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*Post Market Commentary*  
*Color Trend Perspective*

# Market Commentary

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## High Point Furniture Market



Overall, market traffic was reported to be down from spring and even slower than fall of 2014 according to customer reports. The mood however seemed to make up for it. For many, dealers and buyers were serious about finding that new color; the latest design and were ready to make commitments. However, this wasn't the case for everyone who showed at market. Some reported slow foot traffic and very little interest in filling floor space gaps – at least at this time. We're not sure exactly why dealers were buying from both ends of the spectrum, but we're listening, talking and trying to get a better understanding.

We had the opportunity to showcase our finish designs with some new clients during the fall market and the response was extremely positive. Grays remain strong as well as textures, complimentary colors and fresh, light to medium wood tones in the “tru-brown” and gray categories. But it had to be the right gray! Taupe grays are hot because they work as a neutral palette for wood tones and splash colors. Colder grays and green-grays didn't go over so well; more of a “crash and burn” I'd say describes it best. So, “Color does sell, but the right colors sells better”, to quote Color Marketing Group.

Upper end case goods resources reported success from the 2015 fall market, especially with the designer clientele and high-end retailers. This customer is specifically looking for expertise in key areas such as customization opportunities, mixed media and of course, quality of finish. Utilizing a greater variety of designs, (mid-century modern, contemporary, casual and weathered) and a range of wood species, (ranging from oak, walnut & brown maple); providing hardware or accent gilding options, (chrome, brass, painted hardware with gold, silver or a blend of silvery/gold gilding), and of course a great finish story seems to have paid great dividends. Dealers were drawn to mixed media elements; utilizing woods, metals, leather, woven cane, rattan and stone, as well as metallic finishes.

As reported, dealers responded well to the mix of colors including fashion forward blue and reds on both upholstery and wood pieces. Dealers also responded well to the mix of dry, close to the wood finishes as well as clear and soft lacquered finishes, or a blend of “all the above”.

# Show highlights

As reported in the Furniture/Today market edition, **Key Trends** include a mix of everything new and old. Aesthetics, function and uniqueness highlighted the show. “Back to Nature” - the story of rustic and antique reproductions were a success story, specifically in occasional furniture and dining; The “Industrial Age” utilizing casters, worn woods, metal brackets and bases, as well as other accent metal components give a timeless look to the category. “Metal and other mixed media” adds interest and creativity. The use of mixed media such as vellum, acrylic, stone, leather and metal add yet another element to the overall design story, giving traditional forms updated, industrial-inspired looks and continued proven success. Acrylics, clean and clear metal accents including stainless steel and chrome, unique fabrics, leather, stone and glass can offer a touch of elegance to a wood story.

**Casual and rustic** themes were highlighted at market, especially those incorporating a reclaimed or industrial feel. Mixed with stone and reclaimed woods made a casual statement; casters with



worn woods and metal reflect a very hot trend in the case goods and occasional line-up. Antique reproductions with authentic aging techniques and vintage designs and finishes continue to be well received in today’s market. Plank looks, both in veneer and solid wood forms were well received on dining tables and case goods. Distressed, painted finishes add to the casual influence, particularly on European and American traditional forms in bedroom and dining room. Clear finishes on metal are a counterpoint to the more aged, rougher industrial looks and help create a basis for the ever popular eclectic lifestyle.

**Low sheen with finish readability:** Dry, lower sheen finishes; replicating virtually no finish at all, add a casual flair to transitional and even more opulent traditional forms. But, the finish must be readable – meaning that the customer wants to see the natural beauty of the wood. At the same time, finish is a critical element in protection and touch, but the finish cannot take away from the wood story. It must become part of the wood story. Natural materials continue to remain an important part of the wood story as they often complement the natural look of various wood grains. Slate, woven cane, glass or crystals. These mixed media elements offer retailers a story for their sales floor and one



**The wood story:** Solid wood was once primarily used on frames and parting rails. Now it is being seen more and more on table tops and drawer and door fronts of case pieces, adding value for a consumer seeing a good wood story. There are various finishing techniques used to help accentuate and showcase the beauty of the wood. Along with lower sheen varieties that provide an “open-grain”, natural appearance, higher sheen levels are also used to produce a sense of clarity and brightness to the mix. Like the unique features found in nature, unique characteristics in color, sheen and techniques give each piece individuality, character and beauty.

