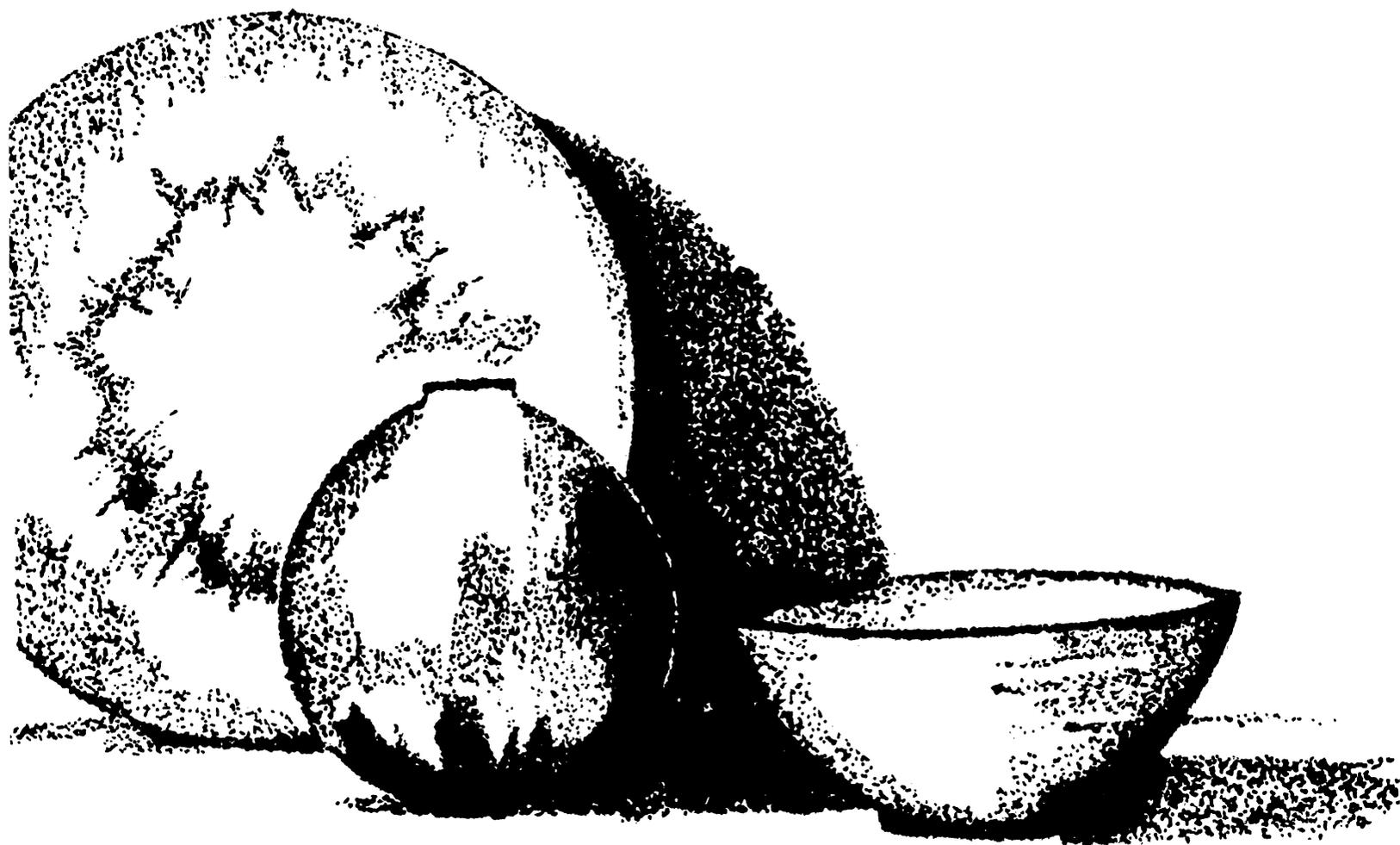


*Design for  
Accessories  
how to use them*



“Too much evaluation of a design can sometimes cause the design to become stiff or give the appearance of an exhibit item. A design is not necessarily good just because we set out to achieve balance, pleasing proportion or locate a center of interest. It must be the result of much searching, experimentation, and many trials.

