

Retro mix

1920's style

By Candace Leigh

No one can argue with the intrinsic style of cold gin and hot jazz. The Roaring '20s, a source of inspiration for fashion designers this spring, also acts as a swank muse for decorating your own pad. While trends offer some excellent ideas, it's the culture of the era that best guides your aesthetic vision through this remix.



THE INSIDE VIEW



This theme works well in condos and apartments, as most living spaces in the 1920s were small. As technology improved, kitchens became more efficient. Formal parlors and dining rooms became rare. European Colonial furniture from the 17th and 18th centuries was popular, as were faux antiques in that style. Sorry, fans of Queen Anne and Hepplewhite, but you're better off avoiding this type of furniture. Your space should be evocative of the era, not an attempt to copy a typical room.

Start with your color palette. Think pastel for the walls, fresh and pale colors, set off by dark wood furniture. Instead of wallpaper, which is tough to steam off when it's time to move, choose a different soft color for each wall. You can also frame a wall section with decorative molding and paint the interior surface. Keep it light — celadon green, petal pink, a touch of gold. Deep colors evoke more of a Victorian feel. Keep a romantic palette, but savor extravagant details.

Some Jazz Age pieces that still work include: the Murphy bed, which folds up into the wall, as you may have seen in classic movies, and the Pullman Davenport Bed, a true sofa

bed, not a futon. Freudianism was all the rage, too, but try not to let it affect too many of your bedroom choices. Seek multifunctional pieces with a modern geometry or art deco look. Large, round mirrors, long and low vanities, and sleek armoires are all swell.

Travel was popular, and treasures from abroad inspired design. From the discovery of King Tut's tomb to mah-jongg parties, anything "exotic" was hot. Think Oriental rugs for your living room, scenic prints, steamer trunks with travel labels in lieu of coffee tables, wall sconces, and shelves littered with unique objets d'art from your trips.

The bathroom, though usually small, was considered to be a meas-

ure of one's status. Hedonism was enthusiastically encouraged. Indulge yourself with heated towel bars, imported soaps and lotions, plush rugs and bath sheets. Keep the kitchen clean-lined, but make the bath a luxury. Invest in fabulous fixtures, flattering light, and oversized bottles of tub suds.

For guys enthused by this era, try going for more of a WWI aviator style to keep it from being too frou-frou, or co-opt speakeasy chic. Use vinyl roller shades on windows, as an inexpensive blackout fix for parties or movie watching. Turn a coat closet into a secret bar with hanging stemware racks, pullout shelves, and a tiny fridge for hooch.

In addition to travel or jazz posters and vintage advertising, prints from artists of the day can

enrich the space. Cutting edge at the time, and still "modern" now, are paintings by Max Ernst, Paul Klee, Edward Hopper, Pablo Picasso, Piet Mondrian, Henri Matisse, Joan Miró, and Pierre Bonnard. As always, choose pieces because they have emotional resonance, not to match the sofa.

Use flapper fashion for particulars: beaded pillows, beaded lampshades, beaded blankets or curtain fringe. Vases of exotic blooms mixed with peacock feathers. A train rack to display your hat or high-heel collection. Chinoiserie and other irresistible silks for pillow shams. Layers of diaphanous fabric over windows. Embroidery, lace, silver and gold details. Choose form over function.

As indulgent as the young were, they were also catalysts of an unmatched cultural revolution. Keep this character in a library of works, not just the great F. Scott Fitzgerald and Dorothy Parker fiction of the time, but also a collection of engaging books on sociology, politics, psychology, and anthropology. (You'll impress your dates.)

If you have an independent spirit, perhaps it's time to bring the 1920s home.



