



A revival of neoclassicism in contemporary design has simmered under the surface for a year or so, and is now gathering pace. Obsessed with resurrecting the culture and styles of Greek, Roman and Egyptian antiquity, the original neoclassical movement – and the accompanying Empire style in the decorative arts – flourished from the mid 18th to the early 19th centuries. Today’s revival is partly a throwback to the last time neoclassicism was in vogue, the late Seventies and early Eighties. Many established designers currently revisiting it, such as Nicky Haslam and Nigel Coates, will remember that well. But still more who are too young to have lived through it are referencing neoclassicism today – proof that we’re witnessing a new trend.

Museums are fuelling this, too. Earlier this year, Sir John Soane’s Museum mounted an exhibition on neoclassical architect and printmaker Giovanni Battista Piranesi, while its recent show, *Peace Breaks Out!*, focused on the summer of 1814 when Europe celebrated peace after the fall of Napoleon. This November, the V&A will open its newly refurbished Italian Cast Court, renamed the Weston Cast Court, which will feature more than 60 of the museum’s 19th-century reproductions of Italian Renaissance monuments – another influence on neoclassical architects such as Soane.

As highlighted by the V&A’s 2011 exhibition, *Postmodernism: Style & Subversion 1970-1990*, the earliest manifestation of the Seventies neoclassical revival was postmodernist architecture, which rebelled against the modernist straitjacket of strict functionalism, and embraced ornamentation, including classical elements. Philip Johnson’s AT&T building in New York, for example, was irreverently crowned with a classical pediment. Design was similarly smitten: in Italy, Ettore Sottsass, Alessandro Mendini and other avant- >

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ABOVE: Marc Bankowsky’s plaster resin ‘Drapery Console’, available from Maison Gerard at Istdibs (www.Istdibs.com)

BELOW: ‘Héraclès’ dumbbells by Charlotte Juillard, from Fabrica (www.fabricashop.myshopify.com)



