

The New Arts & Crafts Movement

By Danielle Proud, Sunday Times Style columnist and author of hip home style bible, **House Proud: Hip Craft For The Modern Homemaker** (www.houseproudcraft.com).

My book House Proud is all about the modern approach to home craft and how this is informing interior design. It's a massive trend that we're just seeing the beginnings of now.

Here, I'm going to outline a couple of long term trends that I think will be relevant to your buying over the next year or so.

In recent years minimalism has died a death and been supplanted by ornamentation and romanticism, you see this in the dearth of Cole & Son style wallpaper s that have filtered down to B&Q and Homebase. Not to mention chandeliers becoming so popular, people have them in every room, sometimes even their loos – what was once a rare style statement is now common.

The very literal translations of vintage style (chandeliers; reissued wallpaper designs) are now making way for a new trend, something much more graphic. We saw the beginnings of this with paper cut and silhouette illustrations (think of the mobile phone ads and Mister Rob's Habitat paper cut cards).

The new trend, a graphic art and craftsperson led movement — ties in with the renewed interest in 80s street art and the modern take on the craft skills that you'd normally associate with W I meetings. This movement has a hip “cut and paste” feel and is about original artwork as opposed to parroting an old style.

Historically, translations of previous styles have always been what has given them edge – think about the 70s take on Art Deco and consider today's look at street art.

What is interesting about the new art and craft movement, is that is more than just a passing fad it's a shift in lifestyle; like the Slow Food movement in Italy, and has come about as the result of a general dissatisfaction with quick and cheap consumerism.

As with most current lifestyle trends new art and craft is inextricably linked to green issues and recycling – you see this in design ideas such as Committee's “rubbish tip” wallpaper and the found objects skewered together to form the stem of a lamp in their Kebab lamps.

New Arts and Crafts

The new art and craftsperson led movement has two main strands – handcrafts which I'll come back to in a minute; and an art approach.

The art approach is the result of visual culture becoming more cross disciplinary than ever before – you see this in companies like 1973: you're as likely to find a street artist such as Jon Burgerman designing wallpaper or textiles as you are an interior designer.

It's this breaking down of barriers and questioning 'established' boundaries has made way for lots of exciting new ideas in interior design.

The renewed interest in street art is a good example – it's graphic, crosses artistic disciplines and crucially, it's something an entire generation that are just reaching adulthood identify with – meaning it is something that for the first time is seen as covetable, something we want in our homes.

Banksy is a well known street artist, who uses stencils in his work. Last year, he brought out a book, Wall and Piece which became a surprise bestseller (though I'm sure it wasn't on many policeman's Christmas lists); testament to the genre's popularity. People with a connection to this art form are choosing to invest in it – it's something in a world of monotony that still has edge and doesn't feel "middle of the road" to buyers. Buying limited edition screen prints is also affordable. See www.picturesonwalls.com.

These ideas are informing different areas of interior design:

In terms of using interior walls for street-art murals, look no further than Jamie Oliver's Fifteen restaurant in Cornwall, that features a wall sized pig by street artist Insa (next to Marcel Wanders's dining chairs and pink chandeliers).

The Fox hotel in the Netherlands, is a project where each room in the boutique hotel was designed by a different street artist or graphic designer – many of wall size graphics have now become wallpaper designs by hip design collective Maxalot. You can see many of these in a book called Wall Paper by Lachlan Blackley.

Three other examples of street and graphic designer's work being used in interior design include Onit design, a company owned by a former graffiti artist that uses original street artists work as prints on melamine furniture. www.onitdesign.com

Secondly Cubic's Nesting dolls – these combine naïve Japanese style graphic drawing with ornament (www.cubicuk.com) and finally 1973's cushions by eboy, which take modern computer generated graphics and transpose them to textiles. (www.nineteenseventythree.com)

What is interesting about the street art movement is it's still at very organic stages. It feels raw, inspiring and individual, which is exactly the same in ethos if not aesthetic as the explosion of all types of handicraft.

Like street art, today's interpretation of craft skills has a punky cut and paste feel.

As you'll know knitting has become very high fashion— it's lost the granny in a rocking chair image and is now a pastime enjoyed at nightclub from New York to Notting Hill.

Cross stitch is another craft finding a hip, new audience. I've held classes and sold cross stitch and cushion making kits in London branches of Topshop and am now creating a new range with the yarn manufacturer, COATS. (contact Clare.WATSON@coats.com)

In terms of cool that's nothing compared to Dutch conceptual artist, Joep Verhoven's crocheted chain-link fence.... Not that this will have much commercial interest — I can't see a huge demand for people wanting to learn how to crochet 5mm thick metal.

The different crafts being practised are like street art, cross disciplinary. Applique and patchwork are good examples of a fashion trend that is also being used to similar effect in interior design - collections by top end designers, Chole and Marc Jacobs both featured appliqué using buttons and felt as well as tiny floral prints for patchwork.

Here Poppy Teffry's stunning tea cosies and Suki cushions are great examples of makers creating inspirational rather than aspirational homeware, using applique.

Cahokia creations' ball lights are another example of the craft aesthetic being used interior design. (www.cahokia-creations.com)

One area that designers and buyers can dip a big toe in to the craft trend, without making too much of a financial commitment, is with papercrafts. It's inexpensive to produce and has a quick turnaround, so is a very good barometer of the latest trends. Ideas like illustrator Cataline Estrada's card kits for children (from graphics company, 1973) and **Petra Boase's** stunning handmade cards are at the forefront of this (www.petraboase.com).

Like street art, this movement is about buying inspirational, rather than aspirational design. The days of buying an image – the loft apartment with a Duallit toaster, Gplan coffee table and *Wallpaper strewn around, are over.

As the trend predictor Li Edelkoort said of her recent Museum House exhibition in the Netherlands; “today is very much about personal taste and people curating their own homes”. Rather than buying responsively into trends, people are choosing items that reflect their lives, personality and taste and making items themselves that are unique. In my book, House Proud, I've used threadbare old 60s dresses to make oven gloves – I love the fact that the retro dresses that I wore when I first met my husband, are now doing second duty as oven mitts for his dinners.

The DIY movement is something dictated by and for the end user and its well worth looking into. By far the most exciting ideas will be found on the websites, in magazines and in the books that fuel with scene.

There's plenty to inspire check out Craftster.org and www.houseproudcraft.com , to books such as Stitch and Bitch (for knitting) and for an overview of hip craft ideas, House Proud: Hip Craft For the Modern Homemaker. US magazine BUST, set up by Stitch and Bitch founder Debbie Stoller is also well worth flicking through.

As buyers the main thing you need to be aware of is, in today's design savvy market, there's a move from branded aspirational purchases and toward inspiration and PERSONAL taste driven purchases.

Consumers have wised up to the "made in china" look of cheap Ikea furnishing and being fed new trends every season. They're wanting to put a personal stamp on things and own one offs, you see this in the popularity of auction buying and the new diy culture as well as the way people are increasingly creating homes with heart – something our parents generation had out of make do and mend necessity.