



# Brief history of Interior Design

by  
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MARLA COUTTS

**M**y inspiration for this Brief History, with its emphasis on home decor, comes from my love of creating warm living spaces. This, I'm happy to do, either from scratch, or by designing around and re-arranging your existing furniture - and then suggesting what to include in the way tasteful and apposite accessories. The challenge, of course, is always matching your lifestyle with my creative design ideas.

My fascination with interiors goes back a long way, beginning with, as a child, having parents with a somewhat 'avante garde' approach to decoration. They always allowed me to select the decor for my own bedroom. This soon became a focal point for the whole household.

Having spent a number of enjoyable years in the fashion trade, I became involved in creating comfortable and eminently liveable homes. My enthusiasm for interior design and decoration coming to the fore, in the process. This, in turn, has given me the desire and inspiration to share my experiences in this area with others and so I have written this short booklet to provide you with the groundwork for your adventures into Home Styling.

And if you cannot find exactly what you want then I am here to help you at any time

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*Introducing*  
**MARLA'S 100% RECIPE  
FOR A CREATIVE HOME**  
- making experience work for you.

Introducing the **Home Styling** for the Creative Homemaker. Based on the informative lectures of Marla Shapps.

**Give your home a fresh look without breaking the bank....use the proven Marla Shapps creative method. Enhance your home environment so that your friends and family will admire the results of your skill in producing truly coordinated settings. They will approve of the way you have just drawn everything together (you've no need to tell them how – just accept their compliments and smile inwardly to yourself).**

### **SO WHERE DID HOME STYLING FIRST START?**

The wonderful world of creative interiors started way back in history. Man, and women, have always looked for ways to enhance the look of their living space - be it in the magnificent palaces of old, or the somewhat more humbe dwellings of today. And with my help you, too, will be able to fashion your own dream rooms throughout your house; finding the look that you love in combination with the lifestyle that you lead.

## SO LET US STEP BACK IN TIME..

...and take a good look around your house in the process. To aspire to good quality home styling does not mean committing yourself to spending a fortune. But it does mean studying and appreciating what has gone before us in the past; looking at styles that were cherished by our ancestors - with the realisation that many of their creative ideas can still be apposite in todays more austere environment.

With our a smaller room, it is often easier to try out your newly acquired furnishing techniques in order to get the feel for design to help you gain and increase your own self confidence. Because, in the final analysis, it's YOUR own personal tastes that count...just consider me your guide, your remote guru, pointing you in the right direction and offering helpful hints and tips along the way so that you get it right *THE FIRST TIME!*

## THE SEARCH FOR ESSENTIAL STYLINGS THAT GIVE YOU PERFECT COORDINATION

### How to get the right look for you?

Well, first of all it's necessary for you to take a look and decide upon a distinct period or design era that you like, and that will fit in with your own lifestyle and property; after all your comfort is a high priority when planning your living space, and practicality is just as important.

And here's one of Marla's simple, but, oh so essential, ground rules on the subject, which is "**DON'T RUSH IT!**". Give yourself time. Just sit back and pause a few moments to take stock of your living area, decide what will fit in sympathetically with the existing decor of your property? )There are many decisions to be made, but to make these you need the necessary styling tools at your fingertips. And that's where I come in. I can assist you by looking at, describing, and then suggesting the many possibilities available.

For example: into which period does your present property fall - and what does this mean in terms of your final result? Careful thought could result in you realizing that

some of the groundwork has already been laid by the builders who might well have set a particular 'style' for the house. On the other hand, it is probably more likely that you are dealing with a nondescript property that urgently requires your own personal touch.

To get a feel for your home, why not look at it through fresh eyes? I, personally, love to take time out to peek into some of the world's greatest Interior Design History: the fact is, I am sure that you would find this area brim full and bursting with adaptable ideas. Just stand back and look with an open mind.

Naturally, since you are avidly interested in the subject, it is already possible that you are knowledgeable about the history and design influence of the past. However, whichever way you have approached the subject (and it may be that this is all new to you), just grab a drink, sit back, relax, and read my brief overview of the influences of styling throughout the ages and how this can be a vital and important plank - a jumping off point - when taking a close look at your own living environment...



## INTERIOR DESIGN THROUGH THE AGES

It is unlikely that your home will come from a far past era, but information like this is invaluable when making decisions for yourself. But residual design influences from bygone ages, surprisingly, do turn up all the time even when they are not immediately obvious to the untrained eye. Examples of these trends are multifarious, and in the following pages I quote and draw your attention to areas that you might never have considered relevant to your own design project. Approach this with an open mind and digest what I have to say. And lets begin with:

### **The Persian Empire - 559-330BC**

The Ancient World covers a great many civilizations. The Persian Empire (559-330BC) was responsible for giving us an abundance of beautiful rich textiles, rugs and ceramics that even in those far off days, featured symmetrical designs and abstract figures.