We are also seeing a variety of wood species that are growing in popularity – not necessarily as a cost factor either. Brown, (or soft) maple seems to have taken a surge as a very common specie in all price point categories - and the finishes can be outstanding. We are also seeing a resurgence of open grain wood species like oak and ash because distinctly defined grain character is part of the finish and wood story. Ceruse or limed finishes remain a popular designer choice but are quite dependent on an open grain structure.



CORN SILK

In conjunction with the wood story, we are seeing evidence that certain wood species appear to be losing steam in the “popularity category”, like cherry, mahogany and other woods that have a “reddish” color reputation. We’ve long been saying that red-browns are moving to browner, “Tru-



13311 FELIX

Brown” tones, and that is very evident in today’s market. We have long been somewhat “hand-tied” to this “color by specie” rule, where we expect the natural color tones of the wood specie to dictate what the final color design would be. We’ve even patterned ourselves to name finishes after particular color tones – “Red Cherry”, Golden Oak”, etc. Our industry as a whole, especially finish designers, have surrendered to this rule. But, we don’t have to be. We can achieve beautiful, trendy, tru-brown colors on naturally red toned woods and the results can be dramatic, especially where the soft grain pattern of woods like cherry, alder or mahogany are desired. The grain pattern and the finish should work together, through creative finish design to achieve the unexpected, unanticipated results. Example; FELIX 13311 (left image); a modern gray finish on cherry, utilizing the soft grain pattern represented by the specie, but certainly not tied to the traditional cherry color tones.

**Relaxed Elegance:** Customers, particularly the younger generation often avoid the traditional, heirloom furniture of their parents and grandparents, basically because it doesn't fit their need, style or personality. But, that doesn't mean they can't be sold on these traditional forms and designs. More often than not, today's traditional is much more relaxed – transitional – casual – livable – and yes, usable. Sometimes it's the design or functionality of the furniture that makes it



less desirable to our younger customer. But, I propose it's as much the outdated finish as anything else. Ever notice on these do-it-yourself shows on TV how one of the first things they do is paint over the old finish. I cringe every time I see one of these home interior designers drag a piece of beautiful traditional heirloom furniture into the front yard and commence to painting it – with a paint roller no less; but, it works for the new owner.

Casual finishes are here to stay and yes they can work, even with traditional designs, by incorporating new and creative finishes that fit today's fashion trends. The customer simply wants it to reflect their own personality. *"People are willing to pay for products they can customize and make their own"*. Nathan Copeland, Highland House. Along the same lines, we are seeing

*Personal note:* With all that said however, I must admit that I have advised my family – do not surprise me with a home makeover if it involves touching my collectables; and no, my children will not be handed down my 3<sup>rd</sup> generation Henredon furniture. I honestly can't bear the thoughts.

**Looking to Nature:** In conjunction with the green movement; (sustainable materials, environmentally friendly coatings, etc.), furniture designs include elements that mimic nature and its popularity is growing. Driftwood finishes with gray undertones, dry and open grain finishes remain strong; although we believe the *Restoration Hardware* look is becoming more refined as it evolves, (refer to our newest concept finishes Silver Fox and Lynx and River Rock from our Lifestyle Expressions Collection).

In the same discussion, the live edge look continues to have a broad appeal, especially with the high-end, designer oriented customer. The live-edge literally has a natural appeal to the customer while "paying homage to the trees – it lets the tree tell the story". The live-edge design incorporates a machined and





finished surface, maintaining all of the natural “characteristics” like worm holes, splits and voids – with the natural shape of the tree along the edges, often containing the bark.

“The live-edge is a good fit for eclectic settings, especially as more consumers are demanding pieces that feel truly organic”, Pat Watson, Hooker Furniture.

Our Interpretive Design Group has created several techniques that replicate weathered barn board, crusty paint finishes and even faux bark, (as seen in the pictures below). Through a series of steps,



we can replicate the depth of colors and texture of faux bark – even down to the faux moss. Today, we have customers who are successfully replicating this effect using specialized products and techniques supplied by CCI/FinishWorks. For more information on how to replicate this look, contact your local sales representative or contact any CCI/FinishWorks location.

## FAUX BARK



## 23212 BARN BOARD

# Fashion forward...

The market is looking for that next hot look, but not necessarily what everyone else already has. *Restoration Hardware* introduced the market to rustic modernism – redefined for today’s customer. Customization, timeless designs and finishes that show off the natural beauty of the wood has a great appeal to today’s eclectic, chic customer. But, what’s next? What’s the next great new look, maybe a refined, finished version of the reclaimed look, with a silky clear, taupe-gray finish and a soft hand waxed patina? Our Interpretive Design Group is working on several versions of “refined-reclaimed” on various wood species that we feel will fill the gap to the next generation of finishes. Among our newest designs include Silver Fox, Lynx, Dark Knight and Vista.



