

Pattern

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Pattern to me is interest. It's depth and dimension; it's stimulation.

Pattern is everywhere and seen in everything, from fabric and furniture and artwork to the placement of trees in a landscape or the movement of grass in a field.

Whether I am working on a garden or composing fabrics, I enjoy playing with different types of patterns. This can be done by putting together vivid prints of different scales and colors or by more subtly combining textures in monochromatic tones—or any combination in between. You just have to recognize what works for you.

Pattern can elicit emotional responses, and even if subconscious, these are powerful. Stripes, for example, provide rhythm and calm. Think of the orderly, almost military appeal of the tented room of the Charlottenhof Palace at Potsdam, or how satisfying and handsome the repetition of stripes can be when covering walls or furniture.

Alternatively, floral patterns remind us of the world around us and reflect or interpret the natural beauty we as humans find so appealing. They can be bright, happy, and exuberant or more reserved and somber. Other patterns—toiles, ikats, suzanis, and Chinese scenic papers—can take us to far-off places.

Patterns can even be transformative. For example, the use of an African tribal print on a period Georgian armchair brings new life to a familiar old style and lightens what could be a heavy traditional feel. When used in an unexpected way, pattern can make an old piece of furniture a little cooler or less rigid.

I am very often asked how I mix patterns together, and I never have a good answer. I think of mixing patterns as more of an art than a recipe. There are no guidelines or steadfast rules—aside from not putting hideous things together. Seriously,

it's all relative and particular to each situation, so I tell people to look at things and see what appeals to them aesthetically.

I've done rooms with a very bold and obvious use of patterns in the mix. I love the challenge of a giant room with all sorts of things going on, from the walls and the carpet to the layers of fabrics in the upholstery and curtains. Add in artwork and accessories, and you have a complex system of patterns working together to make a room beautiful.

Alternatively, when working on rooms where the scheme is meant to be completely calming, the use of subtle pattern, quietly detailed, lends visual interest and lessens the risk of monotony. Even where I intend a room to gently coax one to sleep, it doesn't mean the eyes have to be bored by a lack of pattern. I will use textures as pattern and rely more on other things in the room to achieve this interplay my eye seems to crave; the different shapes of furniture, for example, can be as stimulating as the more obvious use of patterned fabrics.

Whatever the case, a room needs this visual interest, whether it's obvious or subtle, to make an overall pleasing result. One room illustrates particularly well how I view pattern holistically. For the forty-second Kips Bay Show House, I chose a small French-paneled room on the top floor of the classically proportioned Villard Houses by Stanford White.

I went for a monochromatic scheme of teal and highlighted the effect of the handsome paneling by upholstering the inset panels in textured wool. This set off the mottled teal glaze on the surrounding woodwork beautifully and made an excellent backdrop for all of the art I hung on the walls. The play of the different shapes and types of frames in addition to the varied artwork within the configuration of the paneling itself

In a landmark Rosario Candela building on Manhattan's Upper East Side, this staircase has a custom banister and stenciled grass cloth (hand-embellished by a decorative painter) on its circular walls. The carpeting on the stairs is also a custom design.



