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Textile designer and artist Margo Selby talks to Elspeth Pridham about the world of weaving

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Ahead of the 10th edition of Clerkenwell Design Week, we look at the key launches to hit East London

Products

Specifying a home cinema involves more than simply installing a projector, says Sean Hannam

Projects

We look at projects in the Bathroom Design over £25,000 category at the Kbbreview Retail & Design Awards

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Kay Hill looks at why vintage furniture is so popular and how best to specify pieces in your clients' homes

Issue 25
05.2019

Studio.

studio-news.com

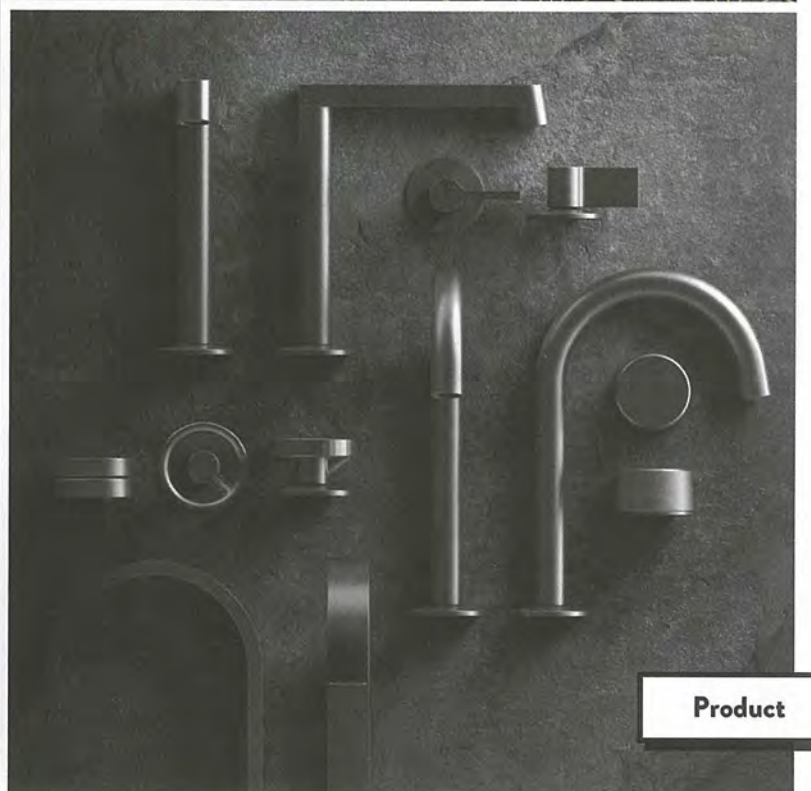
Professional



Places



Product



for residential design professionals

Perfect vintage

by Kay Hill

Interior trends come and go, but vintage furniture remains enduringly popular. Kay Hill investigates its evergreen appeal

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IF THERE IS ONE over-arching reason why vintage design remains popular – even among clients who could afford bespoke furniture – it's the need for individuality. "People have moved away from wanting a show home, especially in London, as these have no personality," says interior designer Maurizio Pellizzoni. "They want something that's their own, not something they have seen in a magazine 20 times before. A vintage piece makes a scheme unique."

Designer Emilie Fournet, founder of Emilie Fournet Interiors, was brought up in France



Above: At Stedsans, which features on The Modern Marketplace all the vintage furniture is reupholstered and filled with materials that meet modern fire safety precautions.

with a mother who loved flea markets. "It's in my DNA," she says. "I will specify a vintage piece as something unique and original. I always try to find a balance of new and old as it adds personality to a room." Melissa Hamilton, interior design director at Studio Indigo adds: "We use vintage in around 50% of our projects. Most people value it because it represents character and makes a home feel like it has been lived in."

