

Pattern and Texture

Unit

8

Unit 8

Pattern

Learning Outcomes:

On successful completion of this unit the candidate will be able to:

- ✓ explore different types of patterns,
- ✓ describe how to mix patterns,
- ✓ choose patterns and use them successfully.

Design schemes are referred to as colour schemes but there are two other ingredients which are as important as colour and without which a scheme lacks depth and interest. It is the skilful use of pattern and texture that makes the scheme bloom. Pattern has been used for thousands of years to decorate houses, objects and people. Patterns may be printed directly on the fabric, or woven into the fabric during manufacture. Very often a pattern can be the starting point for a complete colour scheme, with the colours in the pattern providing the colour palette for paints, plain fabrics and other accessories. Many of the designs developed in primitive times are still with us today.

Different Types of Patterns

There are basically four types of patterns:

- Geometric
- Floral
- Motif
- Pictorial

Successfully mixing patterns also requires an understanding of scale and density.

Geometric Patterns

Stripe - this type of geometric pattern is decorative, yet it can also serve for the purpose of deceiving the eye. It is also a space manipulation tool. Vertical stripes make a surface appear taller, whereas horizontal stripes create a sense of width. Another example of geometric patterns is a check design. Checks are versatile and can fit within a wide range of settings, both formal and casual. A crisp, clean, tone-on-tone pattern can be perfect for upholstered dining room chairs in a formal setting. Whereas gingham check could be great for a casual country house setting.



Floral Pattern

This is perhaps the easiest interior design pattern to recognize. As the name suggests, the focus is on flowers of all kinds. A floral pattern provides a soft touch to a design scheme. Even multiple floral patterns can be used in a design scheme. In this case you can calm the action down by the addition of some geometric stripes or checks elsewhere in the design scheme.



A floral interior design pattern is especially useful for conveying a sense of historical or period style.

Motif Pattern

In the visual sense a motif refers to a repeated image. It can be either representational or abstract. Representational designs are based on nature - moon, stars, sun, shells, flowers and the like. Suppose in a design scheme that a bathroom is decorated with pictures of a reoccurring sea shell design: sea shells can either be stencilled or prepared along the top of the wall like a border, or a sea shell shaped soap dish can be used for soap. This is an example of representational motif, in which the designs are based on nature and the images are repeated in the design scheme.

Abstract designs are based on geometrically formed shapes.

A motif interior design scheme can be used to demonstrate a strong theme and unity in an overall design scheme. A motif can be introduced through fabrics, floorings, wall coverings and accessories.

Pictorial Pattern

Pictorial pattern, though similar to motif pattern, is more scenic in nature. It can be used to provide themed anchoring to a particular era or style i.e., a jungle theme in a child's bedroom.

It can also be a bit more grown up. Like draperies with images of Greek urns in a kitchen environment, tying in with other Greek elements in the space. Another possibility could be fabric depicting an old English hunting scene used on the draperies of an office or den. This will add a masculine flavour to a space. If you intend to use a pictorial interior design pattern, try starting out small. Some throw pillows might be a good starting point.



Choosing and Buying Patterns

One of the fun elements of designing and decorating a room comes when you have to choose and mix the patterns and colours. While choosing a pattern consider factors such as scale, colour, tone and content.

- Experiment with mixing and matching: try stripes and checks, stars and stripes.
- Choose two dominant patterns of the same scale and you will find that they fight each other for your attention.
- As a general rule the best results are achieved by arranging for the largest areas (walls floors, curtains) to take on the largest scale patterns and the smaller items correspondingly smaller patterns.
- Always view pattern from the distance from which it will be viewed in a room. By holding the sample at a suitable distance from a mirror you will get the right effect.
- Curtain sample patterns are best viewed with some light behind them rather than facing the light. This will give a good idea of how the material will appear when hung at a window.
- When using several patterns in one room make sure that they are linked. Choose patterns with colours, themes, motifs or textures in common.
- You can also develop your own patterns, picking up motifs from other elements in a room. For example, you can trace patterns from china to use as a guide for embroidering table linen, or you can cut out elements from a printed fabric to use to make appliqué designs.

