

William Haines
designs

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HOME

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AFFORDABLE FAUX
The Madera floor lamp's resin base looks like bamboo topped with a linen shade. It's \$89.95. www.cb2.com

TRENDS

Bamboo's touch of the exotic

The plant's classic lines move indoors, lending a garden motif that isn't floral. The look is geometric and contemporary.

By JAKE TOWNSEND
Special to The Times



CONTEMPORARY CANVAS
Wall graphics from Blik come in tan and green; \$40 per pack. www.whatisblik.com

Blik

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LIKE the palm tree, bamboo has become as much a part of the Southern California landscape as over-inflated lips. Now its influence is spreading from the garden to the indoors: furniture, wallpaper and tabletop pieces, all sporting bamboo's segmented stalks or graceful leaves as a design motif.

Whether shopping Target online (bamboo-print window decals for \$19.95) or Geary's in Beverly Hills (a bamboo-shaped glass serving bowl for \$9,500), shoppers are bound to find all manner of objects inspired by the plant.

"It retains an element of the exotic," says L.A. interior designer Peter Schifando. "It is something completely different — it's not English and it's not French."

Bamboo's popularity in Western design can be traced back to the 1939-40 Golden Gate International Exposition in San Francisco, where the Pacific House ignited the first craze. Designed by architect William Merchant, the Pacific House featured an entire room decorated with bamboo in a celebration of what was dubbed "the Pacific arts." Soon after, Sunset Boulevard nightclubs such as the Mocambo and the Trocadero were decked out in this bamboo fantasia, and star designers such as Billy Haines and Tony Duquette began using bamboo in their work.

Stalwart examples of the motif include the lattice pattern found in Scalamantré's classic wallpaper and fabric patterns and countless Hollywood Regency-style reproductions found in shops throughout Los Angeles. Haines' decorating partner Ted Graber used a bamboo-print wallpaper based on an 18th century design at the White House, Schifando says. Haines' bamboo-inspired furniture could be found in the homes of clients such as Betsy Bloomingdale, and many pieces, including a leather and lacquer desk with a bamboo motif, are still manufactured by Schifando's Williams Haines Designs.

The look also can be found at Crate & Barrel, West Elm and other mass-market stores, often rendered in silver, resin and other modern materials. Some may credit the design's popularity to the green movement and bamboo's reputation as a hearty, renewable and versatile material, but there's clearly more at play.

"Bamboo is an inherently classic pattern that can work with almost any design style," says Dave DeMattei, president of Williams-Sonoma and its sister brands, Williams-Sonoma Home and West Elm. "It creates this amazing visual dichotomy

of being both natural and graphic, organic and stylized. It's also natural without being floral, which means it's not confined to a feminine look. It's a timeless design that, because of its geometric pattern, continues to look contemporary."

Williams-Sonoma Home carries bamboo-themed lamps, side tables and accessories, many of which are modeled after early 19th century designs.

"The fine bamboo metalwork of La Maison Baguès, the French furniture company that has been around since the 1900s, is a favorite of our designers," DeMattei says, adding that Williams-Sonoma Home has always carried its painted bamboo chairs, whose fretwork backs are actually mahogany painted to look like bamboo. "They've always been quite popular."

One of the more creative riffs on the pattern: adhesive vinyl wall graphics from Blik, whose bamboo decals are among the firm's most popular.

"I think the tranquil nature of the bamboo design, and the fact that it is a graphic rendition of a natural form, appeals to people looking for a simple way to bring graphic design and color into a space," Blik President Scott Flora says, adding that some customers make the leaves look as though they're scattering in the breeze.

"You recognize the form immediately as an iconic representation of bamboo. It's familiar and bold."

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CB2



REISSUED
William Haines' lacquer and leather faux bamboo desk, \$19,539, dates to about 1950. (310) 289-0280.

William Haines Designs



Williams-Sonoma Home



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NATURAL, GRAPHIC AND TIMELESS

The Porcelain Bamboo Lamp, \$350, is new from Williams-Sonoma Home; www.wshome.com. The Kyoto flatware set from Crate & Barrel is \$139.95 for a 20-piece set; www.crateandbarrel.com. A silver-plated clock from Pottery Barn is \$49; www.potterybarn.com.