

# Arts and Crafts Style Decorating

By Melissa Galt

The terms Arts and Crafts and Mission Style are often used synonymously today. They refer to a style of home design and furnishings emphasizing natural materials, especially wood, and showcasing a pronounced geometry in the design. Their tremendous revival in popularity stems largely from their association with hand-crafted elements (though many knock offs are manufactured by machine), a rarity in this technologically advanced age. The pieces offer an heirloom quality and a patina that deepens with age. Arts and Crafts furnishings and interiors are also typically very durable and classic with a timeless appeal. They suit today's desire to simplify and get back to basics. Arts and Crafts interiors are an ideal marriage of function and aesthetic, spaces are designed to work for those living there. To create your own Arts and Crafts interior, there are several elements to consider, both in materials and design.

The materials of an Arts and Crafts interior, while not limited to nature, emphasize wood, stone, glass (made from sand), ceramic tiles (made from minerals/earth), and textiles (using wool, cotton, or linen fibers, and, of course, leather) Much of the visual pattern comes from the grain of the wood selected. Traditionally oak was used, but currently natural cherry is frequently enjoyed. The oak tends to have golden brown gleam, while the cherry is redder. Both darken naturally with age, this is to be expected.

Flooring, all architectural trim/molding, doors, stair rails and stiles, and exposed structural supports are all typically wood, oak most prevalent. Waxed or oil finishes prevail. Joints are pegged or hand-crafted metal hardware is used. Door knobs, cabinet pulls and the like are again hand-crafted wrought iron or bronze in black, umber, or verdigris. Many are square or rectangular shaped and are hand hammered. For a lighter look, some homeowners today are opting for a soft brushed pewter or nickel finish. Once you have the guidelines, you can bend them to suit. If an alternative to a wood floor is desired, tile or slate would be appropriate substitutes. The tile should be large and laid in a linear pattern, not on the diagonal.

To balance and complement the visual depth of the wood, walls are often treated with a textured paint, or plastered (the old bungalows have original plaster.) A good bet is the river rock finish that Ralph Lauren paint provides. Paint schemes bear an influence from nature with goldenrod yellows, burnt sienna browns, cimarron and Indian reds, sage and moss greens, and a neutral palette of earthy tans, toasts, and beiges. The overall feeling has a harmony, a continuity of all elements working together, none upstaging the other. It is about creating an organic home, one that works within its environment and makes the most of its surroundings both outside and inside.

Fireplaces have wood or stone mantels, with stone, ceramic, or occasionally brick surrounds. The wood is oak with a golden stain, usually waxed or rubbed, not polyurethane. Satin or matte finishes rule. Stone is field stone, stacked dry or with mortar, it presents a terrific textural visual. River rock may be used instead and the round smooth stones provide a counterpoint to the rectilinear geometry otherwise present. Ceramic tiles will typically have a motif from nature, perhaps a leaf or acorn, or have an iridescent finish. Today glass tiles are also used to great advantage. Brick, when employed, is smooth faced and laid in clean horizontal bands. Again, one of the clear features of an Arts and Crafts interior is the linear quality. The feeling that the house is part of a bigger view, part of the horizon, is all an effort to be from and of the earth.

Historically, many of the Arts and Crafts and Mission homes sported art glass windows, or at least many panes. This enabled windows to be left uncovered and still appear decorative. Today, art glass windows can be cost prohibitive except in select areas, so if treatment is desired for either privacy, light, or heat control, simpler is better. This translates to options such as a plain Roman shade, silhouettes, wood blinds, or panels on either tabs or rings, on a decorative rod (wood or wrought iron), with finials. If tiebacks are desired consider sisal tassels, simple and bold, or a band of the same fabric as the drapery. No trim or other decorative element is required. Fabric patterns may herald nature, such as a leaf print, or be based in geometry. There is a wide range on the market today including historical prints by William Morris and designs by Frank Lloyd Wright. The same

may also be found in wall coverings, though use them sparingly, as they are often busy and distracting. Arts and Crafts and Mission styles today both represent a desire for a wholesome, hearty lifestyle, a return to yesterday's values.

Furnishings in the Arts and Crafts home are wood, occasionally with a wrought iron or ceramic tile accent. Glass is rarely used. Tables being functional as well as good looking, often have at least a drawer and a shelf for storage. Shapes are squares, rectangles and octagons, though today more rounds are available. Again the geometry created by edges is most apparent. Sofas and chairs are often wood backed with exposed wood arms and cushions that can be readily cleaned or changed out depending on the season. Flexibility and adaptability are prime features. Mission style goes a step further and often offers sofas or chairs with a deep wood shelf surround, acting as the arm and a table (Frank Lloyd Wright design), which gives the illusion of a built-in piece. Leather is frequently used or fabrics in natural fibers such as cotton, linen, or wool. Rich colors and geometric or patterns drawn from nature abound. The most significant interest comes from the combination of elements, again, no one piece dominating. Busy patterns are used sparingly, increasing longevity and flexibility of the furnishings. Resources for furnishings include Stickley, American Impressions by Ethan Allen, and Cotswald Furnishings, a superior resource for hand-crafted furnishings and more in Atlanta.

Lighting in an Arts and Crafts or Mission home is critical, especially with all the dark woods and depth of color schemes popular. While ceiling lights, including recessed can give a good general light, it is far more effective and pleasing to adopt a wealth of luminaries. Torchieres (floor lamps that give uplight, and are best placed in corners) can provide valuable general lighting, while table lamps and floor lamps provide invitation and welcome. Accent lighting can be done with mantel lamps, sconces, and dresser lamps. The two most common types of lamps are the mica and metal designs, the body of the lamp being hammered bronze or copper, the shade a sheet of mica; and the art glass lamps with wood or art glass bases and shades of glass in geometric patterns and a squared coolie shape. Other lighting options include a wealth of reproduction lighting through several lighting sources such as Arroyo Craftsmen, and Yamagiwa (available through designers; they also have an outstanding line of Frank Lloyd Wright designs.)

Accents, accessories, and artwork should be kept to a minimum to allow for a fuller appreciation of the architecture of the home and materials of nature showcased. This is a good chance to provide balance to the predominance of wood with elements in glass, ceramics, and metal. Both bowls and vessels are readily available in all materials mentioned here. Iridescent ware in both ceramics and glass provides an airy complement to the weight and depth of the wood.

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