SILVER FOX, 17415 is originally developed on soft maple with a light, shimmery gray undertone that accentuates the subtle color and grain variations present in the wood. The finish is designed with clarity and depth and a semi-gloss patina. Silver Fox compliments a variety of wood tone and paint finishes including Vista, a new Lifestyle Expression Introduction; Bogart from the Lifestyle Expression Collection; Briar from our



Premier Collection and Metropolitan Gray and various Whites from our Premier Collection. Stainless Steel or Chrome pairs well as a base or hardware option and silver gilding as a paint or leaf is an excellent accent detail.

CONCEPT INSPIRATION BOARD



LYNX, 17515 is another new finish design, originally developed on soft maple. We believe this sophisticated color satisfies that very important, mid-tone category we refer to as “Tru-Brown”.



Like Silver Fox, Lynx is designed to show off the natural beauty of the wood, providing excellent finish readability, clarity and depth.

These finishes will read differently on other wood species, as influenced by the specific grain characteristics. Defined grain species including oak, ash and hickory will be more accentuated, whereas species including maple and cherry will show a softer, more subtle grain definition. This characteristic may also help define the lifestyle as more casual or more modern. We try to design the finishes for the wood rather than allowing the wood to dictate the color. Just because the specie is cherry doesn't mean the overall color has to be red. We work to design the finish to compensate for the natural color already present in the wood. These finishes were creatively designed not to rely on techniques like spattering, grain padding or physical distressing to add interest. The “added value” is the simplicity and uniqueness of the colors.



SILVER FOX 17415



VISTA 06615



LYNX 17515



We referred to the “refined” Restoration Hardware take on driftwood as the new evolution. As quoted in the HOME fashion forecast, fall 2015 edition, “Color will be an essential component of the story, successful examples will recast traditional elements in new palettes. Other style points to keep in mind as you navigate the tropical trend includes”:

- “More brown, less gray: Gray continues its reign..... But earthy brown finishes will be a welcome respite from ubiquitous distressed grays in 2016. They marry perfectly with incoming verdant color palettes”.

ECLIPSE 05315 is a physical textured / weathered finish with layers of colorations that compliment today’s fabric and mixed media palettes. The finish is readable, with richness, depth and clarity. It was not designed with a dry finish as would be characteristic of the typical driftwood. Rather, it has a “waxy” appearance, patina and hand. The finish still has gray and taupe color tones and would certainly be considered in the gray, wood tone family.

