, tastemakers and unique finds. Learn more at [thedesigntourist.com](http://thedesigntourist.com).*

