

MINIMALIST MOOD

'90s minimalism re-enters the home with warmth and cultural pull

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Whether driven by Gen Z's leaning towards analog living or the renewed fascination sparked by *Love Story* and its portrayal of John F. Kennedy Jr. and Carolyn Bessette-Kennedy, the '90s are re-emerging as a design reference point.

At the centre is minimalism, reinterpreted. It's like Calvin Klein's iconic slip dress translated into interiors, the look is restrained and quietly assured.

This resurgence isn't just about nostalgia (although can we all agree that the '90s were the best decade?). It signals a shift toward clarity.

Clean-lined architecture, pale timbers, and a tighter edit are replacing visual excess. *Love Story* captures that composure — unforced, polished, ornament-free — and it's influencing spaces that favour intention over decoration, where every element serves a purpose.

"I think it comes down to a need for more calmness," says Jessica Cinnamon, principal designer and founder of Toronto-based Jessica Cinnamon Design Inc. "Following a recent wave of saturated palettes and layered pattern, there's a noticeable shift toward restraint and a cleaner way of living."

That mindset is shaping interiors

that feel open without appearing sparse. Sculptural forms, tonal depth, and controlled palettes create environments that read cohesive rather than curated. Nothing feels arbitrary. Each piece contributes to the whole.

"There's also an emotional element," Cinnamon adds. "Pared-back interiors feel timeless, which is incredibly appealing right now. People want to be thoughtful with their decor budgets."

Function is central to this evolution. Investment is moving toward fewer, better pieces — objects designed to endure both visually and practically. Editing becomes a deliberate approach, resulting in spaces that feel grounded rather than trend-driven.

Interior designer Jude Kamal of Sansa Interiors observes a similar recalibration. "The return to '90s minimalism is partly a response to overstimulation and complexity in both design and everyday life," she says. "People want spaces that feel calm and intentional, and that era offered a clarity that resonates again."

CULTURAL INFLUENCE, DISTILLED

Film, fashion, and media are shaping this movement, not through replication but through atmosphere. "Pop culture plays a big role," says Cinnamon. "Seeing certain eras por-



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trayed in films, shows, and social media sparks a desire to recreate that feeling."

Rather than recreating a decade, designers are extracting its essence. Linear forms remain, softened through materiality. Neutral palettes persist, enriched with depth. Linen, wool, and matte finishes introduce tactility, replacing earlier, more clinical interpretations.

This perspective resonates with a

younger audience. "Gen Z is influencing this movement," says Cinnamon. "They've grown up surrounded by constant digital input, so they're seeking spaces that feel authentic and personal."

That approach prioritizes experience over perfection. Interiors support daily routines, favouring comfort, usability, and ease over visual performance.

Kamal expands on this idea:

"There's a stronger emphasis on quality and function instead of accumulation. It's not just about how a space looks, it's about how it works."

COMPOSED, NOT COLD

Where today's interpretation diverges most is in its balance between simplicity and warmth. Earlier versions could feel austere; this iteration introduces softness through tone, texture, and form.

"It feels much more approachable now," says Cinnamon. "Pale oak might sit alongside deeper wood finishes, while curved seating introduces fluidity. Handcrafted elements such as ceramics, woven textiles and subtle irregularities add nuance without disrupting cohesion."

Kamal agrees. "We're incorporating natural materials and allowing more personality to come through. It's less about strictness and more about comfort."

Achieving that balance requires discipline. "Spaces are still intentional, but comfort is essential," Cinnamon explains. "A minimalist interior should support real life."

This thinking extends to lighting and layout. Softer illumination reduces contrast, while integrated storage keeps surfaces clear without compromising function. Furnishings are expected to perform, not simply anchor a room.

Details carry greater weight. A textured rug, a draped textile, or a single artwork can define a space, adding depth without excess.

Kamal summarizes it succinctly: "To keep interiors livable, designers are layering tactile materials, softening lines, and prioritizing function without clutter."

What defines this moment isn't minimalism as a strict aesthetic, but as a sensibility. It's less about stripping things back and more about getting it right and in sync with your daily life.



Sansa Interiors demonstrates principles of '90s minimalism with contemporary updates in this kitchen project.



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