



# Updating old design formulas for '80s

**A**LL THAT NOISE in the interior design studio is the sound of molds breaking. The old formulas for perfect rooms are being tossed out as designers experiment with new combinations of furnishings and colors.

Design professionals are responding to a new breed of home owner. While possibly just as house-proud as their parents, they're impatient with decorating rules and they're ready to mix-and-match styles and periods to achieve a thoroughly individual look. Which is why designers have turned a fresh eye on some classic decorating styles.

The traditional room gains much of its time-honored stateliness from an attention to balanced arrangement. Facing love seats, for example, are accompanied by mirror-image end tables and lamps. Or matching brass wall sconces serve as a framing device on either side of a fireplace.

Often too, one will find beneath well-crafted cabriole legs the bold blues and reds of a symmetrically patterned Persian carpet. Save for the swish of silk curtains and the ticking of antique timepieces, here in the classic traditional room, all is quiet.

**TOO QUIET.** THINK some designers, who see the look as long on dignity, but short on welcome. Antiques can be intimidating, they say. Also, today, pedigreed furniture can be impossibly expensive.

That's the reason for the innovative spirit that design professionals now bring to the traditional look. Instead of the seriousness one expects in a museum, one now finds a occasional touch of whimsy — tiger-stripe patterns, for example, painted on the proper frames of a Regency-style chair.

And solidly constructed, but less-than-distinguished, furniture gets new attention: A reproduction fauteuil (French armchair) can be dressed up in a snappy contemporary plaid.

The overall formal feeling of a traditional room often is lightened by simply removing the Persian car-

pet, replacing it with a more casual sisal rug. At the same time, upholstered pieces are swaddled in loose-fitting white canvas slipcovers (they are meant to look a little rumpled).

Still lending their luster to the traditional look of the '80s are rich background colors, such as forest green, teal blue and Chinese red. Now, though, you may find these gemstone colors acting as foil for a singularly bright piece of contemporary metal sculpture.

The updated idea for the traditional look is to blend a few period pieces of excellent quality — an antique armchair, perhaps, or an heirloom writing desk — within a neatly balanced setting, and still make room for supplies.

CONTEMPORARY design always has admired uncluttered surfaces and lots of empty spaces between clean-lined furnishings. This is the minimalist spirit that underlies the classic look. "Steak," some have called it. "Cold" and "uncomfortable," say the critics.

Now there comes a welcome infusion of color and warmth to contemporary design, as well as a rounding off of usually hard, geometric edges. Updated for the '80s, contemporary rooms now offer real places to sit, such as a 19th century armchair, with its wood frame stripped and pickled, the upholstery covered in raw silk of white, pale gray or the palest lilac.

Or imagine the surprise of a camelback sofa, its curving outline covered in the plainest off-white canvas. These pared-down upholstered seats, these pieces look completely at home with international style classics — Wassily chairs or an elegant, square-topped glass coffee table.

And, today, the furniture will perch atop something other than gray industrial carpeting — bleached pine floorboards, perhaps, or a soft kilim or dhurrie rug.

What's gone is the glitz, what's new is the hint of warming colors. Vast expanses of plain, white walls still are the favored background for the contemporary look, but watch for the sculptural splash of bright green apples massed in a glass bowl.

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THE SEDUCTIVE charm of the country look stems from luxuriously comfortable seating pieces. Overstuffed sofas are sprinkled with pillows, and cushy club chairs are paired with ottomans. They all invite the visitor to sink into a downy embrace.

This sense of mid-Victorian overabundance continues in a wealth of garden colors (pinks, blues, greens), repeated in needlepoint carpets, flounced table skirts and slipcovers. And the colors come in a sometimes dizzying array of fabric patterns — cabbage-rose chintz, coral-ribbon chintz, striped linen and plaid taffeta.

At its best, country-look combinations seem artless, as if it all just grew together, in layers, one generation borrowing from another.

This generation, though, is calling for a bit of relief from the determined clutter so popular just a few years ago. In the demanding, busy '80s, designers are packing away some of the overflow of Oriental drawings and majolica knockknacks that threatened to fill every inch of shelf and tabletop.

Simple, down-home comfort — the country look's reason for being — now seeks a subtle restraint in accessorizing. A simple brass floor lamp works just as well as tанд costs



HUDSON DESIGN STUDIO PHOTO

Comfy but not cluttered, this family room offers an eclectic country French feeling with upbeat contemporary appointments. The room is beautiful as well as practical, with its fine play on textures and patterns all in rich,

vibrant colors of gold, tangerine, coral, mint green and teal blues. By Hudson's Interior Design Studio designers Susan Zinger, Mario Kocaj and Gloria Brown Ellis.

far less than a painted milk can wired for light and topped with a fuzzy shade.

Best of all, this new design temperance makes way (aesthetically and economically) for one or two primitive wood pieces — the newest trend in the country-look frontier.

