

Classic versus contemporary

Tracy Leach says good design never goes out of fashion

IN THE last few years, we have seen a resurgence of interest in using 20th-century design classics in the home, including furniture, wallpaper and fabrics.

It is possible to integrate these highly-stylised pieces into a traditional home, as long as we stick to one basic rule: good design is good design, whatever period we are looking at. A beautifully-proportioned Chippendale chair has the same artistic integrity as the elegant curves of a Pantone chair.

When co-ordinating a room scheme, think "balance". To avoid the room looking like a pastiche of styles, decide on a general theme of either traditional or contemporary, and then introduce key contrasting pieces.

The dining room pictured (see top right) has a heavy, rustic dining table, and is teamed with curving Pantone chairs. The look remains balanced because of the simple backdrop of polished wooden floor and unadorned walls.

Think eclectic: in a traditional interior, consider using one-off contemporary pieces. A room should be a representation of how a life has been lived, rather than have a "just-designed" look. We all accumulate furniture over time, as heirlooms are handed down and homes are merged/de-merged throughout our lives. Our homes should reflect this.

Beware of cheap copies of 20th century design classics. Many internet sites boast massive stocks of iconic designs at knockdown prices, but they are simply copies.



Tracy Leach runs her company, Icon Interiors Ltd, from her home in Overton, telephone 01256 770757, or visit www.iconinteriors.org

Think about using wallpaper. Classic wallpaper motifs have been reinterpreted in a contemporary way by Ulf Moritz in his collection for Brian Yates. Use large-scale patterns on a feature wall to give a focal point to a room. If the room scheme is based on a neutral palette, think about introducing curves and texture via wallpaper. This gives a sense of fluidity against the strong geometric lines of contemporary furniture.

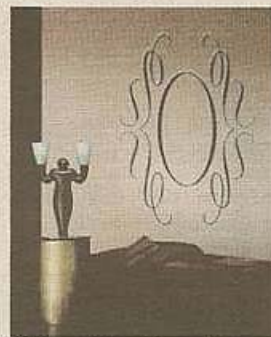
The oversized feature wallpaper, with a curved motif, pictured (see right middle) is in stark contrast to the harsh lines of the armchair and other furniture.

The traditional patterns of damask can be oversized and downscaled to layer different textures within the room scheme. A feature wall with an oversized design at the end of the hallway (see right bottom) could be balanced by using smaller motifs for the adjoining walls. In this hall the traditional wallpaper, with its classic motif, is paired with contemporary occasional tables and coloured glassware.

Be playful! Have the confidence to take risks. Good design is when you look good in your environment. If you like it, go for it! Don't decorate to a trend, or someone else's taste.

Use wallpaper as artwork: strong/decorative motifs can be used as focal points in a hallway, or at the end of a corridor to draw the eye towards the object.

The panel of wallpaper pictured (see below) evokes a feeling of a beautifully-ornate French mirror, but in an abstract way.



Wallpaper is used to evoke a feeling of a beautifully-ornate French mirror



A question of balance – this heavy, rustic dining table is teamed with curving Pantone chairs – and it works



The wallpaper's curved motif is in stark contrast to the harsh lines of the armchair



Large-scale patterns on a feature wall give a focal point