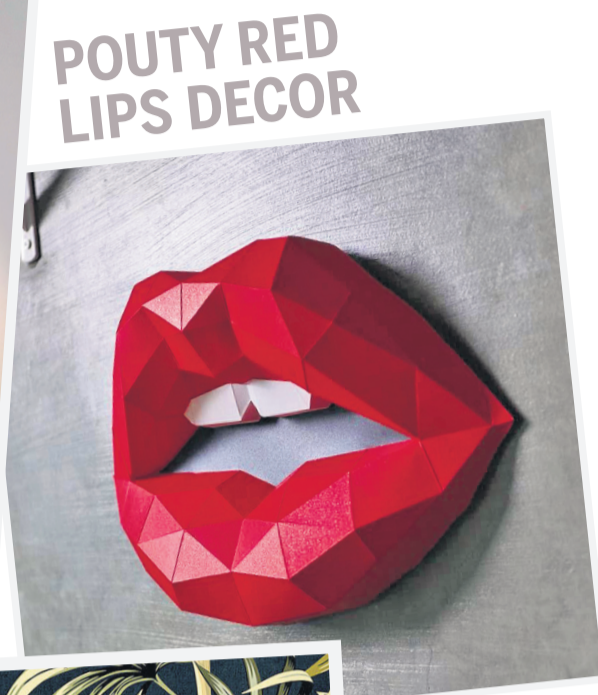




GOLD SHEEN AT MET GALA



MANGO LIGHT



POUTY RED LIPS DECOR



WALLPAPERS—FLAMINGOS TO FLORALS



FLAMBOYANT BY NATURE

Larger Than Life

From decor, fashion, food, weddings to art—maximalism is back to jazz up our lives through eye-popping colours and ritzy additions

By SHILPI MADAN

From sushi cakes and social media to 3D lips on (Insta) walls and vanity corners, to kitschy lines and surreal glam. The 'aesthetic of excess' is all over in gold-tone detailing and loud shout-outs in your wardrobes, décor, food and more. Admittedly, it's been a few difficult years, and it makes sense to have a little overt fun. Cheerful maximalism is filling our lives through eye-popping colours and ritzy inclusions—anything that brings in a sense of 'busy joy' through vibrance and flamboyance is worthy of a toast.

LOOK AT ME!

This year's Met Gala, the ultimate theme party, rolled out the gold sheen in the theme 'Gilded Glamour', drawing inspiration from New York's Gilded Age, when opulence and grandiosity ruled with a precious pout. Indian entrepreneur Natasha Poonawalla dazzled in a liquid gold Sabyasachi sari coupled with an Aztec Schiaparelli bustier, and bijou talons. It has been a dazzling splurge over the past few months, with ostrich feathers, leather trims, velvet tones, Maldivian holidays, cabanas and more filling the picture galleries all over. Forget just celebrities. Call it a toddler-esque design moment too, as animal prints mate wildly with botanicals and bold colours. Russian Instagrammer Alina took the maximalism brief a bit further by posing naked beneath a sacred tree in Bali, inviting local ire and a possible jail sentence. Instagram is swamped with



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AYESHA PURI, Sanjay Puri Architects

images of all that is pretty and bouncing, a world where everything is perfect, glossy and gleaming. Clearly, the bold and the brash are all over and rocking. The motto is "Live it up..."

We lost connection with the sense of touch during the past few years and the element of tactility in our spaces now soothes us. It is less about what we fill our homes with, and more about how our homes make us feel. It is as if you want your home to leap up and give you an effusive hug of welcome when you walk in. Crayola colours and over-the-top artworks are in. Says Ayesha Puri of Sanjay Puri Architects, "It is all about making a

statement. With everyone heavily exposed to design through social media, it is important to be able to stand out and appeal to people by using different colours, textures and objects to be able to make a statement." Puri has been collaborating with artists, graphic designers and fabricators to create interesting wall panels, bold art pieces and customised sculptures to exude a maximalist approach. "I think collaboration is a key concept in today's day and age where people from different backgrounds come together to create something special and unique," she says. "I've been playing with a lot of

colours and different materials while accessorising as this creates an eclectic space through a wide array of objects, and brings areas alive. I have also been experimenting with mixing interesting modern art and furniture with traditional Indian pieces, as this elevates a space." Exit, Zen-like minimalism. Enter *nakashi*, Tanjore art and ilk.

THE PLUSH FLUSH

Most Indian homes are masterclasses in maximalism. "Indians and maximalism go hand in hand, by nature," says Rupin Suchak, art director-cum-

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India is a natural habitat for maximalism. Here's why:

The concept of 'soudarya' has always seeped into our rich cultural heritage. Regalia has been all-pervasive—from lavish *aartis*, to gourmet gospels to opulent sets to magnificent clothes. Think Sabyasachi brides, his swanky mansion-like studios, and the big fat Indian wedding.

