Art in Home Furnishings

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The love of beauty and the urge to create it is deeply rooted in the heart of man. The earliest man decorated his caves with paintings, his weapons with carvings, and his body with ornaments of bone and shell. Man's desire for beauty has been with him throughout the ages.

Today we find evidence of man's quest for beauty everywhere we turn. We see it in the lovely color harmonies of well-designed flower gardens; in the lines of beautiful buildings; in the designs of boats, trains, automobiles, and planes. Indoors, we find it in the well ordered plans of homes, in a well balanced arrangement of furniture, in the design of a range or refrigerator, in the harmonious color scheme of a room, or a beautiful picture on the wall.

We are all born with the desire and ability to appreciate, but what we appreciate is a matter of training. We learn to recognize and appreciate beauty. It takes many experiences to judge objects for good design and color. Good taste is acquired gradually. In our enthusiasm for acquiring good taste we must remember also to be practical. Choose colors and materials which will suit the purpose or use; consider what it costs in terms of the original cost plus the time, energy and money required to keep it clean and in good repairs—is it economical; is it suited to you and your family so that it "belongs"—does it have individuality; and does it give you pleasure when you look at it or touch it—does it have beauty.

To understand and enjoy beauty we need to learn the language. "Tools" used to express ideas are line, light and dark, space and color. With these "tools" or art elements we can also create form and texture. A writer arranges words into sentences and paragraphs to form a story. The artist (amateur or professional) creates a picture, design, or room arrangement by an orderly arrangement of the art elements.

**ART ELEMENTS**

**Line and Form**

We use lines to define a shape or to express a mood or feeling. There are horizontal, vertical, diagonal, and curved lines (figure 1). Horizontal lines give a feeling of quiet and rest. Vertical lines suggest strength, dignity, and stability. The diagonal line expresses movement. A curved line is also a moving line. It may be forceful like the C curve or rhythmic and graceful like the S curve.

Good form is a very important quality for objects to possess. Is the shape consistent with the material from which it is made? Is the shape consistent with the use? Is it related to other shapes in the room?

One type should dominate with a pleasing relationship with another type. Diagonal and curved lines serve as transitions, bring horizontal and vertical lines in relation with each other.

Forms are three dimensional shapes. The forms around us are cubes, rectangles, pyramids, cones, cylinders, circles, and spheres (figure 2).

**Texture**

Texture is the surface quality of materials: how they feel when we touch them; how the surface reflects light—very smooth attracts attention and colors seem clear and strong, moderately rough-surface absorbs light unevenly and makes colors less intense and objects unobtrusive; how easy or difficult the surface is to maintain—smooth surfaces are easy to clean.

In writing there are rules for sentence structure, and forming sentences into paragraphs. In art there
are no rules but there are guides called art principles such as balance, emphasis, rhythm, proportion, and scale.

**ART PRINCIPLES**

**Balance**
This refers to equilibrium, a sense of stability, and steadiness.

*Symmetrical or formal balance.* One side of the object is the reverse or mirror image of the other half. Easy to create, the effect is quiet, reposed, and dignified.

*Asymmetrical or informal balance.* The two sides are equal but not identical. This suggests movement, activity, casualness, and informality (figure 3).

**Rhythm**
Rhythm means related movement, regular repetition of units.

*Repetition.* Repeated squares, triangles, color, texture, etc. Too much, not relieved by contrast, leads to monotony.

*Progression.* Ordered or systematic change in size shape, and direction; of color, from light to dark or dull to bright; of texture, from smooth to rough (figure 4).

**Emphasis**
Dominance and subordination calls attention to most important part. It is sometimes called center of interests or “rest points.” One dominant and two or three subdominant centers are about all a typical room can take. Repeating a color or shape increases its importance.

Arrangements of accessories creates pattern and needs careful handling. Generally one pattern in a room is enough. Small or indistinct all-over patterns giving a feeling of texture rather than design may be used where a more pronounced design would be impossible.

Pattern may be used on at least one-fourth of the total surface area (figure 5).

**Proportion**
Proportion is relation of size, shape, weight, color, and texture of one part to another. If one part seems too large or too small for the other part it is not in good proportion. Proportions of a rectangle approx-
im: 1. tcly 2 to 3 or 3 to 5 are most interesting. A shape is usually more interesting when the length is about one and a half times the width. When a horizontal line divides a space it is more pleasing if it falls between one half and two thirds of the length divided. When a space is divided into 3 parts, one space should be dominant and the others pleasing in relation to it and to each other (figure 6).

Scale

The over-all dimensions of an object or a grouping is related to a similar object or grouping (figure 7).

Harmony

Harmony or unity is the result of law and order—the aim of all art. Through the right use of the above principles this will be attained.

Harmony produces an impression of agreement through the selection and arrangement of consistent objects and ideas.

In choosing articles to be placed together, select those that have some likeness in texture. The dominate lines of a group should follow the shapes of the object on which it is placed. The eye should move easily from one object to the next in a direction parallel to the lines of the furniture. The eyes should be guided toward the center rather than away.

Harmony or unity is attained when form, pattern, texture, color, use, material, and idea expressed by the objects in a room are so organized and inter-related as to give a feeling of completeness, that nothing can be added, taken away, or changed without interfering with the wholeness of it—selected and arranged as to have an air of character and meaning.

SUMMARY

Points to consider are: How do you and your family want to live? What activities give you the greatest satisfactions? What forms, colors and materials give you the most pleasure? How much will it cost in time, energy, and money?

Art Elements + Art Principles = Objectives

- line
- proportion
- harmony or unity
- form
- balance
- beauty
- texture
- emphasis
- individuality
- light
- rhythm
- functionalism
- color
- repetition
- pattern
- scale
- space

![Figure 6](image1.png)

![Figure 7](image2.png)
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Inside Today's Home by Ray and Sarah Faulkner
Adventuring in Art by Kathryn Dean Loe
Home Furnishing (2nd Edition) by Anna Hong Rutt

Design Your Home for Living by Trilling & Nicholas
Fundamental Procedures in Home Furnishing by Sears
Adding Beauty in Homes, University of Nebraska


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