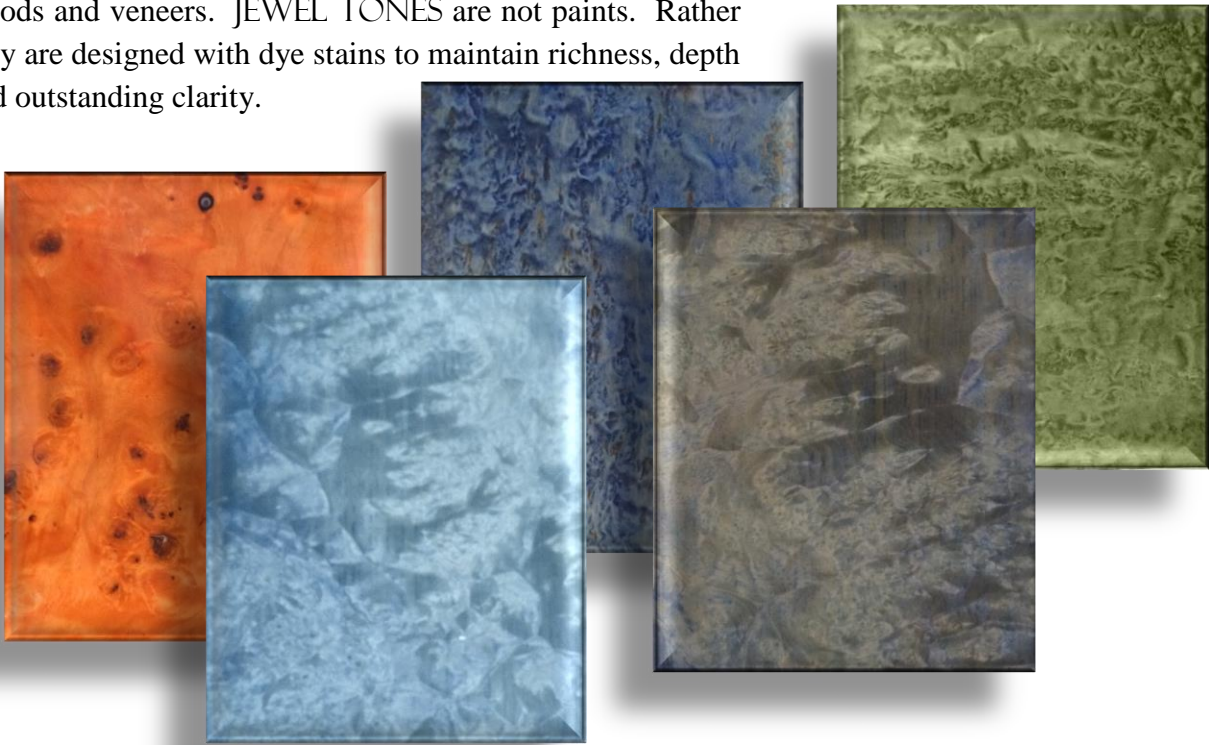


An interesting accent application finish is FAUX PARCHEMENT 02515, designed to simulate stitched leather. The finish has a fine crackle and random smudges of colors. A unique “soft feel” topcoat was designed that provides a cushiony touch, similar to that of real leather. The colorations can be modified to blend with fabrics or a variety of wood or paint tones.



FAUX PARCHEMENT

Additionally, we have designed a collection of finishes called JEWEL TONES, using the concept of color splash to create wood tone finishes. This concept provides a means to produce a accent color splash, while showing off the natural character of the wood, especially highly figured solid woods and veneers. JEWEL TONES are not paints. Rather they are designed with dye stains to maintain richness, depth and outstanding clarity.



Using unique, and somewhat simple techniques, we can demonstrate how to create the illusion of faux borders, inlays and patterns using common wiping stains or glazes – and without necessarily



using tape to mask off areas. The panel 05115 (shown left) is an example of how this process is accomplished. The boarder, splice lines and angle cuts are nothing more than an illusion and can be applied to a number of wood finish colors or painted finishes. This is an example of how “value added” techniques create interest, depth and personality to a finish and normally justifies a higher price point value.

*Color makes us feel good*

# New Programs *Spotlight*

CCI / FinishWorks recently introduced a new finish collection called “Lifestyle Expressions” which will bridge a gap between our Premier Collection and Designer Series. This collection was designed to demonstrate “value added” techniques using a fundamental color base. Many of our customers are asking for finishes that will enable them to accommodate demands of the designer focused market, yet not stray too far from their existing manufacturing capabilities and capacity, or add significant costs to in material or labor. Lifestyle Expressions meets this need. As with the current Premier Collection, Lifestyle Expressions is now available to our customers and retailers and will be reviewed and updated as needed on an annual basis to insure that we are providing the most up to date, trend setting collection available. Please contact your sales representative for pricing and availability or contact Rodney McFalls @ [rmcfalls@rpmwfg.com](mailto:rmcfalls@rpmwfg.com), or [info@finishworksindiana.com](mailto:info@finishworksindiana.com) for more information.

## *Lifestyle Expressions*



Registry Hanover Bay View Toffee Cambridge 7 Oats



Surrey Bogart Eastbay Fruitwood Graphite River Rock



Be watching for new introductions to our Premier Collection and Lifestyle Expression Portfolio's in the coming months. In keeping up with current and projected trends in the furniture and cabinetry industries, we have researched and designed finishes to fill these gaps and help us provide a well-balanced color portfolio for our customers.

The 2016 Market Commentary and Color Trend Perspective is prepared as a summary of color trends and direction, pertaining specifically to the residential furniture and kitchen cabinet industries, based on our observations and overall interpretation. We provide this resource to our customers as a general guide for information and inspiration. We credit our sources of information to furniture related publications, quotes and previous commentaries. For additional information, color trend presentations or customer palette reviews and recommendations, contact your sales representative or M. Rodney McFalls, CMG, CfYH @ [rmcfalls@rpmwfg.com](mailto:rmcfalls@rpmwfg.com).

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Color Trend Perspective, 2016 Update

## CCI/FinishWorks Locations

Shipshewana, IN	Westfield, MA
Apple Creek, OH	Salt Lake City, UT
New Holland, PA	Toronto, ON
Authur, IL	Hudson, NC

### Credits / References:

*Furniture Today High Point Market Highlights 2015*