### **Ancient Egypt...**

...left us great archives of information, the pyramids and many fantastic artifacts. Their use of precious stones, which were often used for decoration as well as personal enhancement are but one example that springs to mind, and hieroglyphics have since been used as literary patterns. The revival in the 1920's by Carter's exploration of the famous tombs, provided excellent and attractive designs. Many of these were encompassed in furnishings, fabrics, clothes and jewelery along with a revival in the design of ornaments.

### **The Etruscans - 900-396BC...**

...(in what is now Italy),(900-396BC) were noted for their fine pottery and art, and even in today's sophisticated design markets, elements of this work is still often incorporated. Ditto, the Ancient Greek style (1050-31BC) which subsequently influenced the Roman Empire and much of Western Art and Architecture.

**WHAT YOU SEE IS WHAT YOU'VE GOT - already!**

**Glance around your house, examine each room and look closely at everyday items including pots, pans, flower vases, wall plaques, candle sticks, chairs etc and other everyday artifacts, and see if your can spot any of these influences that have already invaded your home. Be totally critical in your review.**

Now read on



## **Ming Period - 1368-1644**

Probably the best known period in Chinese history is that of the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) which brought together stability and prosperity, along with notable achievements in literature and the arts. You possibly know that porcelain produced during this period is said to be amongst the finest of Chinese ceramics, and any remaining examples command a fortune at the auction houses around the world.

Silk manufacture also became a prominent feature of the Chinese art, while their traditional blue and white porcelain inspired the famous Dutch Delftware. History teaches us much, especially in this area.

But perhaps more familiar to you is...

## **Renaissance – 14<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> century**

The Renaissance period saw the rebirth of cultural awareness encompassing art, law, language, literature, philosophy, science and mathematics and so this was a very important era in terms of many great artists and architectural styling which was all influenced by classical antiquity.

It spawned great Renaissance artists including Leonardo da Vinci, Michelangelo, Raphael and Titian. Works of these artists and artisans remain shining lights, even to this day. They are certainly worth a study in themselves. Which will also allow you to appreciate design progression through the ages.

## **Rococo Period – 1715-74**

The Renaissance period subsequently also gave birth to, and merged into the wonderful styling of the Rococo Period. This latter was characterized by a delightful lightness and delicacy which was also combined with some truly elaborate ornamentation. Beginning around the time of Louis XV's (1715-74) reign of France it was strongly influenced by the famous courtesan Madame de Pompadour.

The Architectural Decoration took immense strides forward utilizing many features that were based on arabesques, shells, elaborate curves and asymmetry.

Possibly the most important, and certainly the most noticeable features, included the use of mirrors to create a feeling of spaciousness (something that we still apply to this day – and which you can certainly consider in your own designs) and beautiful furniture, to create a visual lavishness not previously seen.

Do you like this style, could you see small samples of this through out your home? Keep thinking how this relates to you as you read on...



### **Georgian & Regency Styling - 1715-1810**

Georgian Style (1715-1810) was developed from the Palladian style. Harmony and symmetry were the absolute key, resulting in soft delicate furnishings, intricate moldings and paneling on the walls.

This transmogrified into the Regency Style which grew from this (1811-1830) and flourished during England's George IV's reign with its distinctive elegance and sweeping staircases.

This style is often termed 'neo-classical' in its conception both architecturally and in its application to interior design.

Many people find this an extremely satisfying styling and it has the distinct advantage that hundreds of houses with examples of this art are still available for you to visit and study if you so wish. This means that you can see the actual period 'in situ', so to speak, and thus determine whether an adaptation would be visually appealing to you personally. Or you might decide that some individual elements could be integrated within your own design plan.

### **Victorian Period - 1837-1901**

Queen Victoria (1837-1901) was Britain's longest reigning monarch and so this period had a marked impact on design.

A key feature of Victoriana is its Eclecticism, and an obsession with detail. Fireplaces were adorned with the busiest ornamentation. Heavily draped fabrics were common and fabrics were highly patterned.

The Victorians borrowed from Classicism, Byzantine and Romanesque periods, reviving them in their own style. The elaborate Gothic style was favored becoming

popular for churches, universities and public buildings. A typical classic style was to have huge sweeping bay windows in all newly built properties.

Again, it is still possible to see this period preserved in architecturally protected buildings, so you can actually visit and decide for yourself if you would you like to apply some of this English heritage in your own home? You can use wonderful rich



colors, providing a feeling of warmth and welcome and making bold statements in your home?

### **The Edwardian Period - 1901-1910...**

...was a short-lived era, but nonetheless very influential in architecture and design.

The reign of King Edward VII - Queen Victoria's son - is often extended to encompass the end of World War I (1918), and was also known as the 'Belle Époque' - meaning beautiful era. So-called 'Art Nouveau' was a huge influence during this time and strongly impinged on the whole of everyday life. Art had never dominated the aesthetics of an era as thoroughly as it did during this epoch. It is characterized by its own unique architectural style, fashion of dress, and even way of life.

