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Modern Romance: State-of-the-Art Spindle Beds

Chic new takes on the four-poster bed invoke the coziness of canopies but liven things up with high-tech carving techniques



SPARE SPIRES Designer Kerry Joyce's bed adds soul to a Manhattan apartment featured in his coming book, 'The Intangible,' (Pointed Leaf Press). PHOTO: JOSHUA MCHUGH

By Kathryn O'Shea-Evans

0 COMMENTS

Oct. 4, 2018 2:06 p.m. ET

IN A MODERN Manhattan apartment, Los Angeles designer Kerry Joyce was faced with a blank-slate bedroom sadly lacking in architectural charisma. He had introduced vintage pieces in other rooms, so Mr. Joyce decided to design a bed that recalls the past without bowing to it. His cast-bronze, finely articulated four-poster bed rekindles the charm of wooden spindles and, said Mr. Joyce, “anchors the room with a little bit of heart.”

After a decade or so of minimalist beds that forgo any draping but delineate volume with the barest of posts and rails, decorators are returning to the romance of the canopy bed without resorting to the festooning you'd encounter at a doily-dotted bed-and-breakfast. The reimagined four-posters replace overwrought Victorian spindles with unconventional, totem-like columns.

As the unnerving theory goes, canopied beds appeared in 13th-century Europe to keep rats from dropping upon the slumbering well-to-do, said Wolf Burchard, furniture research curator for London's National Trust. Americans in the sweltering South dispensed with the insulating canopies and draperies in the early 20th century, said Alexis Barr, instructor of design history at the New York School of Interior Design, to minimize germiness. The canning of canopies also reflects the general “stripping down of the American interior.”

Yet today's designers wistfully admire the four-posters' suggestion of cocooning. Under a client's soaring exposed-beam ceilings, Jessica Helgerson, who works in Portland, Ore., recently installed a bed by Los Angeles's Noir furniture, with stanchions like upended polygraph-test lines. “It creates the feeling of a room within a room without closing things in,” said Ms. Helgerson, who avoids canopied beds as too fussy and “decorator-y.” Los Angeles-based Jeff Andrews, who stationed a similar bed in reality-TV star Kylie Jenner's former bedroom, finds approachable whimsy in these newfangled posts. Without a shrouding canopy, he said, they work with most décor styles and don't look “over-the-top or too commanding.”

New woodcarving technology, namely computer numerical control (CNC) routers, make possible fanciful beds like London designer Geoff Hawkes's for Restoration Hardware, a svelte take on Baroque hardwood spindles. “It's trying to catch people's imagination,” Mr. Hawkes said. “People walk in and go, ‘That's interesting.’”



From left: QS Ferret Bed by Noir, \$3,540 for queen, Mecox Gardens, 212-249-5301; 18th C. Spindle Turned Bed, from \$3,395, RH.com

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