TAKING THEIR fanciful cue from the postmodern architects, young, sophisticated designers strive for an ever-changing, always "new" look that is on the cutting edge of design. There's a certain "undecorated" feeling to these sophisticated rooms, but they're really quite thor-

oughly thought out — right down to the scrubbed, bare floors, which, to hide defects, may be faux-painted to resemble marble or tile.

For the postmodern, youthful economy has gone upscale. That means an investment in stainless steel metro shelving, rather than making do with cinder-block and wood-plank bookcases. And the youthful innovators have bypassed decorative fa s (out with last year's freestanding columns) to concentrate on fundamentals.

Bargain basement furniture is the penny-wise thing of the moment, and it comes dressed up in vibrant Medi-

terranean colors — hot pink, aqua, tangerine — and in wild, lush fabrics. An old metal porch glider, for example, is revamped with a coat of sunny yellow paint, its cushions are covered in a large tropical print.

Pulled up to this postmodern's "sofa" are a pair of metal lawn chairs, painted bright green to pick up the color of palm fronds in the cushion fabric. A coffee table may be a stainless steel two-shelf pushcart from a restaurant supply house, or a galvanized tin washub, overturned and topped with a round of

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## Reborn Colonial now contemporary

By Marie McGee  
staff writer

**I**T WAS THE classic case: the children had grown and moved away and the three-bedroom Spanish-style colonial suddenly got too large. The need to provide space for rambunctious teens was no longer a priority.

They found, too, that their taste in home furnishings had changed. The traditional — and sometimes cluttery — "country" feeling that had surrounded them for so many years no longer suited their lifestyle.

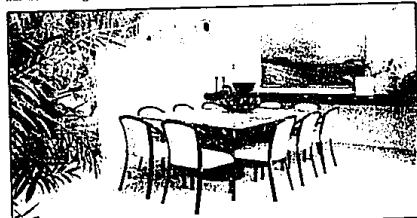
Then, too, there was a need to display some of the art they were beginning to collect now that they had time to travel. A lot of the art was glass pieces that needed to be showcased.

It was clearly time to make a move. A condominium looked appealing. But what about all the memories? How do you move those? How do you give up a gorgeous backyard of trees you planted? Or a tree-lined neighborhood where friendliness was a byword?

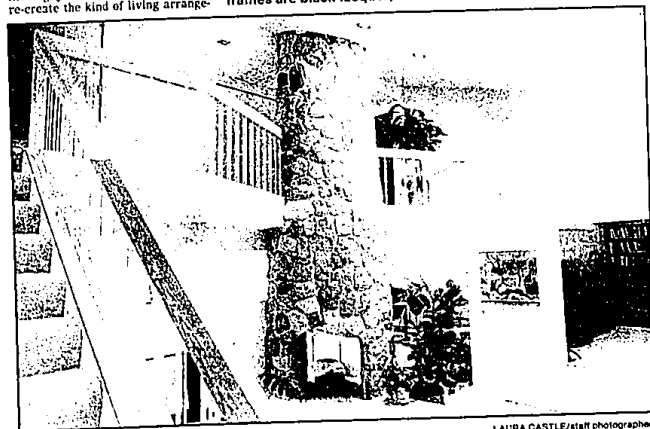
The answer is you don't. Instead of moving, you call in an architect and re-create the kind of living arrange-

ment that now suits your needs at this point in time.

THAT'S THE STORY behind the now-contemporary, two-story home on West Bloomfield that once resembled many of the other colonials in the neighborhood. Only the address and a fieldstone fireplace remain the same — everything else has been changed.



A strong accent piece in the dining room is a custom-designed table that seats 10 made of Paradiso marble in shades of taupe, beige and brown atop black lacquered bases. The chair frames are black lacquer, with the seating fabric in beige.



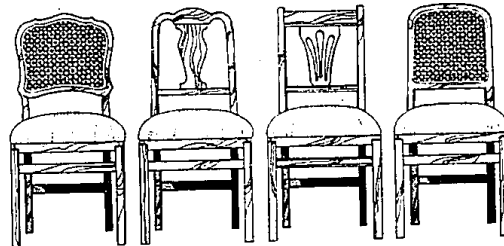
LAURA CASTLE/staff photographer

Only the fieldstone fireplace remained unchanged in the reconstruction. Dark bannisters were replaced with oak with clear lucite spokes.

The downstairs was completely gutted. All of the dark wood, for instance, associated with Spanish-style colonials was removed. Three bedrooms became two — one a master bedroom with its own elegant master bath. The other a guest room.

One of the biggest changes per-

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### ADDITIONAL SEATING

Fall invites so many opportunities to entertain...and with them comes a need for attractive seating. Allow our interior experts to show you our selection of solid maple folding Stakmore chairs. Fruitwood or cherry finish. Fabric seats. \$49-\$79.

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