

INTERIORS

# Relive the Seventies as clash makes a comeback

Interior designers are drawing on the much-maligned decade to make a style statement, writes **Emily Brooks**

**T**he word of the moment for describing interiors is “glamorous”. And, surprisingly, the wellspring of that glamour is the decade often said to have been entirely devoid of it: an era of avocado suites, swirly carpets and a robust belief in the power of brown and orange. The Seventies are much maligned when it comes to decor, but the good stuff has been ignored. Today’s Seventies-inspired interiors are as slick as Bianca Jagger in a masculine suit, and as opulent as Biba’s moody interiors, with dark colours, tactile velvets and glinting metallics. Throw in a nod to boho chic with Moroccan rugs, macramé wall hangings and a cheese plant, and you’ve perfectly captured the zeitgeist. Even top-end developers are in on the act, ditching tasteful greige for something that makes a big statement. When Land Securities asked interior design firm Bowler James Brindley to come up with something different for

the penthouse at the Nova Building in London’s Victoria, they seized on some of the architecture’s late-modernist design influences and amplified them.

The result: ribbed timber wall panelling in rich rosewood, glossy walnut furniture, bright colours and low, loungey, fully upholstered sofas. It’s a stark contrast from the blonde wood, matt finishes and timber-heavy seating you see in contemporary interiors – a style that’s been “done to death recently”, according to Bowler James Brindley’s Lucy Southall. “There was a sort of liberty” to the early Seventies, she says. “It was less constrained. Things could clash; it was about accepting that things don’t have to go together, and actually, they can be more ex-

**HOLD THE AVOCADO**  
Bowler James Brindley designed bold Seventies-inspired lighting and furniture for the penthouse of Nova in Victoria



**TOP OF THE POPS**  
A drum kit on a fluffy rug, rosewood walls and black and white photography set the Seventies tone at the Nova penthouse, main; vintage wallpaper at Dimmet, below

that put together ancient and modern (and everything in between): “Our ethos is to mix different styles and periods, so a Seventies table could be displayed with a 19th-century Venetian mirror and a pair of Louis XIV chairs. The colour palette or the mood is what unifies them.”

Robinson says that clients will often introduce a single Seventies piece in an otherwise classic room: “It can be just the thing needed to give a bit of an edge – an element of the unpredictable gives character.” Popular pieces include Murano glass lighting, leather seating from brands such as de Sede, and American designer Paul Evans’s blocky Cityscape range in brass and wood, which reflects the shiny monolithic office buildings being built at the time.

Interior designer Jo Berryman says that the fact that Seventies interiors are seen as so unfashionable is part of the appeal: “We’re all about unlikely juxtapositions and conscious disharmony. Admittedly I won’t be championing the

avocado bathroom or cork tiling any time soon, though.” She covets de Sede’s DS-600 caterpillar sofa, with its curvy spine-like shape, and Ligne Roset’s low, armless Togo seating – both design classics that are still in production. “I also love Seventies optical thread art,” she says. “So easy to pick up, and sensational when displayed en masse.”

If you want a dip in the Seventies without redoing your whole home, you can wallow in nostalgia by visiting a holiday home. Built in 1969, Dimmet in Devon is a classic seaside bungalow that has been given a period makeover by owner Emma Warren and designer Marina Morris. Original Coloroll wallpaper, a leather suite and Campari-stocked drinks trolley set the tone, but the attention to detail is impressive, right down to the Marguerite Patten cookery books in the kitchen.

There’s a place for this kitsch, homely side of the Seventies alongside the sleek reappraisal of the decade that’s being played out in high-end interiors, says Berryman – “as long it’s done authentically. I advocate all out or not at all. Seventies kitsch is a hard look to pull off half-heartedly.”

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**Togo sofa**  
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**Bamboo mirror**  
£43.50, by Klevering (printerandtailor.com)



**Marsden tea light holder**  
£15, by Habitat (habitat.co.uk)



**Huey table lamp**  
£195, by Seletti (outthereinteriors.com)

citing when they don’t. That’s definitely trending in interiors at the moment.”

With its drum kit in the vast lobby, black and white photography and brass bar, the apartment is intended to be youthful, sexy and provocative. Rather than using vintage items, Bowler James Brindley has favoured current designs that toy with Seventies style, such as Lee Broom’s Hanging Hoop chair and Sé’s Olympia dressing table, which helps to keep the scheme anchored in the present rather than creating a pastiche.

Original pieces from the decade are increasing in desirability, however, according to Dean Robinson of antique dealer Guinevere. “Our clients recognise the cutting-edge, directional energy of the Seventies. There’s a freshness and simplicity to the pieces we sell that don’t have the dubious connotations of the more obvious stuff on the market,” he says. The King’s Road showroom is known for its vignettes

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