

Form and function can light the way

Lighting a home used to be pretty simple. Buy a shade, screw a light bulb in, plug it in and turn it on. The only real decision was what wattage of bulb to use.

Lighting a home these days is much less simple. It is also, however, much less boring, and potentially more healthy.

"Lighting has become more of a decorating and design item than it's ever been," says Paul Williams, owner of McInnis Lighting. "It's become a marriage of form and function."

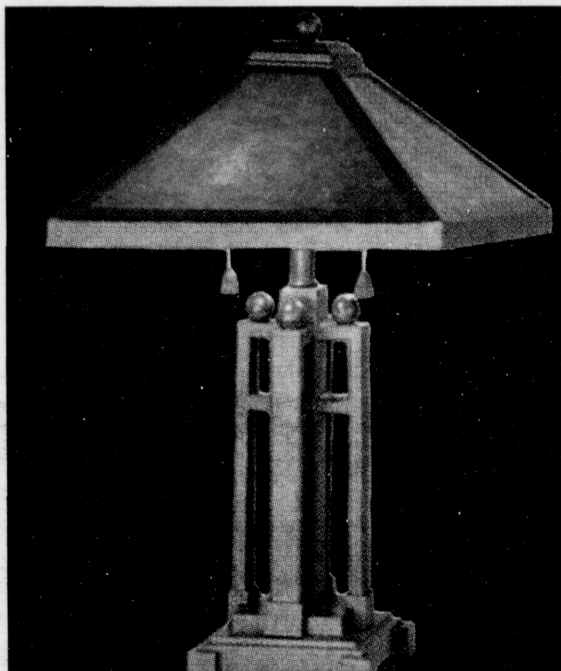
Sure, you can still buy a bulb and screw it in. But why would you?

Now you can light each part of your house to its specific needs. And new developments in lighting technology mean your choice can not only shed a new light on things; it can also improve your health.

Take full-spectrum, or true lighting. Full-spectrum lighting in any room, but especially those in which people spend the most time, such as the kitchen, can benefit more than just your eyes.

"The light you get from something like a fluorescent bulb, for instance, only offers a single spectrum," says Paul. "Full-spectrum simulates daylight, so it keeps colours true."

It can also apparently keep you healthy. Full-spectrum lighting is often prescribed for cases of the



Get lights that work for your needs and your design.

"winter blahs" and even for more severe cousin, Seasonal Affective Disorder, thought to be partially caused by a lack of sunlight.

A new lighting system,

neodymium, is similar to full-spectrum lighting, according to Paul. "It's good for spaces such as living rooms, because it also helps with sight problems. It gives better definition. So it

makes reading easier, for instance."

Another option for such spaces as living rooms, family rooms and bedrooms is mica lighting, which gives a very "warm feeling."

For the home office, the bathroom, the workshop or anywhere else where strong, bright light is necessary, halogen seems to be the choice of consumers. It offers an intense, white and very bright atmosphere, and is more energy-efficient and longer lasting than traditional forms of lighting.

Dressing up the bare bulbs has also become more an art than a science.

As a society the nesting urge is taking over. People are spending increasing amounts of time in the home, and are taking much greater care with the whole design package, extending their interior decorating far beyond paint and furniture. The form of lighting, as Paul says, is becoming just as crucial as its function to the overall look of interiors.

The look of a home office, for example, will often be radically different from the bedroom or the family room. A single home may have a mix of contemporary, traditional and retro. Lighting choices can help signal a smooth transition between styles.

The kitchen, one of the most travelled rooms in the house, often sees three separate levels of lighting: area, accent and under-

cabinet, or cove lighting.

Area lighting floods the kitchen with brightness. Accent lights, such as track lighting, offer warmth and flavour. Cove lighting creates task specific areas that are well-lit. "And you can have a midnight snack without getting caught," laughs Paul.

Lighting as design isn't just for the inside of the house either. More and more people are extending their exterior lighting beyond the standard porch light to include such things as landscape lighting — low-voltage, in-ground lights that highlight landscape features.

Energy-saving and security features are also being built into lights, says Paul.

Self-timers are popular ways to conserve energy coming from high-voltage lights, such as heat lamps. Photo controlled lights turn on and off according to the ambient light conditions — so there's no adjustments needed from season to season. Motion sensors are becoming popular in newer, high-end homes. And there are even computerized lighting systems that can be operated over the phone from the other side of the world.

Paul points out that one of the fashion trends in lighting is a return to stylings of the turn of last century. Lighting technology, however, is obviously turned on to the new millennium.

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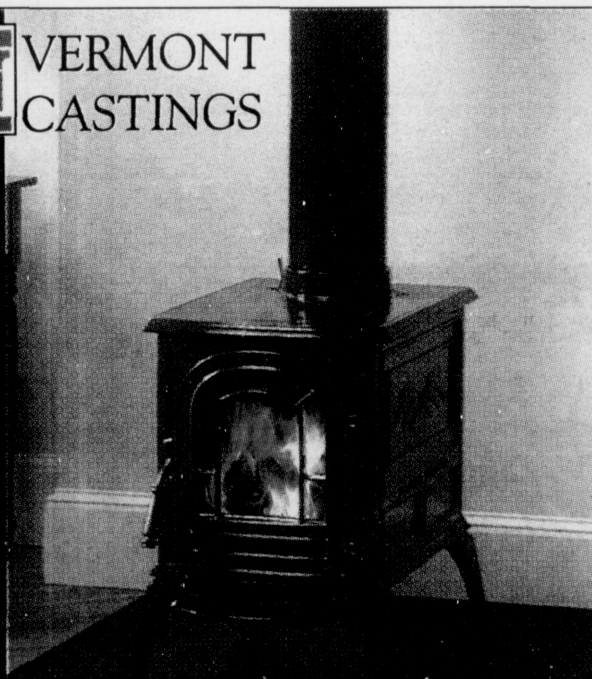
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