After the dark and heavy styling of the Victorian Era the fresh and light approach of the Edwardians was totally refreshing. It was informal and feminine, using bamboo and wicker furniture, flowers and floral patterns and pastel colors. The houses of the time were built with high ceilings giving a wonderful feeling of space and light.

### **STOP!...**

...and ask yourself at this point: **“Does your house have high ceilings?”** How would you like to replicate this feeling of more space? Believe it or not, but it can be done, and I am here to show you how.

### **Art Deco...**

...began in Europe, particularly Paris, in the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, but really did not catch on until after the First World War and it continued until the outbreak of World War II. It drew in many famous artists of the period resulting in a truly glamorous image.

Amongst its features were geometric angular shapes, chrome, glass and shiny fabrics, wonderful angular mirrors with no edging and mirror tiles. There were often stylized images of airplanes, cars and skyscrapers and many motifs utilized the naturalness of nature incorporating shells, sunrises and flowers.

As mentioned earlier, it was during this period that Carter made his startling discoveries, in Egypt's Valley of Kings, where Tutankhamen's tomb influenced designs, characteristically, displaying figures of sphinxes, winged cats, and other Egyptian factors in great abundance. Even to this day it is still possible to buy modern curtaining, and similar materials like wallpapers, that have a design pattern based on hieroglyphics or other Egyptian motifs.

## MODERNISM

It was not until the end of World War II that the influence of Modernism really began to be felt although it had began as early as 1901 when it seemed impossible that people would go for anything but the Victorian look.

Spaces took on an austere under-furnished look. The use of tubular steel, plastic, laminated plywood and fiberglass became common. Abstract designs became 'the norm' together with the use of bold primary colors. The industrial revolution had its part to play with the growth of consumerism after World War I, and engineering methods - such as the cantilever principle - were transferred into making furniture.

### 1950's - sometimes known as 'Contemporary'.



*Imagine, sitting at this halfround table. The 'Route 66' series with the American retro leg design makes a real 1950's statement. This table looks great with the checkered laminate looking particularly funky!*

Because of the urgent necessity to re-house a huge number of homeless people, who had been 'bombed out' during the war, a crash programme of building took place. This period resulted in many of these houses being of a 'pre-fabriacted' variety that only needed to be assembled on site. Designed to last for only 5-10 years, these were,



inevitably, smaller than pre-war constructions; which - in turn - resulted in furniture being redesigned to stack, or be light enough to be moved about with comparative ease. The term 'contemporary' became attached to furniture and fittings of this period.

However, for the first time, true consumerism started in this era which was engendered by such everyday inventions as trolleys, folding sofa beds and ironing boards.

### **Some Design Classics**

From here on in, two distinct 'looks' emerged; the American diner with 'bubblegum' colors, neon and kitsch, think juke boxes and huge refrigerators. Alternatively there was the designer look with fitted kitchens, like the English Rose brand, and textiles with geometric prints and animal prints. Both have become design classics. Open plan houses featuring checkered floors and even checkered tables, and where possible a stepped-up mezzanine level, were just the thing, and became 'de rigueur'.

It is also quite feasible, and often cost-effective, to search for original products such as kitchens, which might need a bit of refurbishment. This could well be worth it, especially if that's the style that you truly desire. However, there is also a wide range of modern reproduction products available (and in the best cases indistinguishable from the originals).

### **The 1970's, and on through to modern day *minimalism***

And so throughout the 1970's the larger the pattern, the louder the colors, the bigger the swirls, the shaggier the pile of your carpet the trendier you became. Coloured plastic chairs and tables, wall hangings, chrome-edged furniture....and you had most definitely arrived.

The 1980's saw toned down versions of this with, perhaps, more stylized using pastel colours, peach being very popular. Floral covered furniture with matching curtains, and matching accessories were the order of the day.

Finally moving through the 1990's and into the 2000's came the *minimalist* look, the plainer and softer the better, creating a feeling of white, not shiny though, cream furniture or maybe multiple shades of beige, chocolate browns and perhaps one or two pictures on the wall, with the odd vase setting it all off in a brighter colour. Roman blinds in pale shades that allowed as much natural light as possible into your living space.

**THE MARLA *individual*  
MENTORING SERVICE**

*N.B. Should you still not be 'quite certain' of the direction that you wish to take with your design concept and would like to have a more personal touch; then help is at hand with Marla's **Individual** Mentoring Service.*

Says Marla: "Working hand-in-glove with me, I will analyse your present situation, and then give you a full written report along with ideas and suggestions, plus comments, where necessary. This will put you in a position to really 'get cracking' with those interior improvements right away. Naturally, there is a charge for this service and you can contact me at my email address:

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...for details. I look forward to hearing from you".

**Marla Coutts**