“Understanding Cannot Take Place Until There is First Awareness”

*From: "Design for You" by Jane Beidler*

# Design for Accessories

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One of the greatest sources of pleasure we have is the daily opportunity to create beauty with everyday objects. It is possible to find charm in the simplest acts of living--arranging slices of bread on a tray, sorting fresh laundry, or setting the table for dinner. An awareness of the beauty in objects around you develops from a sensitivity to design elements--space, form, texture, and color. Cost of the objects you use has nothing to do with the quality of the composition.

The accessories you select and the way you use them can be of the utmost importance in adding interest and pleasure to your home. The selection of accessories is discussed in HEG 1 "Accent With Accessories" and Circular 974 "Judging Good Design."

This information will help you use the elements and principles of good design in designing arrangements to create beauty and express your personality.

**Space-** affects the way accessories can be used, for it is the limiting factor. For example, the amount of space on a shelf or table limits the number and size of the objects which can be used on it. Wall space controls the number, size, and shapes of pictures or wall hangings. Greater harmony and rhythm are created if the lines of the limiting space are repeated in the objects used within it.

For example:

An oval or round table with round ash-tray or bowls of flowers, or a rectangular table with books and square ash trays.

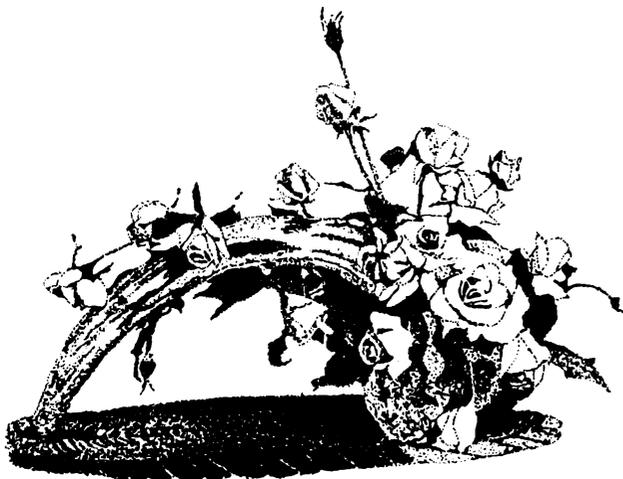


Figure 1

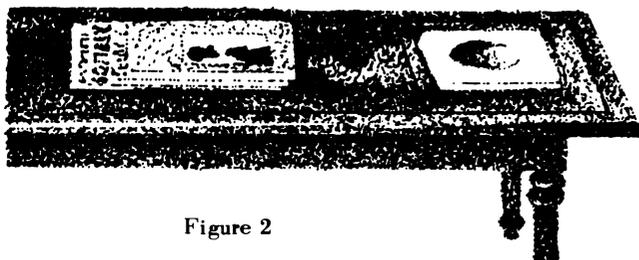


Figure 2



Figure 3

**Proportion-** is the division of space. Proportion is important in developing interesting space relationships. It should not be too evident that a space is divided into halves, thirds, or quarters. On the other hand, neither should the division be so unusual that it becomes confusion; usually space not divided in the center or too far to one side is more interesting.



Figure 4A

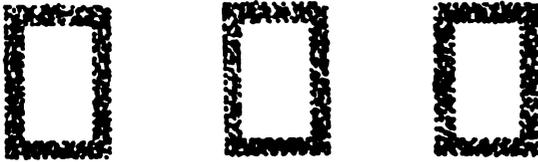


Figure 4B

The space between units determines whether you see them as a group or as individual units. If they are intended to be seen in a grouping, the space between the units should be less than the width of the individual unit (A); if they are to be seen separately, the space dividing them should be greater than the width of the individual units (B). This is a principle frequently used in hanging pictures or grouping objects.