- The simplest way to mix patterns is to choose a decorative pattern first, then co-ordinate a plain or semi-plain fabric, or a stripe in a different scale but all in same colour palette. You can then use combinations of all these fabrics for the window treatment, upholstered furniture and cushions. Consider using a checked fabric for the sofa and then overlaying it with cushions in different combinations of patterns, for example stripes and checks for a floral with a small gingham check.

Mixing Patterns

Books in their various covers and designs; the way pictures and prints are hung on the wall; the play of light and shade; the shapes of different pieces of furniture - all these form patterns in their own right. A play of patterns can be very effective and sometimes enriches the whole scheme. When properly used it will give added depth to the whole room. What is the key to successfully mixing interior patterns? The answer is simple: it depends upon the relationship between density and scale.

Scale

Scale is how big or small a pattern element is on the wall paper or on the fabric. This especially has to do with its size. The scale of a large flower is greater than a small rose bud.

Density

Density is how tightly grouped together the elements of the pattern are. A rose bud pattern on an open solid coloured back ground would be less dense than the larger intertwining pattern which shows little, if any background.

So in this example, the large floral pattern is both relatively larger in scale and denser than the open, smaller rosebud pattern. In order to add sophistication to the overall scheme, you can combine interior patterns of different scale and density i.e. if you are using floral you can use a dense, large multi-floral pattern on the throw pillows resting on a solid colour, yet textural sofa. When working with interior design pattern keep in mind the overall colour scheme. The elements of design work best when together, not alone.

Stripes and checks can be the easiest patterns to work with. They work well alone or with any of the other pattern families.

Using Patterns Successfully

A successful room scheme includes not only colour but also an effective use of pattern combined with textural and tonal contrasts. Like colours, patterns can also help to create mood; they can excite you, or entice you, drawing you into the room. Patterns can also change the proportion of space or can suggest a modern or period look. Bold patterns work like warm colours, they tend to advance (appear to be coming towards you) Therefore they work best in large and cold spaces. Small patterns are like cool, pale colours, they tend to recede (seem to go away from you). This way they create an impression of space, and can

be used effectively in a small space. However, very small mini-prints tend to fade into insignificance if used over a large area. To avoid this happening you can go for an interesting texture rather than a design.

The use of pattern can also set a specific style, either period or modern. The right choice of pattern and colour can enhance the architectural features of a room.

When choosing a pattern, think about its design and scale, and the surface on which you will use it. Heavily patterned curtains and bold carpet designs can be dominant. Patterned curtains can be effective against plain walls. If you want the window to blend in with rest of the décor in the room choose curtains that co-ordinate with the wall coverings.

Taking Care

There are certain areas in the home where overly strong patterns should be avoided: on kitchen work surfaces, for example, where they can cause eye strain. Wall tiles in the bathroom and kitchen need careful selection - too bold a pattern can become irritating.

Texture

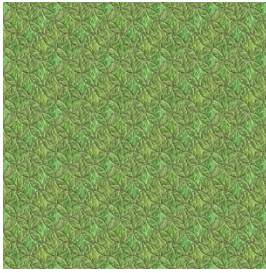
Texture is a key element for making a space interesting and inviting. Textural depth can be created by mixing items of different texture in a design scheme.

A room without texture, though nicely composed, looks flat and boring. Imagine a smooth glass tube, a tactile waffle weave throw, a luxurious chenille drapery panel, a shiny lacquered cabinet - all these when included in a scheme will attract the eyes around the room taking in all the details.

Textural juxtaposition is a critical element to overall success in any interior environment but becomes even more powerful in a monochromatic scheme.

Visual texture can be perceived as warm or cool, similar to colour. For example a glass table will evoke cool qualities because of its clear smoothness when compared to a cross-section tree trunk that is playing the role of a unique end table. Mixing warm and cool textures in a space can make it more sophisticated. The eye is drawn from one detail to another. Focusing texture to one side of the temperature spectrum can create a sense of harmony.

