

Getting

“There’s this trend of what’s old is new again — a return to more traditional kinds of detailing.”

— Cheryl O’Brien, AIA, C. O’Brien Architects, Inc.

While it’s easy to be impressed with mile-high ceilings and expansive walls, wide-open rooms don’t usually project the cozy, comforting sensation that many look for in a home. “There was, for a while, a trend of wanting the room to feel completely open,” says Cheryl O’Brien, AIA, president and lead designer of C. O’Brien Architects, Inc. in Bala Cynwyd. “But now there’s more of a trend toward — even though the room is open — adding columns and details and more definition so the spaces can really stand on their own.”

These details, she explains, whether as simple as thick crown molding or as decorative as custom wainscoting, add richness and charm to a room, turning four simple walls into a self-sustainable environment. O’Brien adds that this simple strategy turns the tables on a space, so the furniture compliments the room instead of the other way around.

While homeowners can go many directions with architectural details, O’Brien suggests looking at historical homes for inspiration. “There’s this trend of what’s old is new again — a return to more traditional kinds of detailing,” she says. This includes heavy moldings, wainscoting, picture moldings and iron details like scrolled railings, which can be particularly helpful in newer homes.

“New construction can be very stark,” O’Brien says. “But you walk into an old house, and there are all sorts of intricate detailing and surprises. By creating those things in renovation or construction, you can give a sense of permanence. It gives it more of a feeling of sophistication. It’s inviting and comfortable to be there, but it’s also rich and elegant at the same time.”

For more old-school appeal, transform a library, den or office with dark wood details to create a gentlemen’s club-like richness. “It’s the trend of going back to the cocoon room, where it’s all brown and it’s very rich and it’s kind of like your haven. It’s reflected in the architecture, the painting, the colors,” O’Brien says.

By adding these traditional touches, O’Brien says homeowners can get miles of impact out of a simple solution. “A room with simple, plain walls can certainly be painted or wallpapered,” she says. “But by using interior molding, the room starts to take on its own character.” **SAH**



ABOVE Tone-on-tone details in rich, deep wood carry through to the paneling, shelving, window treatments and ceiling of this handsome office, creating a cocoon-like sanctuary.

Photography by Don Pearse Photographers, Inc. Photo courtesy Woodstone Homes, Inc.

RIGHT While soaring ceilings are still popular, O’Brien recommends softening their angles with classical details such as columns and wainscoting.

Photography by Paul S. Bartholemew Photography, Inc. Photo courtesy Connect Development, Inc.



t”

FITTING THE MOLD