

Fabulous FURNITURE

Open wide: Use an armoire to store blankets and pillows for a casual, open look in a bedroom.



PHOTO COURTESY OF CLASSIC INTERIORS

Armoires add elegance to bedroom, even bath

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Armoires. They can be used anywhere and everywhere. Most homeowners use them in the living room or great room as an entertainment center. They provide a wonderful focal point and create much needed architecture in those large rooms. But you can use armoires in the bedroom, or even the bathroom, for clothing storage or towels.

Armoires have grown in popularity for the past 30 years, and customers usually buy them for several reasons, including to create a visual centerpiece.

"It really can set the tone for the room because it's usually the largest piece in the room," said Pat Roubie, district trainer for Ethan Allen in Novi. Ethan Allen has stores in Auburn Hills, Birmingham, Livonia and Novi.

"In the bedroom, it also can be used for storage of clothing," Roubie said. "They include garment rods, which are removable. They have open cubby holes for open storage of clothing or the rod can be removed to create stacking storage for linens and towels."

"Most of the armoires are equipped to have a television in them," said Kevin Konat, owner of Classic Interiors in Livonia.

Removable racks in the armoire make it easy to set up a television set inside. Videos and CDs also can be stored in it. Remotes can be stored in an armoire drawer.

Joe McCambridge, manager of product design for Baker Furniture of Birmingham and Milling Road, a division of casual furniture for Baker, said these units are used less for clothing storage, but more as a piece to store a television set, and generally smaller in size than armoires for the living room or great room.

"You can have electronics fit into the upper deck (of armoires)," McCambridge said. "Most people want something that is adaptable for TVs and VCRs. They also prefer the pocket doors to keep the doors out of the way."

Armoires developed in France in the 18th century when the king taxed residents for closet and bathroom space, and homeowners sought ways to create storage without the closet space, McCambridge said. Linen presses, originally from Charleston, S.C., are similar pieces, but more English in style, McCambridge said. People like the traditional look of those pieces, McCambridge said.

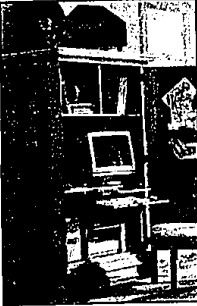
Roubie often sees homeowners using armoires in casual-contemporary styles, country of classic elegance in a French Provence look. Homeowners also go with the traditional, 18th Century or neoclassical look.

"It can be used as a collective piece, to add to a room or to complete it to give more of that collective look," Roubie said.

Maple is used often. "It's very adaptable," Roubie said. "It is used for a clean look or it can be made to look antique or distressed." For a formal look, cherry and mahogany is used.

"Cherry and maple are the most versatile," said McCambridge. "They also are the most neutral." Mahogany also is popular, McCambridge said.

Konat said customers often go with something completely different from their bedroom set. "They really use it as an accent piece to the room," Konat said.



Hidden from view: For homeowners who do not have a library or a separate room for an office, an armoire works well in storing a computer. The doors can close and the computer disappears.

"Computer armoires also are placed in the bedroom for adults to use the computer," said Konat. "If they don't have room for a home office, a lot of couples are getting armoires for their computer."

"They have all kinds of pull-outs for printers, keyboard and units. They are nicely self-contained."

In the bathroom, the armoire can store towels, especially if the homeowner wants a country look. "You can leave the armoire open to give it a more relaxed look," Roubie said.

White-washed tones and cream colors can create a comfortable "seaside" look, Roubie said.

McCambridge said an *etagere*, which is a seven-shelf open unit, is similar, but smaller, than the traditional armoire that can be used in the bathroom. He described one recently created for a customer. "It has a stylized door with overhanging corners, and it looks almost like a clock case," McCambridge said. "An armoire is a tough piece to put into the bathroom since many of them are so small, even though bathrooms are larger in the new homes."

While they may be big pieces, armoires certainly attract a person's eye. "It's hard to get architectural drama in a new home," McCambridge said. "It's nice to have that vertical look and drama with overhanging corners."

A lot of people are drawn to that look — the overhanging corners, the fluting and curved scroll.

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