

Design Trendz for 2005 and Beyond

By Kenneth Hirst



#1. Quality is on the Rise

Product quality will continue to improve across the board, especially in the luxury goods category, a result of ever-rising consumer expectations. With quality but a brand's price of admission, we expect to see the move toward product customization and the "bespoke" tradition to continue to gain ground as more brands recognize it as an effective strategy to escape the commodization trap, where parity products lose their reason for being and profit margins.

#2. Ostentation in Full Bloom

Bling-bling celebrity culture has captured the imagination of the affluent, the wealthy and the "filthy-rich" alike. The Eighties Yuppie "Me" generation has nothing on what's coming, as we expect to see those who can afford to flaunt their success in every conceivable product, luxury service and category. "Super-size It" may become the code words of the second half of the decade as aging consumers make one last glorious fling.

#3. Bigger Does Equal Better

From 400-plus foot-long yachts to 100-carat colored diamond necklaces and mid-six figure land yachts, bigger as in size and price is the order of the day. We expect to see homes continue to expand their footprints along with wine cellars, home theatres, spas and exercise rooms.

#4. Tech is Getting Real Personal

Technology products, from colored iPods to the platinum Virgin cell phone are becoming key personal branding tools. Who you are and what group you aspire to is a direct reflection of the color of one's earbuds, the functionality of one's cell phone or Blackberry, the brand of one's portable game and DVD player. We expect personal tech to flower as the quintessential fashion accessory in the year ahead.

#5. Creating New Experiences

Once again, the bottom line is luxury and, as agents of our personal evolution, we will seek out new luxury products and services that allow us to experience life in new and more self-enriching ways: planning an exotic adventure holiday at an exclusive retreat in the most secluded place, glamorizing a dinner party with fine china and silverware, experiential exercise regimens guided by personal trainers who care about our well-being and our diet, and the recreation of a lux-spa experience at home with all sorts of pampering devices, relaxation creams, wellness potions and aromas.

#6. Uber-lux

It is the watchword wherever we go in the second half of the Millennial first decade. Where does the word uber come from? My research tells me it is a slang word used in comic books and on candy bars meaning extra or super duper. Does that sound like your brand? ■

Hirst Pacific (www.hirstpacific.com) is led by Kenneth Hirst, an award-winning product and retail interiors designer with 18 years of global experience in marketing, manufacturing, and design. Hirst's versatility and expertise encompass a wide range of disciplines, from high-end fragrances and personal care items to mass-marketed package goods, accessories, medical equipment, lighting and furniture design.

A native of Australia, Hirst was an accomplished product designer at home and in the US before teaming with Cato, Gobe & Associates (now d/g) to launch his first design firm, Cato Gobe Hirst, in New York City. Hirst launched Hirst Pacific Ltd. in 1996 to provide comprehensive brand image services focusing on design innovation with a strategic approach.*