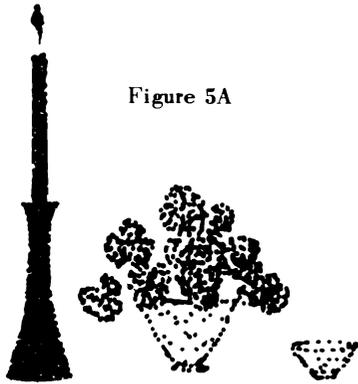


Figure 5A

**Form-** is the key to arranging objects together so they are more impressive than they would be seen separately. Form is the shape of an object. It can be a 2-dimensional, flat object such as a wall-hanging, a place-mat, or a rug. Form adds a third dimension when it adds depth to length and width. A bowl can be seen as a flat circle looking directly into it or as a half-globe when seen from the side. Begin to think of your arrangements as compositions of circles or rectangles. Put round nuts in a round bowl or square candy in a square dish. Clutter occurs when too many unlike forms are seen together. If it is necessary to use several unlike forms together, you might unite them by placing on a tray or mat, using closely related colors.

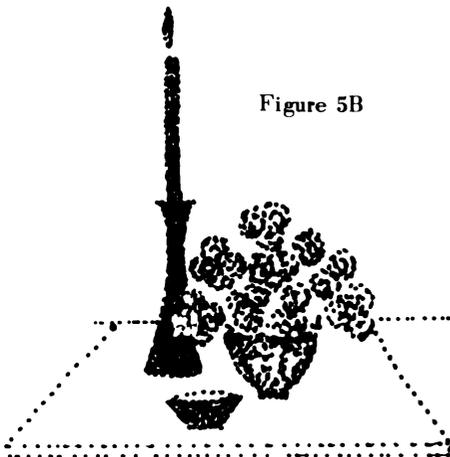


Figure 5B

Try building arrangements so they have several heights. Have one tall object descending by steps to an object that is flat and horizontal. (Figure 5A)

Consider depth in your arrangements, for we live in a 3-dimensional world. Virtually all the things we use are seen against a background. Place some objects nearer the background than others to create depth and rhythmic movement. (Figure 5B)

**Scale-** is important in selecting accessories for your composition. Accessories should be in scale with each other and with the other furnishings in the arrangement. For example: heavy chests and couches require large paintings, bigger pieces of sculpture, brighter colors in accessories, or larger lamps.

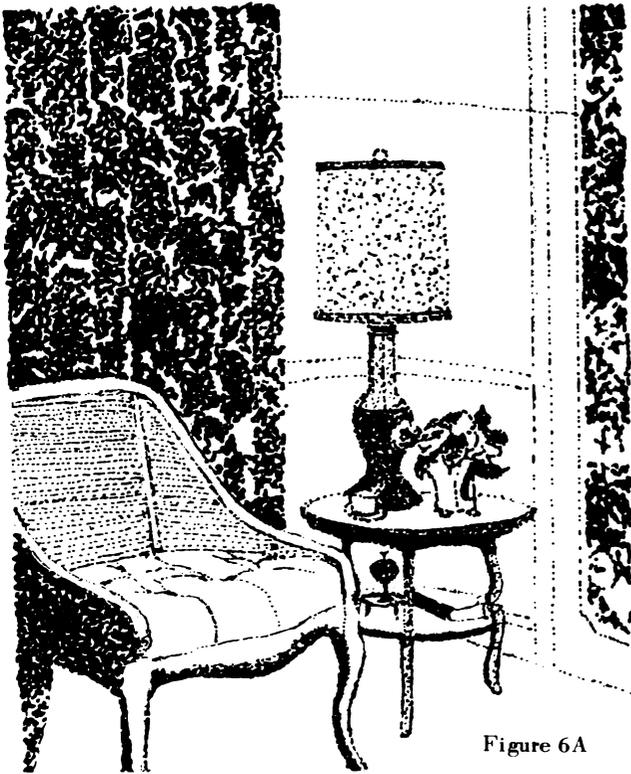


Figure 6A

Tables, chairs, and lamps should be scaled for each other. Do you know which table and lamp are right for the chair and which aren't? A lightly scaled chair should never be used with a table that's too big and a lamp that's trying to outdo the Eiffel tower. We prefer our tables smaller than the chairs. . . and comfortable heights to use. By now it's obvious that Figure 6A is the example of proper scale. Remember, a table top should be approximately the same height as the arm of your chair. The lamp should be in keeping with the furniture. If the table and chair are small in scale and light looking, don't anchor the whole area down with a lamp that's too high or too solid to look right with the furniture grouping.