Adam Hills, co-founder of salvage company Retrouvius, agrees. "It's about individuality and giving people a feeling of history," he says. "There are so many ways of getting yourself curated, so many people telling you how you should live, whether you follow Monocle or the Kardashians. Vintage makes an interior look like it has some historical depth." While according to Richard Parr, architect at Richard Parr + Associates, "people are becoming more adventurous and design-aware. They are not as rigid about conforming as previous generations. They aren't reliant on certain shops to dictate what their taste should be any more."

Clients who love vintage cut right across all age groups. "Many of our older clients grew up yearning for the modern design of their youth but are only now in a financial position to afford them, whereas the younger customers are discovering cool, fashionable designs they are seeing in the must-read magazines or the latest Bond movie set," explains Michael Marks, founder of 20th Century Marks, a regular attendee at the Modern Shows which specialise in vintage.

Most clients don't want to create a historical set but are yearning for a sense of history and permanence. "People who buy Mid-century pieces enjoy the feel and look of vintage – the patina and the story it has to tell appeal to them," Tanya Pateman, marketing associate at Modern Shows, notes. "We have become bored of mass-produced throwaway furniture with no life or soul.

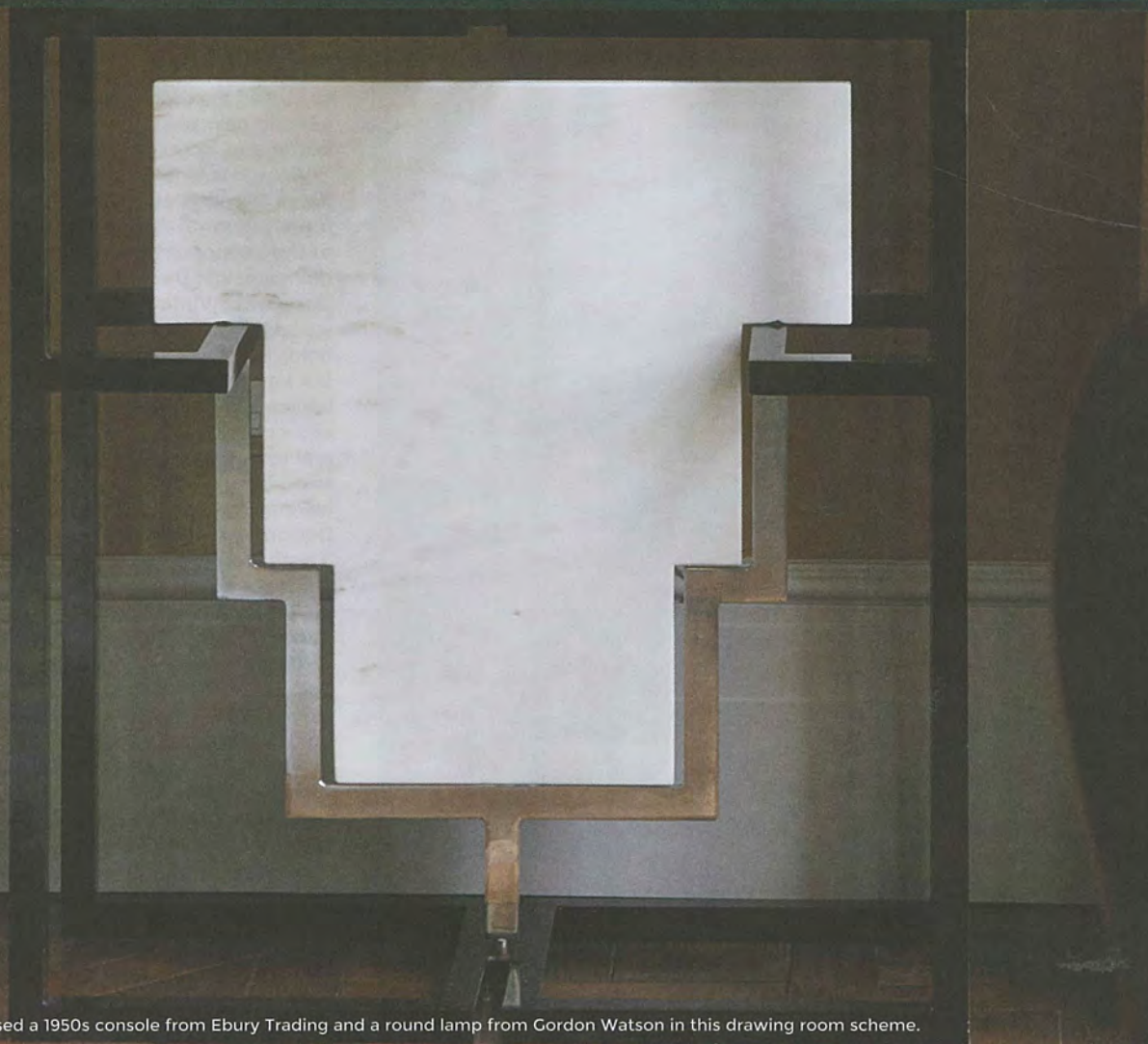
People love mixing Mid-century iconic pieces with modern design – that is why the Midcentury Modern show became so popular. It makes for a loved and lived-in home and a personal, individual environment."