INDIA HAS FILMSTAR RANVEER SINGH (ABOVE), THE MOST MAVERICK OTT EXPONENT OF OUR NEW-AGE SENSIBILITIES. GEN-PREVIOUS ADORED BAPPI DA.

We have always been making and revelling in films that are heavily expressionistic (Nirupa Roy's sobs, anyone?)

GOLD HAS BEEN A PASSION FOREVER

BEJEWELLED STATEMENT



ILLUMINATED BOWLING LANES



REGAL WEDDINGS



“At a Frida Kahlo-themed brunch, the welcome garlands were replaced by gold brooches. Yet another bridal couple wanted a serene entry, without the usual pyrotechnics. We brought in 10 pundits from Banaras who were proficient in performing the aarti on the ghats to chant mantras with lit diyas, a la the Ganga aarti when the bride and the groom entered and performed varmala.”

PRERANA AGARWAL SAXENA
Founder, Theme Weavers Designs

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interior designer, who is busy designing the trendiest homes in Bollywood today. “Whether you look at the complexion of Rajasthan, or even Harappan climes, we have been all about enjoying attention through adornment. Minimalism is monotonous. In 2022, art deco is making a rich splash. The sensibility of maximalism finds expression in a spontaneous blend of textures, in shapes, lines and contours of pergolas and patios. The mantra is to be unique, fancy, and go overboard these days. Messing up beautifully,” he explains succinctly. “I play aplenty with light and shade in a subtle way to create drama. The dangerous line is when you try to mix two design movements, each one loses its special identity.” So, it is a melee of bubble-shaped brilliant red couches, blue walls, yellow light fixtures... breathing in the fun, outlandish, unexpected. The luminosity, multiple-layered feel and oversized planters, mirrors and cushions add up. Even the elitist bathrooms

have evolved into the new sitting rooms, with touchscreens, upholstered furniture, and kitschy oversized bathtubs.

If you thought quiet, low-key weddings along the sustainable route were making the cut, think again. They are, but with a swish factor. “Recently, for a bride, we customised the wedding favours in the shape of shell-shaped and textured boxes (in keeping with her name ‘Seep’) and filled them up with gourmet chocolates,” says Prerana Agarwal Saxena, the founder of Theme Weavers Designs, who works consistently with royal families and the elite to plan nuptials and more. “At a Frida Kahlo-themed brunch, the welcome garlands were replaced by gold brooches. Yet another bridal couple wanted a serene entry, without the usual pyrotechnics. We brought in 10 pundits from Banaras who were proficient in performing the aarti on the ghats to chant mantras with lit diyas, a la the Ganga aarti when the bride and the groom entered and performed varmala. This was grandeur on a different scale altogether,” she explains, adding, “Even along the sustainable route, the element of luxury and maximalism rules in a different way. To create a feeling of a temple in the mandap, we flew down artists from Vrindavan, to carve detailed designs in the stems of banana leaves and create the vedi, along with mogra, against the background of Shivshakti, wrought in flowers. Handpainted trays bearing a unique logo created using the names of the bride and groom, and carrying



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HITEN SHARMA
Businessman



people doing away with empty spaces, to celebrate happy vibes. There is a rich celebration of textures in the works of artist Ramesh Gorjala’s latest collection titled *Vahanas*. Deities and mythological figures, splendid in forms and stunning in rendition, arrive enriched in kalam-kari work, in brilliant ochres and saffron, emerald greens, limpid blues and mango yellows. Clearly, people have realised that there is absolutely no joy to be found in just champagne walls and want to live with beautiful things daily.

With everything bursting with sentiments and stories, the scale of play has increased. Gregarious patterns are layered one above the other, animal prints against large, leafy botanicals. Your space is clearly an expression of your recalibrated self. There is no holding back, even juxtaposition tells a story. “Binges are in,” says Dr Aarti Bakshi, developmental psychologist and SEL consultant at SAAR Education. “Covid took so much from all of us that this drought of normalcy has forced all to hold on to

taking to fusion diets, extreme daily regimes, and broadcasting thoughts. This is the ultimate mode of expressive freedom.”

For businessman Hiten Sharma, in Mumbai, curating the interiors of his car like a plush restaurant (minus the nibbles) is a consistent enterprise he takes great pride and joy in. From laminated playlists of the songs playing inside the buggy encased in seat covers, to overhead tissue boxes, to concise coin arrangers and spiffy footmats, there is everything you could possibly dream of on Sesame Street. “My wife gifted me a set of bright yellow sneakers on my 50th birthday a couple of months back,” he confesses. “Funnily enough, a few years ago, I would have thought of that probably as a symbol of mid-life crisis, but today, I am enjoying and luxuriating in this prized pick. It is a question of evolving sensibilities.”

