

# Home furnishing trends go classic, elegant

**F**URNITURE shoppers can think of themselves as collectors, for this is the season, and indeed, the era, of the classics. Not just antiques and period pieces from the '30s, '50s and '60s, but contemporary classics, too, are the current home decor focus. Any furnishing that is memorable in design, color and material fits nicely into this season's limelight.

Furniture shows are featuring tradition rather than innovation with sophisticated interpretations of older styles. This translates into Gothic beds, gilded Hoppelwhite-like chairs and Directoire tables.

The neoclassical theme persists with strong Greek and Roman elements — columns, pillars, pedestals and arches. The look is elegant, opulent and comfortable, not trendy.

NICKS, SCRATCHES and gouges are no longer considered flaws. They're almost de rigueur.

Some designers are even building the "distressed" look into their pieces.

Designer home furnishing has pervaded the fabric world. Ralph Lauren, Laura Ashley, Diane Von Furstenberg, Mario Bualto and President George Bush's decorator, Mark Hampton, have passed their coordinated collections to the eager and hungry textile industry. Suddenly, their "looks" are everywhere, either in fact or in imitation. Norma Kamali is following suit.

The Soviets, too, have gotten into the act as perestroika created collectors and designers draw on either old Russian furniture or its motifs. Mostly dating from the time of Catherine the Great, the style is Imperial and sleekly ornate.

Leathers are plusher, deeper and richer in color, even patterned on some pieces. Technological tanning improvements have made leather more pliable. It can be worked almost like fabric, allowing gentle draping, shirring and even pleating.

Post-Memphis Milan is supplying us with a

steady flow of cleaned furniture that takes advantage of current technology.

**THE EUROPEANS**, too, are updating the classics with pieces such as Shaker bedroom furnishing in contrasting colors and textures.

Look for reproductions of Macintosh chairs, Frank Lloyd Wright furniture, Eames lounge chairs, von der Rohe Barcelona chairs, Robin Daly tables or Corbusier form-fitting loungers.

Nowhere do Space Age technology and materials meld as much as in portable furniture. These metal and plastic tables and chairs are storable, stackable and spare. But they also are steady and durable, mostly Italian reproductions.

Hot colors are peach, teal and green tones with rust and copper accents. Fabrics are more textured and fancier — silks, tapestry-like wovens, jacquards and damasks. The Southwest motifs are on the wane as are jungle and reptile prints.

Another trick of the times is moving outdoor furniture indoors. Not just wicker and rattan, but Andironack, stone, wrought iron and other metals are off the porch into the dining rooms. Chairs are plumped up with gaily huge cushions or bold and zany geometrics. Tables topped with glass can be filled with plants or curios around stone or iron bases.

High-tech natural finished wood fabrications are achieving a new seasonally with improved cooling methods. There are more geometric, whimsical wooden pieces painted in bright but abstractly a la Robert Venturi. Other variations include a kind of Aztec or African look with loud neon repetitions in the paint.

Even kids' furniture is no longer sanitized and while the colors are so loud, they almost speak. Buildings, trains and plants disguise drawers, closets and tables. Nothing is quite what it appears to be but everything is stimulating, both in color and design.

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## How much coordination is a good thing to have?

**Q.** In the process of redecorating my apartment, I've become very aware of the many ways paintings are coordinated with sofas and other furniture arrangements. Although I'm one of those who doesn't know much about it, it seems wrong to me when paintings take on secondary importance to a sofa. What is the right thing to do for someone like myself who wants to give the best impression they can? Also, what does color have to do with this entire situation?

**A.** At its most basic level, interior design comes down to two matters that ideally should balance the elements of complexity and the elements of order. How this translates into your situation is to understand to what extent you psychologically require order or complexity. Each individual varies in these needs. If you over-coordinate and over-match your sofa with a painting, you will undoubtedly achieve a high level of order, but at a loss variety.

In time the arrangement will look stilted, artificial and impersonal. On the other hand, if you assemble whatever pleases you, without regard for coordination, you will achieve a degree of complexity that will intrigue the eye, but aggravate it after a while.

You take advantage of both elements if you balance them. Use color to tie-in the sofa with the painting, but don't worry about it being an exact match. Pay a lot more attention to the way the painting is matted and framed because this is the one ingredient that both separates and bridges the painting from its environment.

Be confident in realizing that historic precedent supports almost anything you care to do, as far as matters of taste are concerned. Try to select the best quality you can afford and do what pleases you without undue concern what others may think.

**Q.** We're planning a May wedding on a very tight budget not only for ourselves but for our entire wedding party. My bridesmaids prefer

all about color  
**Helen Diane Vincent**

...dresses they can wear for other occasions. The men insist on rented tuxedos consisting of white jackets, white pleated shirts, and black pants. Because of the expenses in setting up a new apartment, we also are foregoing a honeymoon. This is why the wedding itself has become especially important for both of us. Do you have any suggestions to help us make this event memorable, given the circumstances?

**A.** My suggestion is to establish a color theme that links the wedding with your new apartment, especially since it will be the location of your honeymoon. It's not as an unusual idea as it might sound at first. Choose an intermission-length dress (the hermine falls nicely) with coordinated hosiery, shoes and hand bag.

With this, you can wear a sophisticated close-fitting hat with a touch of veiling, or even a more traditional tulle or netting veil cascading from a more conventional headpiece. The dress and veil should be in either the same white as the men's tuxedo jackets or in a distinct shade of pale pink. Avoid an off-white that might look discolored next to the white of a tuxedo jacket.

Have the bridesmaids all wear dresses that coordinate with the silhouette and style of your dress. They'll get considerable use from the mid-length dress, in a floral print of soft pinks, lilacs, on a white ground and greens. Even consider incorporating polished cotton with two-tiered skirts or poplin jackets. They could also wear small hand-bagging hats. All of the floral bouquets could be in pinks, lilacs and greens.

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