

AT HOME

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INTERIORS



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The design team of Craig Mitchell and Martha Channer of MC2 The Science of Design refurbished Judy Loyd's home by reupholstering chairs, using an older table and redoing the fireplace. Loyd wanted furniture she inherited integrated into her home.

New Traditional

Combining old and new furniture
a growing trend

By MEG McCONAHEY

THE PRESS DEMOCRAT



Loyd's fireplace was transformed from bland, right, to a more traditional look, above, to go with the home's more formal period furnishings.

Judy Loyd doesn't remember a time when the furniture wasn't a part of her life.

The pair of wingback chairs, a leather-topped coffee table, two end tables and a formal dining room set by Thomasville — all in the traditional Early American style that was popular in the 1950s — were the pride and joy of her parent's Central Valley home.

So many warm memories were attached to those furnishings.

"Our living room when I was growing up was the special-occasion room," the retired teacher said. "When there were big family dinners or at the holidays, this was the furniture that was there. I think of extended family being in the living room. This was the furniture we used to celebrate."

When her father died three years ago, Loyd just couldn't part with the furniture she associated with people she loved and the good times they all shared. So when she and her husband John, a retired firefighter, moved to Santa Rosa's Fountaingrove a year ago, they decided to furnish their own for-



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TRADITIONAL: Incorporate older furniture with new pieces

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mal living room with the pieces she grew up with as well as a cherished grand piano and small table that John inherited from his mother.

But how do you incorporate vintage furniture, not old enough to be considered antique, into a contemporary home without it looking dowdy and out of place?

The Loyds knew they would need some help making it all work without winding up with a visual collision of styles. They enlisted the West County husband/wife design team of Craig Mitchell and Martha Channer of "MC2 The Science of Design."

Channer says the Loyds' problem is far from unique. The couple get a lot of requests now from baby-boomers who are inheriting older furnishings — from the mid-century to the '80s. They may not be fine antiques or true heirlooms yet, but they carry sentimental attachment. And in many cases, said Mitchell, they are far better made than most of the furniture you can buy today.

They also find themselves working with younger clients in their 30s and 40s who are buying vintage furniture secondhand because they like it, or they like the idea of repurposing for environmental reasons, or simply because it's affordable compared to new furniture or more valuable antiques.

"The only reason to buy new is if something is not working or is ruined or not worth repairing," says Channer. "But there is a way to incorporate all of these things. The Old World-New World combination is really very 'now,' and it's very very California. And I encourage it because it's such a great look."

They are calling it "The New Traditional," traditional interior decor but with an updated twist. And they're mixing and matching, often with a variety of things from different eras. They transformed the Loyds' compact living and dining rooms without moving walls and by investing in only one significant new piece — a custom sofa. In the case of the Loyds, Mitchell and Channer stayed with a look that lightly evokes the formal, Early American-Colonial Williamsburg styling of the furnishings.

An important thing to keep in mind in combining old and new is scale. The designers liked the fact that the Loyds' wing-back chairs, which they re-covered with silk plaid and velvet backs, were smaller with more delicate lines than many of the oversized chairs you see today. They fit well in the small, 18-by-18 foot

"jewel box" living room that serves as the Loyd's formal entertaining space.

They custom designed a camel-back sofa through Carriage House that has Colonial lines but contemporary comfort and that fits proportionately with the chairs and within the room. It is covered in a pressed brocade that adds a touch of formality, elegance and color to the room.

Another detail in which proportion came into play was the drapes. The raw silk panels in a rich gold are topped with a large, 18-inch valance that is in careful proportion to the 10-foot ceilings with crown molding.

Scale also came into play with the fireplace. The original fireplace was blandly simple, with a sheetrock surround and no real hearth or mantel. The formal period furnishings needed a more traditional fireplace. Mitchell, working with cabinetmaker Mike Papola, designed a handsome, cherrywood surround and mantle in clean Early American lines that provides a major focal point in the room. A hearth was built from dark slate that provides a good contrast to the lighter tones of the upholstery and drapes.

The designers found room in the small space for the grand piano, sitting perpendicular to the wall opposite the hearth.

Making the adjoining dining room, graced with the old dining set with lyre-back chairs and a round, double-topped table, tie in to the living room was important. Julia Bombardier designed Irish linen drapes that, like the living room drapes, are traditional but with a nod to the contemporary design of the house itself.

The draperies, said Channer, are "the fancy ballgowns of this new traditional salon."

"It's a warm room now. It brings everything full circle."

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SOURCES

- Interiors and Fireplace: MC2 The Science of Design: (888) 4856; info@mctwodesign.com, mctwodesign.com.
- Fireplace mantel fabrication: Mike Papola Custom Cabinetry. mpapola@sbcglobal.net.
- Window Treatments: Julia Bombardier CID. jbombdesign@yahoo.com or jbcid.com.

DESIGN TIPS

Tips from MC2 The Science Of Design, to create a "New Traditional" look

■ Look for furniture with good "bones." Structure is the most outstanding quality of any piece of furniture. Upholstery and refinishing are easy if the piece is classic and sturdy.

■ Make sure the piece fits the scale of the room as well as the style.

■ Look at old magazines or books from the time period when the furniture was new and re-envision that style with modern materials and colors.

■ New Traditional repurposing can be done with furniture from any time period — from antiques to vintage '80s. Combined with new design elements, this styling can produce original and exciting environments.

■ Go eclectic. Don't be afraid to combine eras.

■ Accent pieces from Asia, India or Africa are great additions to almost any contemporary design scheme, as well as many traditional English and Early American-style rooms.

■ Think texture first, pattern second and color third, when looking for rugs and fabrics. Artfully combining these elements is like cooking. The goal is not to have everything taste the same.

■ Mix and match, just like with your wardrobe; but don't match too much.

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