

# Mirror, Mirror

## Fairest choice for your wall can transform any room in the house

BY KIM COOK • ASSOCIATED PRESS • MARCH 26, 2009

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When Louis XIV decided that the royal palace at Versailles should have a huge Hall of Mirrors, his minister of finance saw an opportunity.

Jean-Baptiste Colbert, a fierce nationalist, was determined that Paris be able to compete with Venice in producing luxury products like silk, lace and mirrors. He recruited Venetian artisans to come to Paris to craft all 357 of the hall's mirrors. They devised a method of pouring hot glass onto an iron table that allowed them for the first time to make really big mirrors.

With its elaborate ceiling art and solid silver tables, lamps and orange tree pots, the magnificent 17th century hall was the setting for balls, births, even the signing of the Treaty of Versailles.

We don't live in glittering palaces, but many of us do tend to think of mirrors as a tad gaudy, a bit Vegas, and not a material we can decorate with easily.

None of which need be true.

We might consider mirrors the way feng shui practitioners do. They see mirrors as serving three purposes: expansion, reflection, deflection.

A well-placed mirror, particularly one that reflects an open doorway or window, can open up a small space. It doubles the feeling of space and, in feng shui, serves an even greater function: It's believed that when a mirror reflects something good -- such as a family portrait, pleasing scenery or symbolic object -- its positive effects are doubled. Bagua mirrors, on the other hand, are seen in feng shui as bad-energy deflectors used on the outside of the home.

A mirror clad in a pretty or unusual frame will enliven the most basic room.

"They're a focal point in bathrooms, functional in bedrooms and closets, can serve as accent pieces on dining room walls and in foyers, and add height and light to small, dark spaces. When designing a room, it's the one thing I almost always use," says designer and HGTV celebrity Will Smith.

Notes New York designer Geoffrey Bradfield, "mirrors give a room an illusion of infinity."

Round mirrors can be especially smart looking. Pottery Barn has an Art Deco-style beveled glass beauty that hangs on a faux leather strap. Another is wrapped in sustainably harvested cherry tree bark.

In Rocky Mount, Va., Uttermost has a stable of artists creating mirror designs, such as Grace Feyock's "Raindrops," a constellation of tiny mirrored circles orbiting a larger one. Her "Kellan" is a swirl of silver leaf around a beveled mirror, and "Tamryn" boasts a headdress of woven palm tree fibers.

Horchow offers a hand-painted, wood-framed mirror designed by Janice Minor that looks like it is bristling with porcupine quills.

And mirrors don't have to be hung. Prop one on a dresser or console with a few favorite objects placed in front of it; you'll enjoy your things from two vantage points.

A large mirror placed at floor level in an entryway comes in handy. Horchow's version features a mirrored frame, which helps bounce the light around.

Sundance Catalog has a casement style framed in steel, reminiscent of old warehouse or country mill windows.

MirrorMate, in North Carolina, offers groupings of "Pizzazz" custom-framed mirrored squares, with a personalized look. Use them as artwork run up to the ceiling, or as a decorative headboard.

The company also custom frames existing "raw" mirrors, such as bathroom vanities. The frames attach directly to the mirror. Do the perimeter or, on an especially large mirror, frame just the area over the sink to add a dramatic, "finished" look.

Lisa Hunting, the creative brain behind the concept, says it was her own move to a new home in Charlotte, N.C., that sparked the idea.

"Though I was decorating the bathrooms with accessories and pictures, they just never looked 'done' because that huge mirror remained naked!" she says.

The frames also help solve issues like edge-silvering, or unattractive mirror clips, she says. They run about \$100-\$200, depending on size and style.

Seura, a Green Bay, Wis., firm, has adapted new technology to create a sleek mirror/television combination. Turned off, you have an attractively framed mirror, but press a button and the mirror morphs into an LCD TV screen.

Featured on some home design programs, the product found its way into upscale hotels before interior decorators took notice of it as a way to "hide" the TV. Tim Gilbertson, Seura's president, says that even given today's ravenous appetite for technology, "we still may not be willing to compromise atmosphere, or give up the comfort of a calm, sophisticated environment."

Mirrored finishes also are turning up on dressers, shelving, backsplashes, candlesticks, even fireplaces as a relatively inexpensive way to add glamour and lightplay to a space.