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Red crystal chandelier is an example of transitional design, offering a new twist on an old-world style.



This Louis XIV armchair gets a funky update with a high-gloss finish and Cursiva fabric, inspired by the cursive script.



The best of both worlds

Old charms make seamless transition thanks to design's new 'blend' trend

DONNA LAPORTE
STAFF REPORTER

What is transitional design?

Is it a new trend that has bubbled up from Carl Jung's collective unconscious?

Designer Yanic Simard wouldn't make that claim — exactly — though he agrees, "it's in the air." He says that it probably started in Europe, with its big, beautiful interior spaces.

At its heart, transitional design is a creative blending of two styles — say Louis XVI meets Charles Eames, or, one could say, antique meets mid-century. Or it could be a twist on a traditional concept.

In both cases, he says, it takes the stuffiness out of the traditional and the coldness out of the modern style.

Think of a jet black or red crystal chandelier.

"You would never have seen that at Versailles," the 31-year-old designer says with a laugh.

Or, how about a white paper chandelier, such as the one designed by Moooi? Simard says his firm, the Toronto Interior Design Group, is one of the first to have introduced this concept in Canada.



JOSHUA MELES PHOTO

Designer Yanic Simard in a client's Bloor St. apartment, profiled on Citytv's *CityLine*.

Rather than impose a rigid set of design rules, transitional design draws from personal style and works with one's own furniture but incorporates finishes, materials and fabrics to create something new.

It's important that people feel at home in their own space, Simard says.

Some couples are downsizing from a house to a condo, others are blending families and furniture and bringing treasured mementoes along. Transitional design, however, is not "eclectic," he emphasizes.

"Eclectic is a mishmash of everything," Simard says, whereas

in transitional design, the look is achieved by editing out some pieces and integrating the good ones.

Say you have a sentimental piece of furniture from your grandfather. By changing the hardware and the finish, you can give it new life.

He did just that for a client in Thornhill who had a huge chest of drawers. Though the client wondered how it would work out, in the end "she loved it."

He shellacked it and changed the hardware. "It was like a brand new piece."

When asked how transitional design would work in a new condo with basic builder's finishes, he says it's best not to "fight" what's there.

He suggests that you could add crown moulding. Or put fake moulding on the wall to create a panelled look, which lends a traditional theme to the room. Then add a very modern couch, covered in Ultrasuede, with two Louis XVI chairs as accents.

To further tie it together, you could paint the walls in Benjamin Moore's cream coloured "Feather Down" OC6 or its "Ballet White" OC9 in a flat finish. Then paint the crown moulding and trim the same colour but in semi-gloss.

In a dining room, you could flank two Louis Ghost chairs by French designer Philippe Starck at either end of a traditional carved table and four armless



PHOTOS BY TORONTO INTERIOR DESIGN GROUP

Something old, something new: With its carved legs on casters, this couch looks traditional, but the punchy black and white fabric chosen for its reupholstering gives it a fresh, modern look.

Dante chairs in white vinyl, as Simard unveiled in a remake of a dining room on a recent episode of City-tv's *CityLine*.

Simard is a fan of the Louis Ghost chair, a post-modern interpretation of the classic Louis XVI armchair made of injection-moulded polycarbonate. In this case, the translucent chair takes up little visual space.

"I really like that piece. It's such a transitional piece," he says.

He adds that, with no upholstery on any of the chairs, it's easy to keep them clean.

Balance is key in blending the old and the new, he says.

He points to another example from a bedroom. In this vi-

gnette, a traditional bed is painted in a high-gloss black lacquer, while the wall is adorned with mosaic glass tiles in a flowered pattern. The bedside lamp, atop a cubic-shaped table, is modern. All in all, it's a clean, cohesive look.

Simard relishes pushing the limits and has used the formula successfully in design projects throughout North America. Having launched his company in 2000, he has focused mainly on transitional design.

Unlike other design trends — think minimalist and monochromatic, which tend to eschew the personal — "you're creating your own look with a formula," he says. The home-

owner can put a unique stamp on his surroundings. It will be trendy, too, with its own personality and attitude.

Simard says for that reason, too, not one of his projects will look the same.

He considers the blending of traditional and mid-century "the ultimate" choice of styles, because of the plenitude of great mid-century designers such as Le Corbusier, Bauhaus and Bertoia, mixed with elements of Rococo or Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette.

Other transitional design combinations could include blending Asian and contemporary, or modern and traditional.

A black-and-white colour scheme is often used in transitional design, because "it's timeless, it's high impact and it's visually interesting."

For those who want a more subdued look, he suggests using taupe and cream colours.

You can reach the Toronto Interior Design Group at 416-927-8744 or visit the website at tidg.ca