Texture in fabrics emphasize mood within a room. A grand dining room is synonymous with velvet, brocade, paisley and taffeta, whereas a romantic bedroom brings to mind voile, light weight cotton and ribbon trims. Texture can be used to create the smart town house look of smooth linen, and suede. Every fabric you choose has textural significance, so be aware of how you can use this to add another layer of interest to a room. This applies not only to foundation fabrics but also to smaller items: denim cushions embellished with wooden buttons are the perfect addition to a relaxed family room, for example, whereas cashmere ones trimmed with satin look sensational on a leather club chair.



Colour and Texture

Surface textures also affect the way we perceive a colour – many textures absorb light, some reflect it while others filter and diffuse it. Sometimes the same colour can appear quite different, depending on the way the surface reacts to light. This is another reason why you need to look at the fabrics and paint samples under the lighting conditions in which they will actually be seen.

Many people think of texture as a purely raised, rough or sculptured surface. Actually all surfaces have a texture, even if they are perfectly smooth and bland, such as plastered walls that have been painted with matt emulsion paint. This texture absorbs light slightly, making a colour look weaker. The same colour on a shiny surface, such as gloss paint, silk fabric, glazed tiles, will look brighter and stronger, as the light is bounced back.

The rough textures of exposed brick or stone walls, planks of wood, natural flooring and coarsely woven textiles absorb light, and therefore make the colour appear darker, richer or in some cases duller. Light diffusing textures such as sheer muslin and voile fabrics, allow the light to pass through, making the colour appear softer and more delicate. Heavily textured items can create very interesting effects. Because of their uneven surface, light is reflected, absorbed and reflected differently resulting in varying values of colour. You can use this in a room where you want to add an extra visual element.

Texture can also work like colour to bring surfaces forward or can give the impression that they are further away. For example the shiny and silky textures - glass, brass and chrome - seem to come at you; whereas the rougher, soft and light absorbing textures - velvet, tweed and jute – do the opposite and seem to move apart. As a result the colour of highly glazed ceramic tiles stands out much more than the same colour on a bath towel.

Setting a Style through Textures

Texture can also help to set the style of a room - for example some textures are definitely more traditional and are suitable for decorating period rooms. Brass, velvet, brocades, lace and feathery ferns, for example, all have a period feel, while chrome, especially if combined with smoked glass, brushed aluminium, black ash, slatted venetian blinds all have a more modern look. Some textures, however, such as brick, stone and leather are timeless; it is the way they are used that creates that special look.

It is very important to achieve textural balance when selecting materials. This means choosing a variety of textures within a scheme, which will complement and contrast with each other while at the same time relating to the overall style.

Softening Texture

Shiny textures are too busy and stimulating and can almost be disturbing if too many are used in one room. This is often seen in bathrooms and kitchens. A calmer feel can be created by balancing shiny textures with soft and delicate light filtering textures. Rough textures can be very harsh. You can soften them by using some light filtering surfaces. The softer and light absorbing textures sometimes appear claustrophobic, especially if they are on a dark coloured surface. They will look more effective if contrasted by silks, shiny and light diffusing textures.

Textural Contrasts

Think about different textures and you will see that it is possible to practically feel, as well as see, different textures through the mind's eye. Pick out some of them and imagine how they would look when appropriately distributed around walls, ceilings, floors and furniture. Contrast their qualities; weigh up their surfaces and juxtapose them in your mind. Rough can easily go with smooth and matt with gloss, but what rough with what smooth and what matt with what gloss, are the questions of taste and situation. For example brick walls would better be contrasted with linen or cotton, or smooth white finish of shutters, than with silk, or velvet.

Activity

Shop around and bring back various samples of brick, tile, paint chips, matting, silks, velvets, other fabrics. Experiment with them and try out various contrasts.

Suggested Further Reading:

- ✓ *Principles of Form and Design, (1993), By Wucius Wong*
- ✓ *Interior Design Materials and Specifications, (2013), By Lisa Godsey*