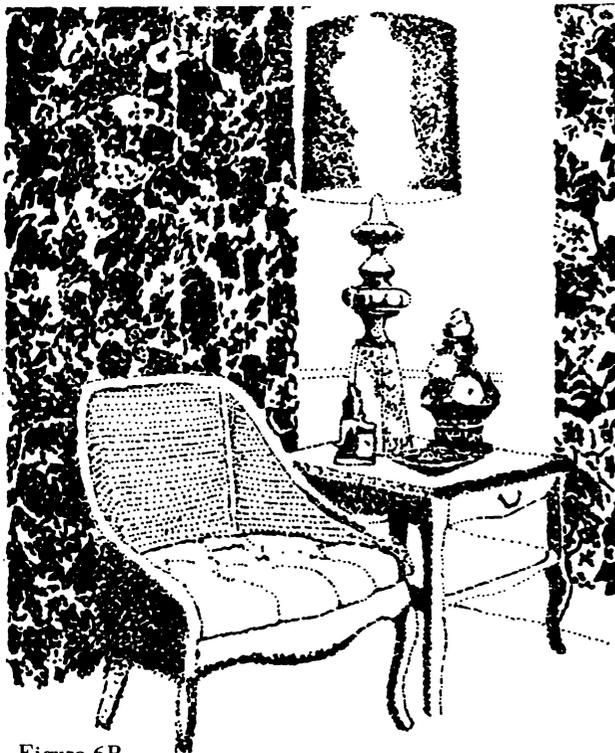


Figure 6B

The general trend of home construction today is toward openness. For such homes, accessories should be impressive in size and importance and tied together by use of color and feeling.

