

RESTRAINT

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Decorating is much like a play or movie: a cast of characters act out the story, and everyone in the story can't be the star. There are major and minor roles, and it is as crucial to know how to use the minor characters to develop the narrative as it is to push the stars into the spotlight for maximum effect.

Restraint is not often discussed in shelter magazines, but it is as important as a harmonious scheme, killer art, proper lighting, or a functioning floor plan. And while print and social media tend to embrace visually grabby rooms that attract attention and likes, the reality is that a room that is subtly nuanced can be just as impactful and even more beautiful than its flashier counterparts.

Knowing where and when to hold back when choosing a finish or a piece of furniture is crucial to giving certain elements importance or visual prominence. For example, if you have a bold and vibrant painting, you don't want to hang it on

an equally visually stimulating wall treatment, as that would draw the focus away from the artwork—unless, of course, the painting is hideous and you're actively trying to detract from it.

Always make sure the eye has relief and can pass over the room and focus on certain things without lingering too long on others, at least at first glance. The point is not to give everything away at once. Details and layers can reveal themselves upon further inspection, and it is lovely to uncover new things as one settles in and experiences a room or space.

The concept of restraint can seem simple, or worse, boring, but that's a misinterpretation. A space can still be layered and nuanced and have all sorts of exciting things going on. Restraint makes the whole more effective. After all, you don't want everything in a room jumping out at you, screaming at equal volume for attention. One loud individual in a group—one star of the show, so to speak—is usually enough.

Opposite: Artisan Robert Christian transformed this Nantucket dining room floor with an open trellis design, interweaving stylized petals in blush pink and soft green. A colossal Minton nautilus shell, one of a pair, rests atop a directoire column. Following pages: Red-and-white-striped fabric was meticulously pieced into panels, then upholstered onto the walls. Custom slipcovers in floral linen with tape trim complement the soft white curtains framing the windows.



