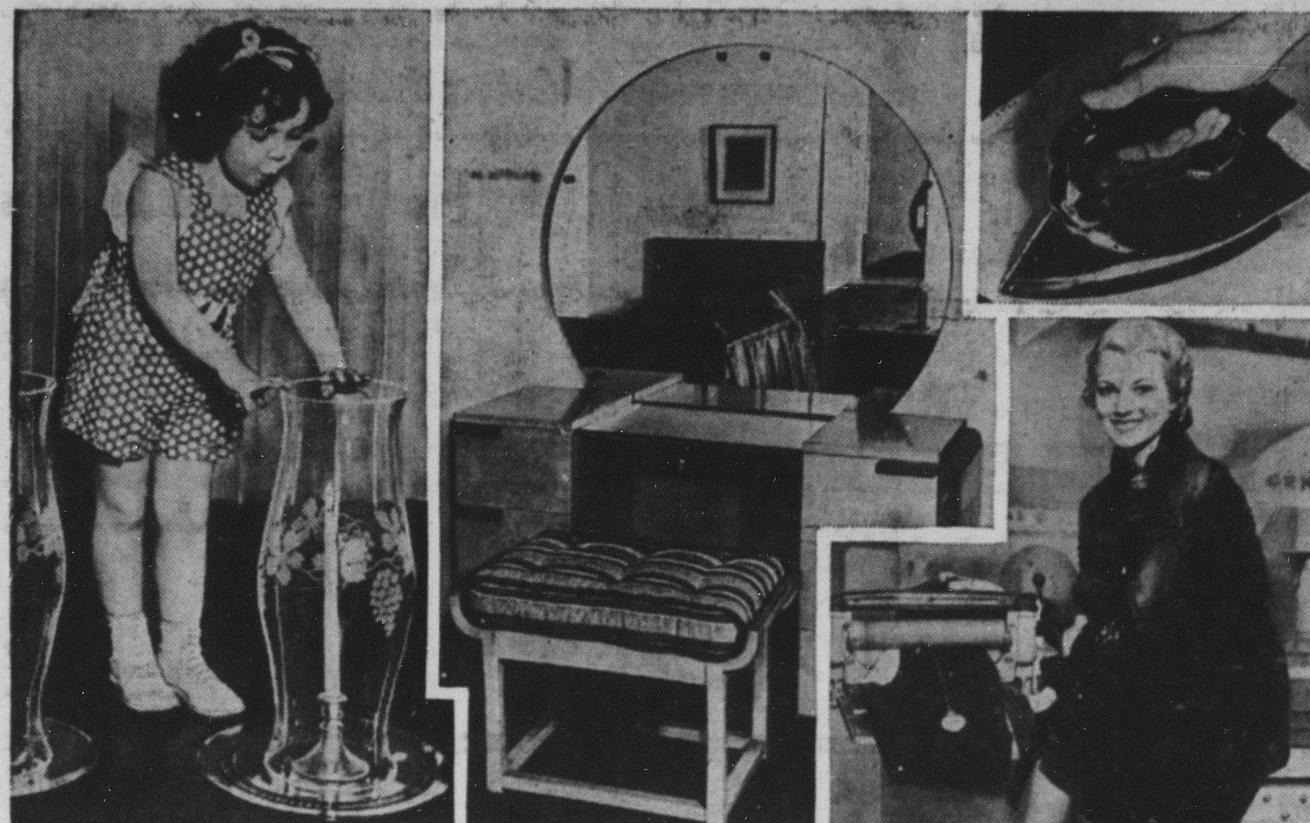


American Home Design Goes Modern



Innovations in furniture and housewares await an expected buying wave without precedent since the boom years. Some of the features of the annual winter wholesale markets at the Merchandise Mart in Chicago: Candlesticks fashioned after the old chimney lamp; mirror designs that go 'round and 'round; streamlined irons with heat graduations marked for the kind of cloth to be ironed, and wringers through which you can run even a wash with perfect safety.

By WILLIAM C. UTLEY
THE American home is going "modern." It is right now on the verge of a wave of buying that is to reveal a new beauty in household articles and a new functional philosophy of design in furnishings from living room to kitchen, from basement to attic.

Such is the impression everywhere apparent this year in the several great wholesale furniture and housewares markets conducted annually in the wholesale centers of the United States in January.

In these markets there are actually twice as many buyers as there were last year acquiring stocks for the retail trade. There is little or none of the quibbling over prices which characterized such markets during the lean years after 1929.

Such buying could be laid to two reasons, although it is impossible to say in what degree to either one: That times are actually better, and that the depreciation during years of depression in the American home is no longer to be denied. At any rate, manufacturers, believing that the turn has come, have seized upon the 1936 markets as the opportunity for concentration of new ideas, and for the introduction of tempered solidification of trends that, in the extreme forms by which we knew them a few years ago, were little more than bizarre novelties.

Preview of 1936 Homes.

Although the wholesale markets are not open to the public, the merchandise that is shown and bought in them offers an interesting preview of forces that will influence the American home in the months to come. It is therefore the purpose of this article to set down the trends as accurately as they may be interpreted by the lay observer. Most of the information has been culled from the markets in Chicago's wholesale city under one roof, the Merchandise Mart, where nearly a million and a half square feet of floor space has been occupied by them.

From the nightmare of weirdly cubic and geometrically uncomfortable "modernistic" furniture that was fantastic to look at and even more fantastic to sit on, in penthouses paid for with the paper profits of the boom years, has emerged a new "period" furniture that belongs definitely to the era of recovery. It is known in the trade as "modern."

