

MANSION GLOBAL

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Going Vintage: Classic furnishings spark curiosity, tell a story, and add character to interiors

By Tracy Kaler

Estate sales, flea markets, marketplaces such as Chairish, Etsy, and 1stDibs, and even secondhand shops like Goodwill are where interior designers forage for vintage treasures. Be it a 1940s Danish sofa, a mid-century tulip table, or a striking starburst chandelier, vintage pieces are flawlessly woven into home decor, as they pair well with both new furnishings and priceless antiques.

A TRENDY AND VERSATILE STYLE

Vintage ranges from 20 to 99 years old, with collectibles 100 years or older qualifying as antique. Although vintage items and antiques have long had their places in well-appointed spaces, pre-owned furniture and accessories seem to be more on-trend than ever. With lingering supply-chain issues, long lead times for custom furniture, and the rise of sustainability, recycling, and eco-friendly products, designers and their clients are frequently outfitting rooms with vintage seating, tables, lighting, and accouterments.

Those who adore vintage often include a mishmash of articles in a single room, layering and blending finishes, fabrics, and materials. That curated mix of objects, ideally reflecting several periods in history, can revitalize a home.

“I love items that evoke another era’s sense of style and glam,” says New York – based designer Andrew Suvalsky. “Certain eras appeal to me in particular, from the Art Deco of the 1930s and 1940s and the more obviously mid-century look of the 1950s to 1970s.”

According to Mr. Suvalsky, such collectibles not only create a mood in his home, but they enhance his other pieces. In his Montclair, New Jersey, residence, he has placed a medley of vintage items and never grows tired of his carefully

curated assortment. For instance, he points out an oversize, oxidized metallic-finish lamp from the '60s in his living room. He gave it a fresh look by topping it with a modern, rust-colored shade. Likewise, his pair of '70s armless chairs were recovered in a “groovy” houndstooth fabric, playing up the mid-century aesthetic of the upholstered duo. But natural materials like rattan aren't off the table, either.



A statement lamp with a rust shade. DLUX EDITIONS

“In my sunroom, I have a 1950s rattan set—sofa, chair, and side tables—that has also been reupholstered in a preppy and durable indoor-outdoor fabric,” he says. “Each piece adds a sense of history and playfulness to the room, a vibe that people really love.”



Designer Andrew Suvalsky has a 1950s rattan set in his sunroom.
DLux Editions

'INSTANT CHARACTER'

There's no doubt that vintage furniture, textiles, and accessories introduce personality, a characteristic that a room may otherwise lack when solely decorated with new furnishings.

START WITH A MIDSIZE PIECE

For a first-timer, designers generally recommend starting with one or two vintage pieces. Gradually phasing articles into a room is a way to get one's feet wet. Then in due time, one can become a seasoned pro when browsing flea markets and online marketplaces. But introducing a single trinket such as a blue and white candlestick or a jadeite vase wouldn't be enough to spur the eclectic sensibility that vintage represents. Mr. Suvalsky suggests beginning with a midsize piece.