HEALING TOUCH

It’s not revenge buying to cultivate a curious clutter. It is a meditated purchase, to curate a feeling of ownership and happiness. Is maximalism the need of the healing hour now? “Healing takes time and nurturing strategies. Gushing over the top seems like a much-needed break from the epidemic, yet in the long run, may not be a long-lasting avenue. Restrain, and versatility may be as important as big expressions. Collecting experiences, visiting countries, and meeting different people is energy-driven too. The idea is not a behaviour explosion but tasteful mannerism which allows a pendulum of experience and recoup, coupled,” explains Dr Bakshi. A minimalistic dresser herself, with a nude tone home décor, Bakshi herself is a mother to a 23-year-old, who loves statement wrist cuffs; a budding drummer in her second son, followed by an 11-year-old who enjoys making mohawks for hours while shampooing his hair. It’s a maximalist trend creeping in as well, as found herself purchasing a fuchsia painting of a mountain man—a flamboyant addition to her home that is a conversation starter. “Maximalism is not a recent fad. It has come around many times in the interiors as bold colours and gigantic prints. But to see all statement pieces, vying for attention simultaneously, is an eye-opener. It is as if the world wishes to proclaim, ‘Here, I come!’ Mindfulness, reflection, and spending time with loved ones may still be the best way to heal, albeit stay old fashioned,” she sums up with a smile.

With mainstream news so depressingly stained with wars, shoot-outs, rapes, blasts and murders, who doesn’t need a rainbow?

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RUPIN SUCHAK Art Director and Interior Designer

healthful nibbles, were sent to the guest rooms.”

From leather-textured marble walls to life-sized anthropomorphic figures stalking lavish bathrooms and living rooms, the contours abound. There is nothing that elevates your spaces and wardrobes like a touch of whimsy, especially in the wake of pandemic fatigue. Fashion designer Kunal Rawal has come up with an entire collection using glow-in-the-dark fabrics for that fantastical edge. “I have used this technology on cotton weaves, corduroys, and baby cords, linens and jute linens, raw silks and raw satins, in Indian wear as well,” he says. “The idea is to make a statement, stand out.”

DIP WITHIN

Beige-lovers move aside, in come the bijou spaces and threads, everywhere. The hashtag #moreismore has netted 293k posts so far and is still growing. Gone are the days of the beatific reclining Buddhas that made for soothing centre-pieces. The humming vibe is in all across. Swanky bowling alleys laced with in-house cafes and game parlours are mushrooming to life. Game Palacio—India’s first nightclub with swanky boutique bowling and entertainment lounge—yawns lazily across a golden realty space in Bandra, Mumbai, complete with gourmet



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KUNAL RAWAL Fashion Designer

gospels, strobe lights, sparkling chandeliers and a darling DJ console suspended above the bowling lanes. If that wasn’t enough, Spott brings the spotlight onto itself in Andheri with Asia’s first Spark bowling lanes, marked by a hypnotic flow of graphics shimmering across the lanes with amazing fluidity as you roll the balls.

There are generous bursts of colour and swish in every direction. Delhi-based origami artist Ankon Mitra’s creation ‘The Golden Fruit’ is a seasonal ode to the mango splendour in Totapuri, Dussehri, Banganpalli, Safeda, and Alphonso. “Our eyes light up when we savour the fruit, making me light up the creation,” he says. The magic of inserting light into an origami creation celebrates the grains and textures layered within, variable thicknesses showing up as light and dark spots, and when combined with folds, reveal a mosaic of brightness and shadows. A surreal play. “It is almost a feeling of not folding paper; but of folding the light itself,” muses Mitra. The takers are aplenty with

anything that uplifts the senses. Bursts of colours in the interiors of our homes, to loud over-the-top design patterns, have become acceptable, reflecting our emotions and memories. The world seems in a spin to grasp at fun elements, without tallying or thinking. Covid took a toll, resulting in finding a way to express it. And so, in walked joyous maximalism, the antithesis of simplicity, with an individualistic twist. Everyone has embraced objects that speak their inner language, loudly. Earlier people had been conservative about expressions due to the monotony of life, conservatively spending money. Cut to 2022. Everyone is dabbling in home design, indulging in alternate passion professions, tendering mass resignations, bombarding social media, aping master chefs,



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LEAD

SUSHI CAKES



PUNCH UP YOUR PALETTE

Go wild with prints on wallpapers: Flamingos to florals

TRY OUT BOLD COLOUR COMBINATIONS LIKE BLUE AND RED IN DÉCOR

Scale up. Think oversized mirrors, dramatic showpieces

