

Hand-painted furniture: The must-have home furnishings of the season

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Worldly influences

Hundreds of years ago, Egyptian artisans embellished everything from tables to pottery with colorful motifs to pass on ancient fables to future generations. "We're seeing a resurgence of these hand-painted items as consumers look to add personal style to their home with unique pieces from around the world," says Babcock. "They're embracing heirlooms and other richly decorated items that they see as authentic to a certain era or culture."

Today, influences in hand-painted home furnishings are widespread, coming from as far away as the Middle East, Europe and South America. "We've seen a variety of items wrapped with ethnic-inspired artwork, from a sideboard with a soft, delicate floral print inspired by Eastern Europe to an Asian armoire with clean, simplistic lines and finished in black and red with the added touch of painted landscapes and pictorials," says Babcock. "Painting styles vary from region to region. From the palate of colors to the brush stroke, every region has its own influence. The uniqueness of the hand-painted piece is reflective of the individual artist's background, as well as their talent."

Arhaus commissions gifted artisans from all over the world to give each hand-painted piece its own unique qualities and traits. For instance, the Sam Remo Armoire gets its charm from old world style cabinets reminiscent of those that can be found in the Italian villas of Tuscany. It features intricate, hand-painted floral accents and a distressed garnet finish achieved by applying several layers of multi-colored paints and lacquers. A matching cupboard and sideboard are adorned with the same hand-painted finish making the San Remo an exquisite collection.

Ethnic motifs

From attractive 19th-century Southwestern prints to those of Northern Sweden, there are a number of decorative motifs to choose from when incorporating elegant hand-painted pieces into the home. "Artwork with Moroccan, Indonesian and Middle Eastern influences tends to be very ornate with rich, bright colors like cinnabar red, black and bronze," says Babcock. "If the goal is to add a vibrant color or pattern to a specific room, but you are not ready to paint the walls, try adding hand-painted pieces from one of these regions to create a focal point or accent to the room."

To create a balanced, eclectic look with clean, ethnic-inspired collections, Babcock recommends introducing lavish hand-painted furnishings showing a variety of influences from all over the world. "It's important to choose one piece to serve as a center piece or focal point in the room. This may be a large Venetian mirror with a handcrafted frame covered with Middle Eastern art to hang over the sofa or a grand vintage-inspired armoire with doors ornamented with lilies," Babcock added.

Ethnic-inspired accent pieces are becoming increasingly popular, especially mixed with contemporary furnishings. According to Babcock, there are no rules to decorating with hand-painted items. "You can take an intricately painted console table like our Kartini Console and pair it with a handsome contemporary leather sofa and brushed chrome lamps. Accent the look with graphic pillows and a fur throw and you have a contemporary look full of color and texture," says Babcock.

Endless opportunities

With ethnic-inspired hand-painted home furnishings, the opportunities are endless. Below are suggestions from Babcock and the Arhaus team of interior design consultants as to how to incorporate these one-of-a-kind pieces into your décor.

* Look for antique-looking pieces that bring a certain era or culture into the home. This adds a personal touch to your décor, and because hand-painted furniture is such a big trend, it's becoming easier to find unique pieces with a variety of ethnic influences.

* Introduce painted furniture that brings a new element of style and color into the space, adding an eclectic look. This piece doesn't necessary have to blend with the existing furnishings; it's the subtle details like an accent color of paint on a coffee table duplicated in the pillows on a sofa or the beading on a lighting fixture that pull the entire look together.

* Mix more modern, contemporary styles with ethnic, antique-looking designs. For instance, take the Verona TV Cabinet by Arhaus. The doors of the cabinet are accented with clusters of hand-painted roses and vines. Pair it with a floral tapestry sofa and throw in pillows with lots of floral mixes -- now that's a refined, elegant look!

* Embrace pieces with a variety of finishes. For example, the panels of a simple armoire can be brushed with black and gold filigree accents, while the casing is a deep-waxed stain allowing the natural wood grain to show.

* Watch for this season's decorative, hand-painted accessories like mirrors with delicate floral designs, candlesticks imprinted with Asian-inspired designs and bowls, platters and tabletop figurines to add color and interest to any room. Accessories are just another way to achieve this charming hand-painted look in your home!

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