

This month, we're talking... How to buy vintage

Introducing old furniture full of character into your newly renovated home can help transform it into a charming and stylish space – but there are a few things to think about before you invest

Words: Yvette Murrell

Mid-century, Art Deco, 70s-inspired – many retro trends crop up time after time. But often, nothing is better than getting your hands on an original piece. “The history and craftsmanship of vintage furniture is very appealing to 21st-century homeowners who are turned off by the throwaway culture associated with mass-produced goods,” says Will Harness from The Old Cinema, a vintage shop in Chiswick. While finding pieces to suit your home and needs will likely take longer than buying brand new, there are benefits to time spent researching and reclaiming. Many vintage designs are available “at the fraction of a cost” of new pieces, as interior designer Jen Morton highlights. “And design classics can often be picked up for a snip of their current retail value,” she says. So where should you begin looking for these prize pieces? Websites such as eBay and Gumtree are popular, but there is something to be said about heading out to the shops, too. “There are some fantastic vintage fairs and specialist stores around the country,” says Carl

Morenikeji, director at online shop Scaramanga which specialises in vintage interiors. “You’ll get the chance to have a good look at the furniture and ask the seller about its history and provenance.”

Interior stylist Amy Fewtrell, who also co-founded Devon-based Relish, a shop and online store selling antique finds, encourages thinking outside the box when searching for vintage products. “Keep an eye out for house clearances, visit an auction, or look in your local paper for advertisements – you’re likely to find pieces for great prices.”

Some destinations come up often when we talk about retro furniture: Ardingly Antiques & Collectors Fair at the South of England Showground, Sunbury Antiques Market at Kempton Racecourse in Surrey, and Newark Antiques & Collectors Fair in Nottinghamshire. “You need to get there before 7am to get the best deals, but don a warm hat and bring a flask of tea and the haggling can be a lot of fun,” Jen tells us. “But if that doesn’t sound right for you, take a look at online stores specialising in certain products or eras – theantiqueshop.co.uk, for example. They will post regular updates on what they have to sell, and often have a bit more background information on each item.” When shopping online, narrow down your search by including key wording such as ‘Mid-century chest of drawers’ rather than simply ‘vintage storage’ and look out for companies that restore original products such as wooden floorboards and tiles, which can bring real character to a space or even replicate your property’s original features. The likes of Woodworks by Ted Todd salvage rare antique and reclaimed floor-coverings from all over the world.

As with any furniture purchase, it is important to measure up your space before you shop – but there are some additional considerations to bear in mind, too. “Come with a plan,” advises Sonia Pash, founder of interior design and build company Temza. “You only have one



Image: James Badston



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