

# An Introduction to the Stylistic Features of Furniture from the Neoclassical Period

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**Abstract:** The neoclassical style is distinctly temporal and spatial, an evolutionary pattern that is unmatched by any previous furniture style. It is unique in its commonality as a stylistic art of its time. It highlights the role of straight lines and rectangles in furniture design, modeling, decoration are to be linear and flat as the basic structure, at the same time, reasonable with the regular curve and surface, the use of carving, wood inlay, mosaic, lacquer decoration and other decorative techniques to form a refined style, proportional harmony, elegant modeling, fine workmanship, exquisite decorative style features. It has great significance for our modern design.

**Keywords:** Neoclassical period; Furniture style; Styling; Decoration

## 1. The process of forming furniture styles in the neoclassical period

Neoclassicism was a style of art that was popular in Europe from the late 18th century to the first half of the 19th century, and was a style of art that was dignified and elegant, with a vintage interest. Due to the discovery of the ruins of the ancient Roman city of Pompeii by archaeologists in the mid-18th century, classical art made its debut in the midst of a crowd of artists, and relics such as architecture, frescoes, pots and sculptures showed the world the true classical art. The spread of the German scholar Winkelmann's aesthetic ideas aroused interest in classicism. The core of neoclassical furniture design was derived from ancient Greek and Roman furniture design. Early neoclassical furniture tended to directly imitate architectural patterns into furniture, such as leaves, scrolls and other patterns, which had been in use during the Baroque and Rococo periods, while later people paid more attention to better combining patterns with furniture shapes, adapting the patterns to furniture and better interpreting design emotions.

## 2. The characteristics of furniture representative style modeling in the neoclassical period

Although the French neo-classical art style originated in the reign of Louis XV, it was in the reign of Louis XVI that the real neo-classical furniture took shape and spread in France. The elegance, lightness and simplicity of Louis XVI furniture is due in part to the Empress Marie Antoinette. She was an elegant woman with a taste for high art. She was averse to the pomp and wastefulness of the French courts and strongly advocated the art of elegance and simplicity. Under the Queen's initiative and promotion, the furniture makers and architects of the French court perfectly reproduced the art of ancient Greece and Rome and the oriental decorative arts of the Chinese era in the design of furniture and interior design, resulting in the characteristic Louis XVI style furniture.

The style of Louis XVI furniture is characterized by the fact that the curved and curved structure became the object of reform and gradually lost its dominant position, the aesthetic vision of the court nobility shifted to the horizontal and vertical structure of the body, and the straight line and rectangle became the center of the furniture form. Artistic interest returned to simplicity, order, geometry and solidity of form, as well as to classical symmetry.

Another distinctive feature of Louis XVI furniture is the addition of a moderate amount of curved elements in a straight frame, forming a square with a round, round with a square visual aesthetic. It was influenced by the art of Greco-Roman architecture and furniture. It can be said in a nutshell that the main modeling characteristics of Louis XVI furniture are "straight more curved less", the surface more swirling surface less, rectangular geometric shape, and intentionally reduce the volume, so that Louis XVI furniture is more slender and light, beautiful. French neoclassical furniture in the Louis XVI period furniture style fully embodies the delicate and elegant style characteristics.

Although such angularity is also present in Louis XVI furniture, it is always weakened by decorative lines, fluting, columns and other treatments. In the same vein, Imperial furniture is over-proportioned and voluminous, making it appear heavier and more serious against the clear contours. However, from a political point of view, the imperial furniture perfectly reproduces the majesty of ancient Roman furniture and faithfully reflects Napoleon's power, strength, and supremacy as emperor. Another distinctive feature of imperial furniture is the pursuit of symmetry, which is more demanding than any other style of furniture. This is clearly reflected in both the shape and the decoration.

### 3. The characteristics of furniture representative style decoration in the neoclassical period

The decorative motifs of Louis XVI furniture were mainly derived from ancient Roman art and various French flowers and plants, and depending on the form of the decorative elements, Louis XVI furniture was mainly decorated with inlay, engraving, and painting, while the application of bronze gilding was more rational, no longer gilding the perimeter of the furniture in pursuit of luxury as in the Rococo period.

We can divide them into two categories: those in which single or multiple elements appear in continuity and form a band, and those in which elements appear singly, alone or in combination with other elements in a pattern, and play a decorative role.

The common decorative bands are toothed, gadrooning, interlocking ribbons, rings, scrolls, leaves, beaded chains, ropes, overlapping coins, fluted bands, etc. These decorative bands were either carved from wood or cast in bronze.

Louis XVI furniture division commonly used decorative elements are eagle, sheep's head, lion's head, bull's feet and other animal themes, scabiosa leaves, ranunculus leaves, ivy and other components of the garland, pine cones, vines, laurel leaves and other plant themes, Cupid, winged Cupid, angel heads, human faces and the Sphinx and other mythological themes, steel helmets, medals, vases, harps and other living themes. These decorative elements, especially the botanical ones, were transformed in the hands of the furniture maker and organized in harmony with each other to form beautiful decorative elements.

The decorative motifs of imperial furniture were mainly taken from ancient Greek and Roman architecture, frescoes, furniture and other artistic vehicles excavated from ruins such as Pompeii and Herculaneum, as well as from ancient Egyptian civilization. Many of the decorative motifs are the same as those of Louis XVI furniture, but the Imperial style has a different approach, more serious than the latter and more imposing and magnificent in its expression.

### 4. The influence of furniture style characteristics of the neoclassical period on modern furniture design

Throughout the neo-classical period in the 18th and 19th centuries, successful furniture designers such as Raisena and Jacquot in France, Adam and Hepburn in England were all re-creating activities based on the study and digestion of classical art. Therefore, modern neo-classical furniture design should be based on the study of classical art (mainly including classical art and traditional neo-classical art), take its essence, and combine the local traditional culture, aesthetic habits, and innovative activities.

Focus on straight lines and the principle of rational use of curves. This is determined by the characteristics of neoclassical style, straight line, plane is the main body of neoclassical furniture design, whether it is modeling or decoration, are to revolve around these two subjects. Curves, curved surfaces in its design system can not be too extravagant, exaggerated, for straight lines or planes to play a role in setting off.

The design of neoclassical furniture focuses on the style elements and modeling, because there is no necessary connection between various decorative elements and modeling, and European decorative elements are varied, as long as the right treatment, seemingly unrelated to the two elements, can be perfectly combined together, so in the premise of meeting the functional requirements, how to organize the two, from elements to elements, from elements to modeling, as well as modeling and The key point of the design is how to organize the two elements, from element to element, from element to shape, and between shape and shape, to intersperse and harmonize each other.

In general, the inspiration of neoclassical furniture to modern design lies in how to effectively combine classical elements with modern structures and forms, so that classical beauty is integrated into modern beauty, rather than just copying classical elements indiscriminately, so that the two kinds of beauty are combined together, but seem to be separated from each other: on the other hand, it is the treatment of classical elements to make them suitable for modern industrial mass production. On the other hand, it is the treatment of classical elements that makes them suitable for modern industrial mass production.

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