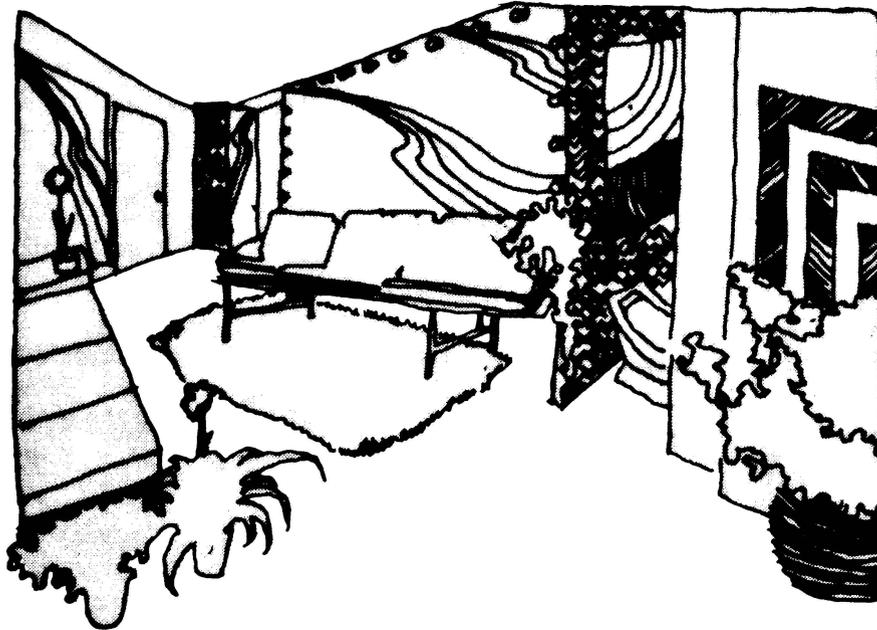


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4-h home environment your space for living

designing your space



a study of lines

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4-H HOME ENVIRONMENT, YOUR SPACE FOR LIVING

DESIGNING SPACE

A STUDY OF LINES

Are these searching eyes? 

Could be, if you want to interpret them that way. But, really they are just looking in that direction eyes prefer to look. When you remember that, you have mastered some basic principles for successful room arrangement.

This analysis may seem like child's play, but play along with me, if you'd like to know why one room welcomes you and makes you feel comfortable, while another gives you the jitters. The reason is that the eye is essentially lazy and any movement other than straight ahead or side to side, it considers as extra work.

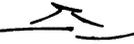
A straight line like this  is horizontal. The eye sees it easily and is pleased. Horizontal objects such as a table , a chair , a sofa , or a chest  satisfy the eye because the muscles aren't put to any extra effort. Horizontal stripes   or plaids, weaves, or printed patterns  maintain a horizontal feeling even though they may be used on walls or in draperies. The reaction is pleasurable because the eye quickly flashes the no-extra-effort horizontal impression to the brain.

A straight line like this  is vertical. It gives the eye muscles more work to do, and attracts attention because the eye has to move up and down. Vertical objects like a high cabinet , tall windows , or a tester bed  attract interest because they stir the eye from its lazy way.

Vertical stripes  take the eye up, as does vertical emphasis in patterns or weaves  or the grooving in wall paneling. 

A slightly curved line like this  is concave. With little extra effort the eye translates that as a slightly downward horizontal direction, and is pleased.

A curved line like this  is convex. It is satisfying because the upward direction is not great enough to make the eye do extra work.

Shallow curves  are transitional . . . or are links . . . that create an expectancy of other stronger direction. Objects with shallow curves such as a mirror , a chair back , or a scalloped valance  all retain a horizontal quality.

A sharp curve up  or down  has the same attention-getting quality as a straight vertical line. A high back chair , a tall mirror , or a high sofa back  force the eye to treat them as verticals.

Now, apply horizontal, vertical, and curves to a few examples which you find in rooms. A group of objects that are horizontal in feeling, or movement, are restful and soothing to the lazy eye, presuming they are related to a starting point, in this instance, the floor. 

However, there aren't many rooms that do not have a fireplace, windows, or some tall object to be organized into the scheme. Besides, a room that gave no vertical exercise could be dull and would lack points of interest. The balance and transition between horizontals and verticals is the key to successful room arrangement.

A helter-skelter placement of horizontal and vertical objects that make the eye go up and down, then side to side, etc., creates an atmosphere of unease and restlessness. "Busy" is one word for it. True, the furniture stands quietly in place, but see how the eye has to jump around. 

The trick in pleasing the eye is to decide that there is to be one major point of interest, and one or two lesser points. That is, objects or groupings that are usually vertical in movement--to be tied together with the horizontal objects by means of accessories, such as pictures, lamps, planters, small hanging shelves or sculpture. All of these are relatively small, and contain curves. All can be manoeuvred to lead the eye up, down, and around gracefully. The transitional links may be imaginary, but it is they that create rhythm in a room.

Before illustrating these principles, it is important to know the proportions of the room. If it has a low ceiling, the vertical elements should go as high as possible, to the ceiling for shelving, cabinets, and window treatment, at the same time being broad, not skimpy. This fools the eye into believing that the ceiling is higher than it really is.



If the ceiling is too high, stop the verticals well below the ceiling to "pull the ceiling down," and concentrate on strong horizontal effects, even in the tall objects.



Remember that the eye likes to see small objects arranged in groups. It doesn't like to skip around to see a little picture here, a little picture there.

Pictures hung together indicate your knowledge of how the eye behaves.



The same is true for sculpture and bric-a-brac; several pieces placed together where they can guide the eye from a horizontal to a vertical means that you understand the principle of transition and rhythm. These principles also guide the grouping of furniture out in the room to help you avoid scattering chairs, lamps, or tables.

Rhythm and comfort follow naturally when you cater to the lazy eye.

Make a drawing of your room. Check the kinds of lines used. What do these lines express? Check with friends to get their ideas of the lines used.

COLLECT LINES THAT SAY SOMETHING TO YOU

Lines

What they say

SKETCH THE LINES IN AN AREA IN YOUR SPACE FOR LIVING.

EXAMPLE: SEE COVER