Buyers estimate that 80 per cent of the new furniture shown to the retail trade this year will be "modern." It makes use of the simple straight lines and departure from elaborate ornamentation that characterized the "modernistic" pieces of a few years back. It stimulates the eye, but not to the point where it leaves you with an artistic hangover. A room full of it does not look like a jigsaw puzzle waiting to be fitted together. It is both comfortable and practical.

In the opinion of E. J. Wormley, one of the most noted of contemporary designers, the simplicity of "modern" furniture makes its manufacture for selling to the middle and low-priced trade possible, and therefore will have a profound effect upon the average home.

Furniture to Be "Styled."

"People who bought furniture in these price classes used to buy a suit of walnut or oak or mahogany, simply because it looked pretty," said Mr. Wormley. "Consequently their homes were conglomerations of many styles without rhyme or reason. Now these same people can obtain definitely styled furniture. I venture to say that 50 per cent of the furniture bought this year will be definitely styled for some particular application."

America prefers blonds this year—at least in furniture woods, according to Mr. Wormley. Most prominent in the markets are bleached mahogany, nutwood, acacia, aspen, English hickory, and other light woods. Upholstery and leather coverings are seen in pastel shades. Wool and rough, fur-like fabrics are much in evidence, one of the most popular coverings being of

a material that looks and feels like caracul.

Always the new furniture looks first to comfort and practicability. The sharp corners of "modern" furniture are gone now, and more pleasing rounded ones have taken their place. For homes where space is important, the come-apart sofa which breaks down into three comfortable chairs is being seen more and more. This idea has carried over into dining room furniture, too, and this year there are wall benches offered which break down into dining room chairs.

"Modern" in Bedroom.

More than anywhere else the "modern" note is evident in bedroom furniture, which is now extremely simple in design. There are striking applications of English hickory, prima vera and myrtle wood. But perhaps the most notable trend is that of bedroom glassware. Modern mirrors, like modern music, are "going 'round and 'round." Everywhere are round, unframed mirrors, much larger than before.

With repeal of prohibition has come a new article of furniture, the cellar-ette. This is a sort of travelling bar, containing glasses of various kinds, shakers, ice-bowls and bartenders' tools. The cellar-ettes fold up into other pieces of furniture, such as radios, desks and bookcases, when not in use. Perhaps the most unusual—not to say incongruous—combination was a sewing machine which could be turned into a fully equipped cellar-ette at a moment's notice.

Asked where in the house a cellar-ette could be placed to the greatest advantage, one exhibitor replied that he had his in his "rumpus" room—and never batted an eye. To the parlor, bedroom and bath trade this was something of a jolt, but the dictionary revealed that "rumpus" meant "disturbance; wrangle; row." If you must have these things it is probably a good idea to have a separate room for them, and maybe a cellar-ette would help.

Floor coverings this year have relinquished the large, gay patterns, and have shown up in more small patterns and plain colors.

Linen Rugs Are New.

Among the new departures were rugs and carpets of linen and linen-cotton, which are practically fire-proof and moistureproof. Also there are reversible floor coverings, containing a distinct and different pattern on each side, which can change the character of a room if the rug is turned over. Texture weave rugs that look very rough, some of them like homespun, but are not really that way, were shown.

Manufacturers of housewares, it is said at the markets, have laid low during the depression years and, rather than spend a great deal of money on sales promotion when there was little chance for large volume sales, directed their efforts to the field of research, and now that the tide has turned, or shows signs of turning, are releasing many new perfections of household utensils. Two facts may be said to be true about these: They have fallen into the present-day fashion of streamlining to the "ith" degree; and they are characterized by the ultimate in functionalism in design. While the modern streamlining gives them a new, unusual beauty, the insistence on functionalism assures that this beauty of design will help to increase the efficiency of a utensil, rather than detract from it.

An example of both the new characteristics was a chrome pitcher shaped like the funnel of the Normandie. Asked just why a pitcher, of all things, SHOULD be shaped like the funnel of the Normandie, the manufacturer's representative explained, "Why, so it will pour better." If you can follow that (this writer couldn't) you will be interested to know that he also said, "It can pour through the eye of a needle." That is, of course, if you should ever want to pour anything through the eye of a needle.

The situation in the chinaware market was, to the lay eye, much the same. Looking at some new Japanese dishes, decorated with a brilliant plaid design exactly like some of the new tablecloths, one couldn't help speculating upon the embarrassment of some day discovering his elbows to be right on his plate, instead of just on the tablecloth, though.

And to conclude on a happy note: For the bathtub vocalists—recognition at last! The new shower curtains have the music printed right on them.

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Keep the temperature of the room in which house plants are grown at 60 or 65 degrees. They do not thrive in a room that is too warm.

Sprinkle a cake with cornstarch before icing to prevent icing running off.

To clean a white fur carriage robe heat sawdust in the oven and when very hot rub well into the fur. Several applications may be necessary before it is clean. Brush in the open air until all the sawdust is removed.

Slip several slices of bread under the rack on the bottom of broiler pan when broiling steak. The juices drip down and when meat is done the bread is toasted a delicate brown. Serve with the broiled steak.

Before washing colored handkerchiefs for the first time soak them for ten minutes in a basin of cold water to which a tablespoon of turpentine has been added.

Indestructible garden labels may be made during leisure hours in the winter. Use tin or copper scraps cut the size of a small paper tag and mark with India ink.

Sprinkle cocoa stains on table linen with borax and soak in cold water. This will remove the stains. © Associated Newspapers—WNU Service.

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