Tony Freud, editorial director at online vintage and antique marketplace 1stdibs, has seen the mix-and-match approach develop. "When the craze for Mid-century modern first started 20 years ago, I knew houses that were recreations of the era, with every piece looking the part as if it was from a museum," he says. "We are seeing less of that period-perfect design now; people are mixing these pieces with other things. So much of what is being made today really echoes the style of those Mid-century pieces, so they work well together." Hamilton adds: "A piece of Gabriella Crespi furniture will sit very well next to something contemporary or an 18th-century piece and will look beautiful regardless. I love the tension between the old and the new."

Andrew Fletcher, also a founder of 20th Century Antiques, agrees. "Some of my clients live in Mid-century properties and want to furnish the interiors with period pieces," he says. "But most people have more eclectic tastes, mixing Mid-century with contemporary and earlier pieces which makes for interesting and textural interiors."

Customers "aren't so blinkered that they have to have everything from 1956", according to Hills. "Now they will bring in Edwardian, Victorian or Mid-century pieces from other countries. To be able to say 'that belonged to my grandmother' – even if it didn't, but could have – gives people a touchstone about who they are and where they have come from. It's a very emotive thing."

Although iconic designs are expensive, vintage offers value for money says Parr. "Something like my Mid-century rosewood desk is beautifully made and fit for its function, and the materials are almost



Studio Indigo used a 1950s console from Ebury Trading and a round lamp from Gordon Watson in this drawing room scheme.



Photo: Jave Fitzgones



Photo: Caitlin McGrigge

Definitions

Antique - an item must be at least 100 years old to be defined as an antique, so anything older than the 1920s would fall under this term.

Vintage - an item more than 20 years old (or 50 years, according to some) that is not yet an antique, so anything from 1920 to the 1970s definitely counts. Most would also include items from the 1980s.

Mid-century modern - furniture from the middle of the 20th century (roughly 1933 to 1965, although some say 1947 to 1957). A number of designs are still in production.

Retro - a new item made in the general style of a previous era.

Reproduction - a copy of an item from a previous era. These have become less common since copyright laws changed in 2016, preserving copyright on most Mid-century modern designs until 70 years after the death of the designer rather than the previous 25 years after launch.

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unacquirable - I would not specify tropical rosewood these days," he explains.

"A vintage Mid-century Scandinavian desk might cost you £3,000 - £5,000, but if you commissioned something new with that level of workmanship it would cost much more than that." Penny Oliver at Stedsans, one of the regulars at the Modern Shows, agrees: "The craftsmanship and quality can be better than a lot of modern furniture and the pieces often come with real design heritage."

Like a classic car versus a new one, vintage furniture can increase in value. "I think clients appreciate the craft, quality and tradition of vintage pieces. There is also the investment appeal," says Fletcher. "In my area of Scandinavian Modern design, many pieces have been in continuous production since the 1950s. In many cases it's actually cheaper to buy an excellent vintage example than a brand new piece - it will hold its value better and increase it with time."

