



PHOTO COURTESY OF ART VAN FURNITURE

Art Van Furniture's electric fireplace offerings include models that serve other functions, such as house entertainment equipment.

**FIREPLACE**

FROM PAGE C1

in Southfield, where gas easily outsells wood-burning. And since gas fireplaces are so easy to use, homeowners don't think twice about adding a second or third.

"Today, even the most modest home gets one or even two fireplaces," said Brown. Even low-end gas models look realistic, said Bob Merrill, a sales representative for All Seasons Spas & Fireplaces, which has showrooms in several cities including Livonia, West Bloomfield, Waterford, Sterling Heights, Dearborn Heights and Ann Arbor. "Now it's a matter of do I like this one or do I like that one? It's not a matter of does this look realistic to me."

Of course, fireplace technology hasn't overlooked our penchant for gadgets, buttons and the ultimate in convenience — another selling point for many homeowners. Today's gas and electric fireplaces are available with hand-held remote controls with on/off switches, thermostats and flame height monitors.

"It's something to have to impress your friends," said Merrill.

**ELECTRIC FIRE WAVE**

Technological improvements have transformed the electric fireplace, as well. And today's models — vastly improved ver-

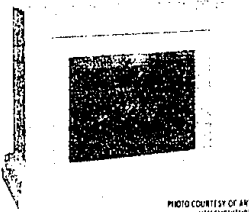


PHOTO COURTESY OF ART VAN FURNITURE

technology has enabled manufacturers to turn out electric fireplaces that look realistic, which has fueled consumer demand for them.

sions of the slow-moving flames of yesterday — have a substantial presence in today's hearth showrooms.

They have come a long way. They look better, and they are much more realistic," said Merrill at All Seasons where electric models range from \$500-\$2,000.

The result: Consumers have embraced the electric fireplace, an appliance once considered, if not tacky, then silly.

"There's been increased demand for the electric products," said Merrill. "Five years ago, it was laughable."

Again, verisimilitude primarily explains

consumer interest. That electric fireplaces are portable and extremely easy to use and maintain adds to their appeal.

For apartment dwellers, home renters and those on the move, an electric fireplace is the only viable option, said Karen Curley, spokeswoman for Art Van Furniture, which started carrying electric fireplaces three years ago.

"We felt it filled our guests' needs, and it's been very successful," said Curley. "You have the look and the feel of a warm fireplace without having a flue, the wood and the whole process. They just add a little ambience."

Currently, Art Van offers 40 electric models with furniture-grade mantles in a variety of materials, including oak, cherry and marble.

Mantle architectural styles run the gamut from traditional to Mission to contemporary. Some coordinate with Art Van furniture sets.

"Fireplaces really are an extension of furniture," said Curley. "It's a natural architectural piece that you put in your home, and it's another piece of furniture."

At Art Van, some electric fireplaces not only look like furniture, but they are. One model, for instance, does double-duty as an entertainment center. Another boasts a bookcase.

A little Dickens by firelight, anyone?

instafford@homecomm.net | (248) 901-2567

**ACCENT**

FROM PAGE C1

Keep fireplace use and frequency of use in mind when

purchasing accessories.

Obtain fireplace dimension measurements before shopping.

Let the design style of your home guide you.

Examine the predominant

colors and textures in the room housing the fireplace, including lamps, light fixtures, door handles, hinges and other hardware.

Take a few snapshots of your hearth to help guide you

in the showroom.

Browse the Web for accessory offerings and ideas. A list of manufacturers with Web site links is available from the Hearth, Patio & Barbecue Association at www.hpba.org.

**Don't Get Left In The Cold**  
Our Weather Maker Furnace Can Save You Up To 40% On Gas Bills!

**COLD FRONT ALERT**

INSTALLED FROM **\$1595**

FREE ESTIMATES FINANCING AVAILABLE

PRE-SEASON FURNACE CLEAN & CHECK Now \$69.95 Reg. \$99.95

DO IT YOURSELF AND SAVE

PRE-SEASON SALE

**LIZUT HEATING COOLING 858-7730**

205 ORCHARD LK. RD. AT TELEGRAPH (Across Home Depot) SERVING OAKLAND COUNTY SINCE 1968

UP TO **65% OFF**

**KITCHEN TOP SHOP**

Call us today so you can be cooking in your new kitchen before Spring arrives!

Free In Home Estimates • Design Service Available

**248.477.1515**

31150 W. Eight Mile Road • Farmington Hills

**CLASSIC INTERIORS FURNITURE**

*Announces...*

**The Grand Opening of Our Brand New LEXINGTON SHOWROOM!**

Come in and see the largest and newest showroom in Michigan! Celebrate with extra savings and extra discounts on everything from...

**LEXINGTON HOME BRANDS**

And for this event...  
**We Will Pay Your 6% Sales Tax!!**

**CLASSIC INTERIORS FURNITURE**

Visit Our In-Store Clearance Center

20292 Middlebelt, Livonia (S. of 8 Mile)  
**(248) 474-6900**

Open Mon., Thurs., Fri. 9:30-9  
Tues., Wed., Sat. 9:30-5:30  
Open Sunday 1-4

VISA M.C. DISCOVER