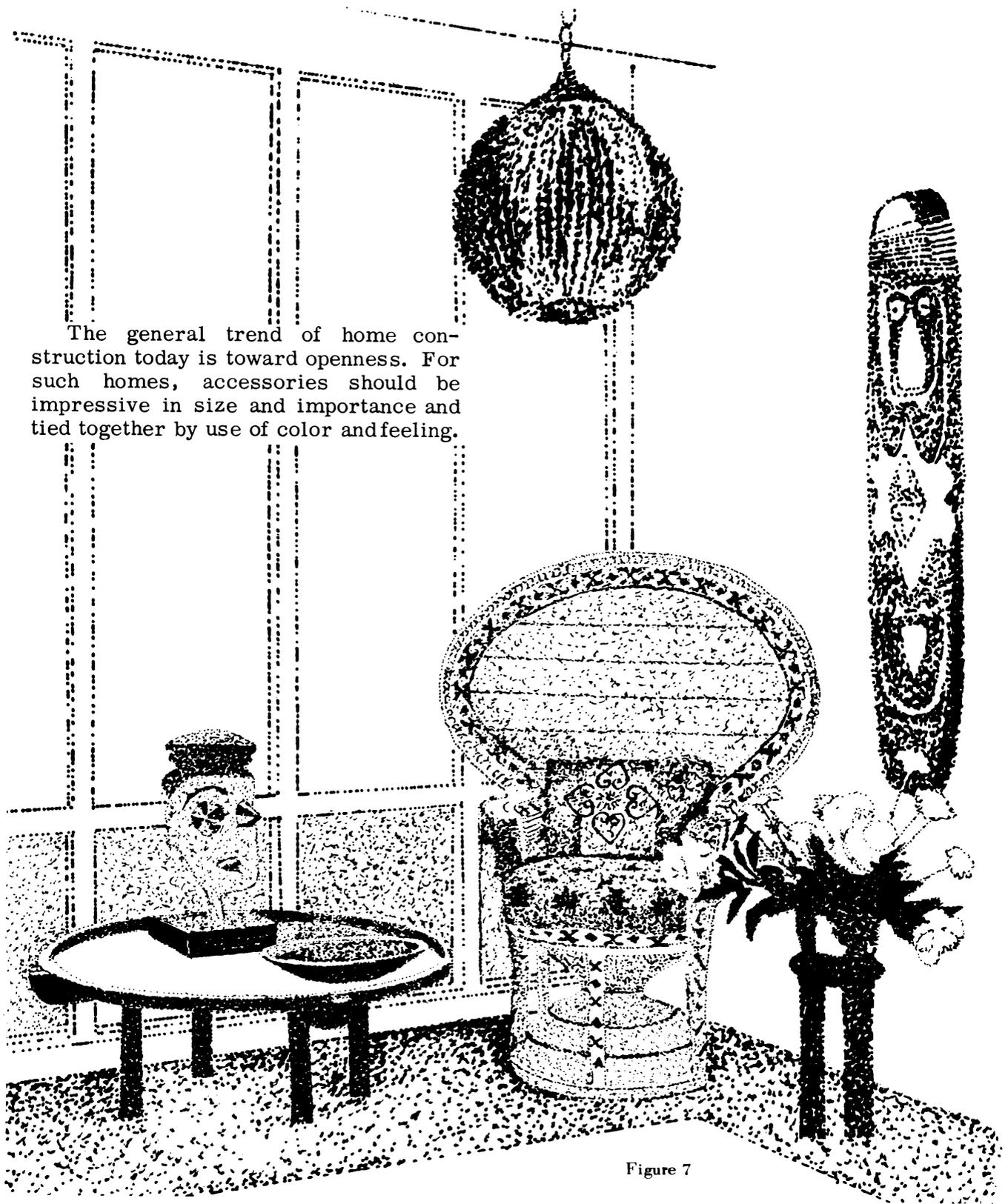


Figure 7

**Balance-** Symmetrical or formal balance gives the illusion of equal weights on both sides of a composition. The weights may be identical and equidistant from the center of the arrangement. This type of balance is too obvious to be very interesting. A more pleasing type of symmetrical balance may be achieved by using objects of equal importance or weight but which are not identical in appearance. One large object may balance several small ones or a small amount of bright color will balance a large area of grayed color. (Figure B) Informal or asymmetrical balance is created when the sides are not equal in importance. It is the most challenging and interesting form to use. The objects which "carry more weight" should be placed closer to the center of the composition in this case. (Figure C)

Radial balance radiates out from a center; using round place mats on an oval table.

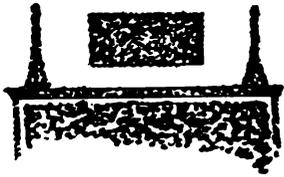


Figure 8A



Figure 8B



Figure 8C



Figure 9

### Color and Texture-



Figure 10

give character to objects. Consistent use of objects with the same character creates a theme which provides unity and harmony. Consider the character, 1) of warm wood tones and the rich pattern in the grain; 2) of a smooth, shiny silver bowl; 3) of a shimmering cut-glass vase. Identify the character of your accessories--it will help you select objects that blend harmoniously. Variation in texture can frequently be used where variation in color or pattern would be distracting. Textures should be selected for their harmony of idea and the use that is to be made of them. Velvet, silk, satin, lace, brocade, fur, and crystal all have different surfaces but harmonize in their feeling of elegance and formality. Tweeds, burlap, brick, stone, pottery, and copper create a feeling of natural ruggedness and informality. Study the variations of texture in your home. What are the individual sensations you receive from them? What is the total idea or mood conveyed by all of the textures together?



Figure 11

Colors used for accessories should harmonize with the background and other furnishings. However, since accessories are frequently used for accents, to add interest, greater contrast is permissible. This may be a contrast of hues, values, or intensities, or it may be a variation in texture.

**Rhythm-** is a sense of order, a quality of gracefulness; a feeling of easy movement. Rhythm is not possible without related movement or the sense of leading the eye easily from one part of a design to another in an easy, flowing manner. A certain arrangement shows rhythm, but it is not in the individual shapes, but in the change from one line to another, from one dimension to another, from one color to another, from one value to another.

Rhythm shapes may be repeated but they may make a monotonous arrangement if they are all the same size and same distance apart.