Vintage is kinder to the environment, too, notes Oliver: "Customers are looking to buy more thoughtfully and are taking more notice of the impact of their purchasing decisions, going against the tide of the throwaway and disposable. Vintage furniture is more sustainable, has a lower carbon footprint and holds its value." Growing awareness about our impact on the planet also contributes, as Pellizzoni adds. "People are trying to be more eco-conscious," he says. "They are reusing and recycling more and they don't want to see a beautiful piece of furniture that could have a new lease of life end up in a skip." Designers feel better too, says Fournet: "I hate it on install day when there's that pile of cardboard boxes and polystyrene and plastic in the hall. Vintage comes with all the history and none of the carbon footprint!"

Unless you are buying priceless rarities, opting for vintage pieces makes them easy to live with. "Things can be allowed to look quite shabby or unrestored; 25 years ago everything was over-restored, now people want it to show as much history as possible," says Hills. "It can be really forgiving to live with. I can't stand modern interiors where everything is pristine, as the first scratch and it's ruined. With vintage you can use it and abuse it - your kids can be sick on it and your dog can scratch it and it just tells a story. It's a much more human way of living." According to Hamilton, "using vintage makes you more relaxed about your space. You

Above left: Maurizio Pellizzoni designed the room in this Surrey Hills country mansion around a vintage woven chair that belonged to the clients' grandmother. The Indian chest of drawers is also vintage

Right: Retrouvius find pieces that bring individuality to an interior.



Photo: Tom Fallon



understand that something has had a life before it came to you and it will have the odd chip or mark”.

The most popular eras are the 1950s and 60s, but others are enjoying a renaissance. “People will always be drawn to the timeless beauty of the classic Scandinavian Mid-century designs,” says Oliver. “But I’ve also found there seems to be an increase in interest in earlier 30s and 40s sofas and armchairs - in particular the lovely curved banana sofa designs.” At 1stdibs, Mid-century and Art Deco are hugely popular - but interest in the 70s and 80s, including The Memphis Group, is increasing. “Well-made things from every era survive and find a home,” notes Hills. “Some of the 80s pieces from Roche Bobois, Conran or Cassina were well designed and made and will perpetuate.”

Others are looking beyond the famous names. “Mid-century modern is ubiquitous and too-much copied, but there are some designers where there is not quite the same volume of reproductions, such as Børge Mogensen,” Parr says. “I’m also a big fan of Gio Ponti, who has been a lot less copied because his pieces are quirky and a lot of people consider them ugly. I find that level of exploration of design from a free-thinking Italian designer in the 1940s and 50s really interesting. For me, Gio Ponti and Franco Albini were the pinnacle of design. The next wave to become popular will be the early Gothic revival furniture, which is tricky for people to understand as it has connotations of being dark and religious - but since the St Pancras station restoration it’s a lot more accessible than it used to be.”

Everyone has their favourite sources - antique shops in Lillie Road, King’s Road, Pimlico Road and Portobello Road, Everything But the Dog in Walthamstow and Vine Street Vintage in Brighton are mentioned. Building a relationship with a good local dealer is also judged to be a far safer and more cost-effective way of buying than via auctions. Shows such as Midcentury Modern and Midcentury East by Modern Shows offer rich pickings, too. “It’s always worth getting up stupidly early in the morning for events like the Ardingly International Antiques & Collectors Fair or the Sunbury Antiques Market at Kempton [Racecourse],” adds Fournet. “With vintage, if you don’t buy it when you see it then you will live to regret it.”



Top left: For this project in Crystal Palace, Emilie Fourget chose a vintage Ercol two-seater and dining chairs. The kitchen was made from reclaimed Canadian bar wood, the large vintage lamp is from Homeplace and the vintage kilim is from Everything But the Dog.

Top right: This Studio Indigo scheme features a 1970s Talisman coffee table, Lorfords table and 80s table lamps from Tarquin Bilgen.

Above: While furnishing this flat at the Barbican, Retrouvius focused on Mid-Century modern.