SOMETHING OLD, SOMETHING NEW: HOW ANTIQUES AMP UP CONTEMPORARY SPACES

by Cara Greenberg | September 19, 2016

Antiques add drama — and more than a little gravitas — to contemporary interiors. Top talent reveal how they pull off the balancing act.

In the bedroom, an upholstered bench by Brunschwig & Fils is positioned at the foot of a vintage sleigh bed by Mitchell Black. The headboard was custom built by Christopher Ball of Michael Thomas. The side table is a vintage American cabinet, and the vintage mirror is a 19th-century English. "This bedroom is a fantastic example of how you can blend old and new to create something truly special," says Brunschwig & Fils partner Steven Schneider.

"Antiques are a great foil to chic, fast-forward interiors," says New York-based decorator Howard Slatkin. "They add a sense of history and personality to a contemporary space."

In the living room, a 19th-century English mahogany secretaire is paired with a 1950s French iron armchair. The custom-made sofa is upholstered in a vintage fabric by Brunschwig & Fils. "Antiques give a room character," says Slatkin. "They can be used as focal points, or to give a more casual, lived-in feel to a modern space."

In the kitchen, a vintage French clock is positioned on the counter. The vintage mirror is a 19th-century English. "This kitchen is a fantastic example of how you can blend old and new to create something truly special," says Brunschwig & Fils partner Steven Schneider.

"Antiques are a great foil to chic, fast-forward interiors," says New York-based decorator Howard Slatkin. "They add a sense of history and personality to a contemporary space."

I don’t like the term contemporary interiors. I prefer mid-century to periods to create a timeless design in a 21st-century home," says Slatkin. "I’m not a centennialist of old, traditional interiors, which can incorporate every style and period from antiquity to the present day, but not necessarily blend into one seamless whole. Too many designers selectively use antiques in otherwise contemporary settings. In today's homes and in today’s interiors, there’s a few particularly successful examples of such a strategy.

Antiques add drama — and more than a little gravitas — to contemporary interiors. Top talent reveal how they pull off the balancing act.

antiques

antique

contemporary

interior

furniture

sofa

chair

table

bed

bedroom

kitchen

living

room

French

Antique

European

American

custom

made

fabric

mirror

clock

painting

photography

design

decorator

Howard Slatkin

Steven Schneider

Brunschwig & Fils

vintage

19th century

20th century

21st century

mid-century

traditional

timeless

blend

successful

examples

strategy

SHARE THIS STORY

Facebook

Twitter

Pinterest

Email

Tap to share
SOMETHING OLD, SOMETHING NEW: HOW ANTIQUES AMP UP CONTEMPORARY SPACES.

by Cara Greenberg | September 13, 2016

Antiques add drama — and more than a little gravitas — to contemporary interiors. Top valentins reveal how they pull off the balancing act.

C

c all of it is the unexpected juxtaposition of decorative elements that lift a contemporary interior out of the ordinary and make people sit up and take notice. Often, it’s the mixture of one or more well-defined antiques, thoughtfully deployed against the backdrop of contemporary furniture, that makes the whole setting pop. "Antiques are an element of surprise in a contemporary space," says Lori Nellis, an interior designer and New York-based interior designer. "They can be a contemporary interior design trick that has an effect similar to the color black.

It wasn’t until the last few decades of the 20th century that mixing styles and periods became acceptable, and then their design repercussions were small. Now that people think about antiques far more modernly in their interior sense — “off the shelf,” whether the item was bought new at Macy’s, Century or of high Victorian stock. The early 20th century saw excesses of classical styles, the birth of the modern movement and the success and continued adoption of the international design language. By the 1970s, when the typical contemporary room was white and open, with furnishings grounded on the right angles, some design rebels began bringing in Eclecticism and historical styles to temper the mix.

Today, with websites making global shopping possible, the window of decorative history is fair game for those seeking to create interesting interiors, which can incorporate style and period from antiques in a pleasing manner. But a delicate balancing act is required. Many top designers selectively use antiques in otherwise contemporary settings to add drama and anchor their schemes. Below, a few particularly successful examples of such a strategy.

* Barbara Brancino, (left, ca. 1690), is a masterly in Sackville’s elegant living room, which also features a sofa, chairs and side tables. (1690), and the Sackville designed furniture that forms a limited edition of 40 pieces, which is upholstered in Italian wool in heavy woolen linen and linen detail. Photo by Paula Panesgini.