Even though the shapes are identical they can give a more pleasing rhythmical pattern when the spaces between them are varied. (Figures 12 and 13)

Besides having the spaces varied between shapes, other decorative details such as thin and heavy lines might be added. (Figure 14)

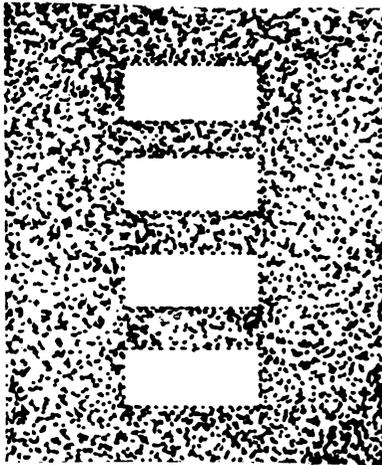


Figure 12

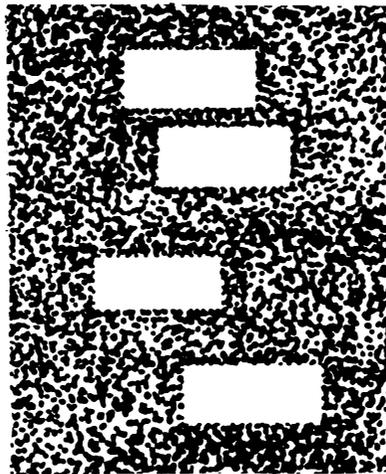


Figure 13

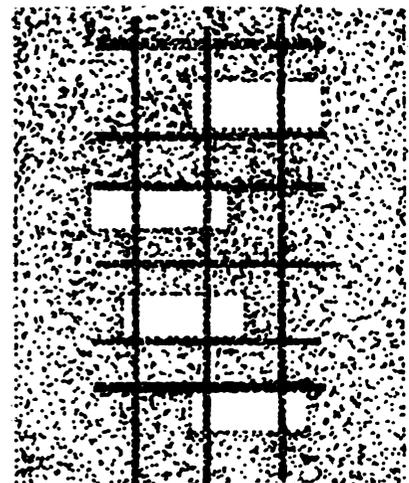


Figure 14

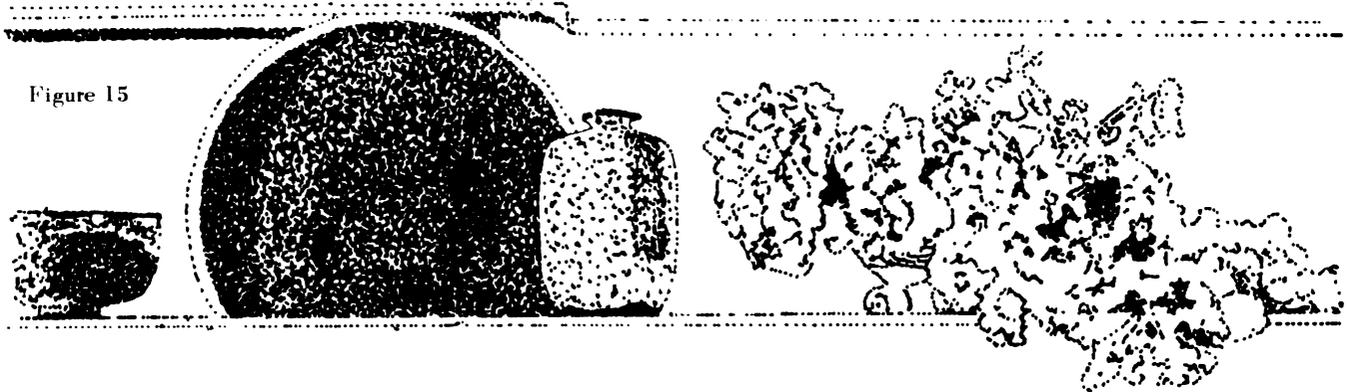


Figure 15



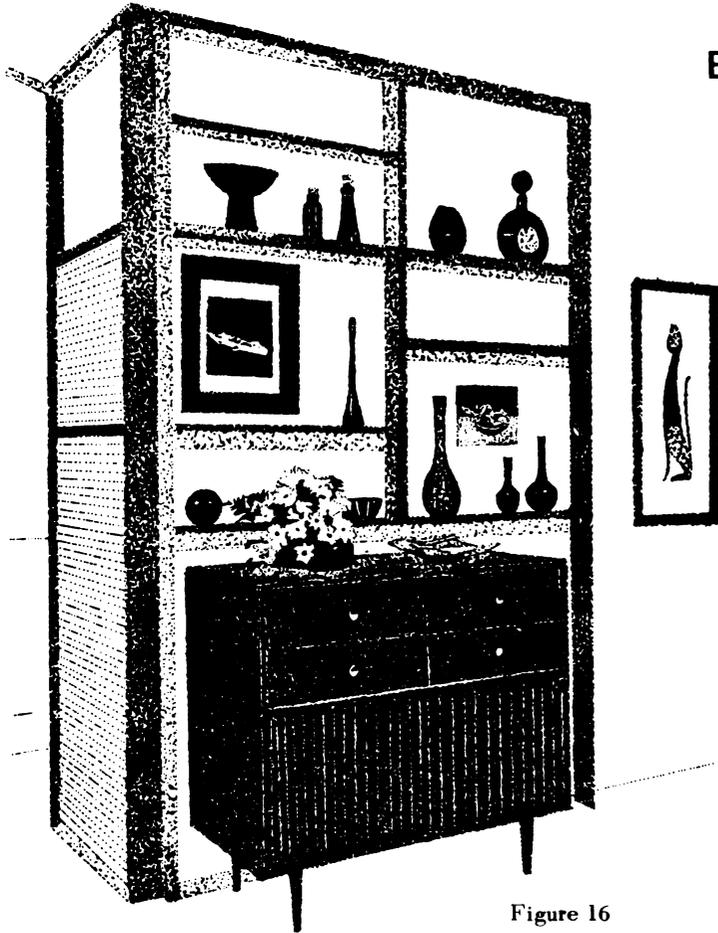


Figure 16

**Emphasis-** may be referred to as the point of emphasis. Every design needs some note of interest that catches the eye or arrests the attention. It involves the principle of design which leads the eye first to the most important part of the design and then to other areas in the order of their importance. In a room arrangement, a window area, a grouping of sofa, tables, and accessories might have attention directed toward them. Developing a center of interest might be one way of drawing attention away from an undesirable area or object.

There are several ways. We may attract attention to the important part of a design by:

- Use of contrast of color
- Value of intensity
- Unusual detail
