

Datebook

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HOME & GARDEN

Blending old with the new



Far left: Russian neoclassic mahogany brass-mounted armchair from the 19th century. Left: French wrought iron and leather armchairs, early 1960s.

S.F. Fall Antiques Show mirrors how we decorate today

By Anh-Minh Le
SPECIAL TO THE CHRONICLE

To some, it might seem like an odd pairing: the Tesla Roadster and the San Francisco Fall Antiques Show. Wouldn't a classic Model T be a better fit for Friday night's Cars and Cocktails event than an electric sports car?

Interior designer Bunny Williams' tips for blending styles, eras. P.5

The Tesla actually makes perfect sense. Its appearance at the show in some ways reflects how we decorate today. More and more people have embraced the practice of mixing the old and the new, the sleek with the more ornate. And, despite what its moniker implies, the Fall Antiques Show highlights accessories and furnishings that represent a range of styles, periods and provenances.

"The name is a bit of a misnomer," said Lisa Podos, director of the annual affair that benefits the nonprofit Enterprise for High School Stu-

dent. The show continues on P.5



Left: Lillian Bassman's "Fantasy on the Dance Floor" (1949) features model Barbara Mullen in a Christian Dior dress for Harper's Bazaar in 1949. Below: A Chinese teapot, circa 1790s, from of the Ames Gallery in Berkeley.

Fall Antiques Show

10:30 a.m.-7 p.m. Thurs.-Sat., noon-5 p.m. Sun. Festival Pavilion, Fort Mason Center, S.F. Tickets: \$15 at the door. Gala preview party: 7-9 p.m. today. Tickets: \$200. (415) 989-9019. www.sffas.org.



Bringing the Past to Present and Beyond: Lecture by designer Bunny Williams. 2:30 p.m. Sat. \$15.

Billy Baldwin: America's King Cotton Decorator: Lecture by Adam Lewis. 11 a.m. Sat. \$15.

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dents. "Antiques are technically 100 years and older, but we also feature modern and even contemporary art and design at the show."

You can find great diversity within even a single booth. Take Thérien & Co., which has showrooms in San Francisco and Los Angeles and carries period antiques as well as 20th century furniture. The firm's offerings include a 19th century Russian neoclassical mahogany seat inlaid with brass accents, its rectangular backrest enclosing an oval fan-shaped medallion. A collector eyeing such a piece might appreciate the modern 1960s French wrought-iron and leather arm chair also in the booth.

Chinoiserie

Carlton Hobbs will be exhibiting rare Chinese hand-woven wallpapers dating back to the latter half of the 18th century that are painted with birds, flowers and blossoming trees hung with lanterns. A fan of such florid chinoiserie may find that the New York dealer's clean-lined travertine circular dining table, circa 1963 and designed by sculptor Henry Moore, is an ideal complement.

This year's Fall Antiques Show, which runs Thursday through Sunday, features more than 60 vetted dealers from all over the world. The name and theme for the

event is Chinoiserie: Rococo to Eco. The entrance to the Festival Pavilion at the Fort Mason Center will be marked by a two-story gilded pagoda created by noted architect Andrew Skurman.

Wheeler Griffith, who co-chairs the show's Supporters Committee along with Michelle Curtis, views the event as a great learning opportunity. "I mostly go to browse the beautiful selections and attend the lectures," she explained. "The educational aspect is important as there is so much you can learn from the guest speakers."

Several of the talks in this year's lecture series are centered on the chinoiserie theme — including those by Christina Prescott-Walker of Sotheby's, John S. Major of Dartmouth College, Princess Michael of Kent and David Beevers of the Royal Pavilion in Brighton, England.

"Chinoiserie is not an area I am very familiar with," Griffith said, "so I'm looking forward to the lecture series, especially given the international voices that will be present."

For those interested in acquiring antiques, she suggested asking questions — lots of questions. "The dealers are very approachable and are always interested in talking to people."

Curtis, who is in the process of building her own collection, concurred. "Because of my



Stewart Tabori & Chang

A vignette from Bunny Williams' new book "Point of View" (Stewart, Tabori & Chang; \$60) juxtaposes a 1950s drawing with an antique Irish mahogany table.

seeing the very best."

Required reading

If a client's taste veers toward the more modern, he gives them a book about Jean-Michel Frank, the Parisian designer and decorator of the 1930s and '40s who was known for pairing simple forms with luxurious materials in his sparse interiors. The design of the Parsons table, which remains popular today, is attributed to Frank.

"Young people who think that antiques are for their parents and grandparents are talking about 'brown furniture,'" observed Lewis. "There are some very good lines of modern reproduction furniture — much of it painted and fabulous."

San Francisco native Jenna Liddell Hunt has been attending the show for years and currently chairs the Enthusiasts Committee along with her husband, Bryan. "It's a wonderful experience," she said, "whether you're buying or just getting inspiration."

The couple are especially drawn to vendors with antique etchings. Their own residence combines antiques, both inherited and purchased, with more contemporary pieces. An Italian dining table is surrounded by modern black leather chairs. Ming Dynasty garden stools, passed down from her grandmother, and modern art are also present.

"There's really something for everyone at the show," Hunt said. "There are antiques dealers from all over the world who bring their most beautiful things."

E-mail comments to bome@sfgate.com.

Pro's guide to blending eras

Renowned interior designer Bunny Williams, who will be speaking at the S.F. Fall Antiques Show on Saturday, shared her thoughts on successfully blending old and new:

► "When adding antique pieces to contemporary interiors, I like to think of the expression 'opposites attract.' I like rooms to combine the masculine and the feminine, the eccentric and the classic, the exuberant and the refined. Think of painted lacquer chairs around a polished wood table."

► "I don't like rooms filled with only modern furniture. Add one rustic object, and suddenly the modern pieces take on a whole new personality."

► "Scale is the most important thing to consider when adding antique furniture to a contemporary interior. I always go for big bold pieces to make a statement in a room. Placing one superb tall cabinet or secretary into a white box of a room adds a sense of architecture and character to the space."

► "Antique carpets are a great way to take the edge off a modern room. Whether you choose a carpet with bold color and pattern or one that is more subtle, it will add warmth and texture. Beautiful hand-woven carpets are like adding a piece of art to your floor."

► "I am an avid collector and love to display antique objects in modern rooms. Keep your collections organized and display similar things together. A cabinet filled with blue and white china, a tabletop displaying a collection of magnifying glasses, or a modern console with beautiful antique silver has more visual impact than a messy group of things."

involvement with the Fall Antiques Show, because I've been attending the events and spent time talking to dealers," she said, "what I have learned has helped me make better decisions and will continue to help me as I grow my collection in the future."

By approaching the Fall Antiques Show as an educational event, she added, "It becomes a very accessible, rather

than exclusionary, experience. What I love is that there's a story about each piece. I'm really interested in the history and the people — where it came from, who might have used it before."

According to decorator Adam Lewis, author of "Billy Baldwin: America's King Cotton Decorator," establishing a foundation of knowledge is key. (As part of Designer Saturday, Lewis

and interior designer Bunny Williams will speak and sign copies of their latest books.) "There is no pleasure greater than working with an informed client," he said. "I am constantly encouraging young clients to go to Christie's and Sotheby's to look. They always say, 'But these things are out of our price range.' They may be, but they begin to train their eye by