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HOME & GARDEN | SHOPPING WITH DOUGLAS WRIGHT

As the Thermometer Falls, 'Man Cave' Décor Is Warming Up

By TIM McKEOUGH NOV. 2, 2009

COOLER temperatures often drive people indoors, but not everyone is disappointed by the change of seasons. Douglas Wright, an architect with Hart Howerton, a firm based in New York and San Francisco, said many of his male clients look forward to hibernating in “man caves” — cozy, masculine dens where they can pursue interests like spectator sports, woodworking or billiards.

“It runs the gamut, from beautiful men’s rooms down to the nitty-gritty of workbenches and tools,” he said of the spaces his clients have increasingly been requesting in recent years. “Often this room is something they have always dreamed about” — a place for a great sound system or a collection — in a spare room, a basement or even a garage.

Among the retreats Mr. Wright has created for clients are a home theater with a polished mahogany bar; a den with a putting green outside; and a garage with a big-screen television that can be viewed from the comfort of a car.

Most “definitely have a masculine look,” he said, with hefty furnishings and features like dark wood paneling. “A lot of them have the feeling of a lodge.”

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On a recent shopping trip, Mr. Wright found a number of items to help create that vibe, at a wide range of prices, from tens of thousands of dollars to less than \$15.

His first stop was a Manhattan store aptly named Mantiques Modern. A warren of high-end collectibles in Chelsea, it offered finds like a sofa made of two 1960s brown Fiat car seats, for \$11,500, and a polished bronze gear from a World War I-era tank, mounted as a sculpture, for \$3,200.

One of his favorite pieces was a 27-inch-wide Fresnel glass lens, priced at \$1,800, which the proprietor said was most likely the cover of an early-20th-century steam-engine light. Mounted on a stand, it had an impressive look, he said, and would be good for someone interested in machines and early technology.

For those who prefer games, Mr. Wright suggested a visit to Blatt Billiards, a Greenwich Village factory and showroom established in 1923. On the fourth floor, he admired the custom pool tables, including a cherry wood model with an intricate geometric pattern carved on its sides. The price: \$55,000.

There are plenty of man-cave accessories, however, that don't require that kind of investment. For example, handsome barware, Mr. Wright said, can go a long way toward setting the right tone. He suggested the Cluny lead-crystal line from Pavillon Christofle, on the Upper East Side, particularly pieces like the old-fashioned tumbler and highball glasses, for \$65 each, and the decanter, for \$462.

Even downright inexpensive gadgets, he said, can add to the fun. The retro gyroscopes at garrettwade.com are perennial favorites, popular with both sexes — and a bargain at \$14.95 a pair. **TIM MCKEOUGH**

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