

An Ode to the Skirted Dressing Table

Because everything's better with ruffles.



BY EMMA BAZILIAN FEB 28, 2020



At age 14, I was given free rein to redecorate my bedroom. Among the things I immediately requested: peachy-pink checked curtains, *lots* of toile, and, most importantly, a kidney-shaped, mirror-topped, silk-skirted dressing table. (Also hand-stripped walls, which is where my mother finally put her foot down.)

A few months later, the table arrived, its perimeter wrapped in yards of slubby pink silk, with two arms that swung open to reveal drawers just calling to be filled with a vast collection of lip gloss and headbands. To my teenaged self—and, quite honestly, to my adult self—that table was the epitome of glamour. When seated in front of its tri-fold mirror rather than standing in front of my bathroom medicine cabinet, I wasn't just "getting ready"—I was doing my daily *toilette*.



A Federal-style dressing table in House Beautiful, 1938.

HOUSE BEAUTIFUL

Don't just take it from an overly dramatic 14-year-old, though: The timeless allure of a skirted dressing table is a well-known fact among designers. "I adore them because they're just so old-school and feminine," says [Danielle Rollins](#). "They instantly take you back to a different era, a time when ladies had their hair done, wore corsets and frilly ball gowns, slicks of lipstick, and plenty of jewels."



Rollins trimmed a ruffled skirt with even *more* ruffles for a truly heavenly confection.

MELANIE ACEVEDO

Instead of confining them to bedrooms and bathrooms, Rollins suggests placing a skirted dressing table in a downstairs powder room, as she did in her own Atlanta home. **"It encourages guests to take a pause and maybe spend a minute alone gathering themselves or gossiping with girlfriends. Some of my favorite party moment memories have been in those rooms!"**

So where can you find your own dressing table? Well, here's the tricky part: Despite being ubiquitous through the 1980s, these days, there aren't many manufacturers (in the U.S., at least) who still sell proper swing-arm vanities. (I was recently heartbroken to learn that the company that made my own cherished piece, Minic Custom Woodworking, had long gone out of business). You can certainly hire a carpenter to make a fully bespoke piece, but if that's not in your budget, take a note from Virginia-based designer Shazalynn Cavin Winfrey and think vintage. She recently sourced a kidney-shaped vanity on Etsy and had it recovered in a peppy Thibaut print for a client's young daughter.



Before...

SHAZALYNN CAVIN WINFREY



...and after.

SHAZALYNN CAVIN WINFREY

Or, if storage isn't a necessity, simply top any old desk or table with a piece of plywood, drape with a tablecloth, and place a piece of glass or mirror on top for an instant skirted vanity.

Looking for more dressing table inspiration? Scroll through the gallery below for a few of our favorites.



Contrasting pleats add extra dimension to this Kelley Proxmire-designed table in a Thibaut print. ANGE SECKINGER