



From top: Soft shapes, generous volumes in a range of eye-catching colours infuse Paola Lenti's So collection with an energetic air; the chubby body of Arflex's Pecorelle collection poised on skinny legs adds humour to the mix.



From top: The Eros Corner sofa by Pau Design literally breaks with convention; Kenzo's Alice coffee table/pouf features a faceted design dressed in glossy shades like apple green, lime, purple and red.



POPTIMISM

Optimism, great splashes of colour, exhilarating contrasts and the reduction to essentials are the qualities that characterise the major consumer goods trends of the 2012/2013 season. Interiors have become more colourful and carefree once again and life is introduced via luxurious finishes and textures, elusive patterns, and unexpected forms or combinations.

For example, Cini Boeri's plump Pecorelle, or sheep, originally designed for Arflex in the mid-Sixties has been reissued in a larger version. This collection of sofa and armchairs poses a puffy, generous seat atop slender, tubular black legs – think of a fluffy sheep and you'll get the idea. So while the design is straightforward and elementary on the surface, the proportions lend a whimsical tenor to the piece, while carefully placed seams and gentle ruching along the arms and backrest add a layer of complexity to an otherwise humble design.

German furnishings fair Ambiente recently released its predictions for the four major trends its trendspotters expect to guide design this year. "Electric Romance" presents traditional and old handicraft techniques touched by humour and an easy-going style. Under this umbrella, natural and recycled materials are presented in lush summer colours such as grass green, cornflower blue or vermilion.

"Dark Attitude" combines the casual with glamour to create a look that is nonchalant and fitting for everyday use, yet self-confident with a daring touch of extravagance where sculptural forms and low-contrast shades like navy-blue, chestnut, smoke-grey or graphite black will be pronounced. In contrast, "Light Innocence" carries a more subtle, softer and purist energy, characterised by an almost ethereal ambience in powdery pastel shades, emphasising gentle and restrained organic forms.

Within this category, you will find ranges such as Paola Lenti's inviting and informal So sofa system, offered in a multitude of shades from white to bubble gum pink and lime green. The soft shapes are meant to receive, the generous volumes are all encompassing and the aesthetic presented is balanced, ironic and original.

Ambiente's final major direction, "Radiant Modernity", is marked by a conspicuously eye-catching colour scheme consisting of designs in jazzy colours and the shapes of the Seventies and Eighties. Intense shades such as radiant yellow, dark aubergine or bright fuchsia are often used all over or in the form of graphic patterns.

From Kenzo comes a young and dynamic modular system called Pausa, which it has dressed in a kaleidoscopic of colours such as bright red and magenta, matelassé finishes and floral prints. There is also the Pop-style Mayflower armchairs by designer Fabrice Berrux, available in nine vibrant colors for Roche-Bobois and consist of six "petals" that form the structure.

Another major barometer of design directions echoes the themes predicted by Ambiente. At German home and commercial textiles expo Heimtextile, the just-released 2012/2013 trend book Montage pinpoints four major themes: "Colour Riot", "Dark Lux", "Craft Industry" and 'Split Clarity' – which are all dominated by colour and sustainability.

"For us, 'Montage' means we take existing elements, mix them anew and create something of our own, something that has never existed before," Herke says. "This process symbolises the individuality and needs of the consumer."

In "Colour Riot", dynamic, thrumming shades of colour appear in a new context – fresh, bold and vivid. High-gloss materials, coloured laminations, superimposed, fluid and flexible fabrics underscore the brilliance of monochrome colours. Kenzo's coffee table/pouf Alice, with its faceted exterior, finished in lustrous shades like apple green, grass, lime, purple, and red makes the point.

