

## ACCORDIN' TO GORDON

### Episode # 12: Trendy Pendants

It had to happen. Last week I discovered iron-clad evidence of the ever-growing popularity of historical design while riding coach in an El Cheapo airline. These days, the middle seat on two-hour flight can be just like study hall; there are certainly no distractions from a gratis soda or tiny packet of stale party mix. When you're forced to read out of sheer boredom, it's amazing what treasures you can encounter, and I found my nugget of gold in the *In-flight Shoppers' Magazine*.

There on page 29, just across from the cordless wine chiller and the universal body hair clipper, was an unbelievable gadget: the Instant Pendant Light. With a mere \$50 and a few turns of the hand, it offered any buyer the means alter their ceiling in seconds from nearly invisible recessed can lighting to an unmistakable shade suspended by a cord. Surely an astounding metamorphosis, but what really struck me was the write-up and the idea it was selling.

Now, it seems, it's time to "update your old recessed lighting." Yeah, but wasn't recessed the high-tech lighting of the future when it started to invade kitchens and offices in the 1980s? Even better, the ad explains that way to get back in step with the times is to convert to a "trendy pendant light." Trendy? Well I'll be. Those of us who love old houses no doubt know that the lowly foot soldiers of early electric lighting well into the 1940s were simple, single-bulb-and-shade affairs hanging by cloth-covered cords -- the very pendants marketed here as so *soignée*. What's more, should the buyer miss the history point, the copy makes it clear that the "trendy pendant" has it all over the recessed can by virtue of its "Traditional Design".

If an almost random cross-section of the population -- airline passengers -- are being marketed to in the most a-historical of places -- an airplane -- with a 100-year-old lamp design, is this the shape of things to come? As the saying goes, the only thing better than a good new idea is a good old idea.