

Fabulous FURNITURE 2001

Furniture style options abound

BY JOAN BORAM
SPECIAL WRITER

What is your definition of a "livable" home? Or a "comfortable" room?

Whether we decide to furnish a room or an entire house, we bring with us certain preconceived ideas of how we want to live, and how we want to be seen by others. Chances are we know what we don't want, even if our "wants" aren't clearly defined. However, when faced with the myriad furniture styles available, we're often overwhelmed and unable to say, "That one."

Sometimes a professional interior designer is just what we need to help us make decisions, reconcile our private and public images, and live happily ever after.

For example, clients of Ed Postif, president of Edward Postif Inc., a Plymouth-based interior design firm, recently bought a ranch home in a subdivision, built sometime in the 1980s. Ardent golfers, the couple wanted their contemporary-style home to have the convivial warmth that they enjoyed in the club house.

"We decided to create a combination library-dining room. The clients only used the dining room once a year, for Thanksgiving, and then they only had one guest," says Postif.

To create an intimate, friendly, conversation area with a pub look, I used sage-green velvet on a custom-made banquette and on two antique chairs. The large TV was installed in a custom-built unit made of old barn pine wood.

Postif used arts-and-crafts furniture and William Morris fabric throughout the house. Although the furniture and fabric designs were popular in the late 19th century, the strong and simple lines of the furniture style, accented by prominent oak grain, complement the contemporary architectural style of the home while adding warmth and character. The fabric designs, typically in quiet greens, gold, ruddy madder reds and deep indigo blues, add a note of quiet elegance to the pared-down integrity of the furniture.

"I like to incorporate antiques to finish a room," says Postif. "When we've selected upholstered pieces and rugs, I'll add



PHOTO COURTESY OF SHERWOOD STUDIOS

Get it straight: Most people have a theme, such as contemporary, traditional or eclectic, in mind when they decide to decorate. Warm contemporary is characterized by straight lines and no carving or columns on wood.

English or French or early American pieces, a chair or a side table perhaps, to add character and warmth. The patina of oldness — little cracks, dark old brass, and duller finishes — contrasts with shiny new pieces and adds a sense of history."

French antiques generally are "Provincial" — rustic country pieces — or the classic Louis XV, XVI, or Empire. Louis pieces typically have curving lines, and decorative add-ons, such as bouquets, baskets of flowers, swirls and scrolls. Definitely luxurious, they're also delicately proportioned and airy in feeling.

Empire pieces were a product of the Napoleonic era. Napoleon wanted to disassociate himself from royalty, but he also wanted his regime to have historical antecedents. Empire style draws on the Roman Empire for inspiration, and is characterized by classical lines, columns and laurel wreaths. Often, there are gold touch-

es. Traditional 18th century English taste ran to large, chunky, dark furniture: pieces designed by Adam, Chippendale and Sheraton during this era are orderly, symmetrical, and architectural. Very classic and clean, they often feature columns, pediments, or fretwork. Early in the 18th century, walnut was commonly used for furniture, but in mid-century, when trading with the Caribbean colonies flourished, mahogany became the wood of choice.

Postif frequently turns to Chris Pray, owner of Europe Direct Warehouse in Ferndale for antique furniture and small pieces. Franklin resident Pray travels to Europe several times a year to replenish his stock of British and French antiques. His workshop also provided the custom banquette and barn wood TV unit for Postif's clients.

"It's the best place I know to find a big selection of excellent

pieces at excellent prices," says Postif.

According to Mark Morgenroth, A.S.I.D. president of Sherwood Studios in West Bloomfield Township, most people have a theme, such as contemporary, traditional or eclectic, in mind when they decide to decorate.

The most important factor in a successful design is a design flow that runs through the house and represents the owners' personality," says Morgenroth.

"Years ago, most design was traditional, but within the past ten years, there's been a trend towards warm contemporary. It's characterized by straight lines, no carving or columns on the wood, no skirt on the sofa. Earlier contemporary was colder and starker, employing polyester lacquer finishes and, often, formica."

Today's contemporary style uses rosewood, mahogany or natural oak with a clear finish. It's apt to have rounded arms and



PHOTO COURTESY OF ED POSTIF

A friendly area: Ed Postif used sage-green velvet on a custom-made banquette and on two antique chairs to create an intimate, friendly conversation area. The large television was installed in a custom-built unit made of old barn pine wood.

puffer cushions. An earlier contemporary sofa may have been covered in leather, but today's Ultraseude is warmer than leather and, says Morgenroth, "Nothing wears or

cleans as well as Ultraseude." Traditional furniture, which still has many proponents, is more detailed and is character-

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