- Grouping or placing objects

The fact that it is something out of the ordinary is sufficient to attract our attention to it and make it seem important.

Mounting a picture on a background shape or planning a mat for it are problems in proportion, balance, and in emphasis. The width of margins should be planned to be pleasing in relation to each other. The picture is to be viewed on the wall in a vertical position, so the bottom margin is wider than the other 3 for better balance. If they are all the same, the picture would appear to be sliding down in space. From the standpoint of emphasis, we need a rectangular shape of background on which to place the rectangular picture in order to emphasize the picture and not the background. If a rectangular picture were placed on an oval

background they would both be competing for attention. If the object is to be viewed in a flat position or from all sides, like a table cloth on a table, then the opposite sides should be the same size and should be parallel with the table. Placing a cloth in a diagonal manner on a table is contrary to the shape of the table and there is lack of emphasis on the cloth in relation to the table.

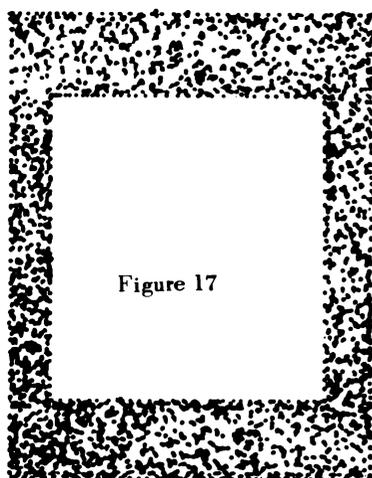


Figure 17

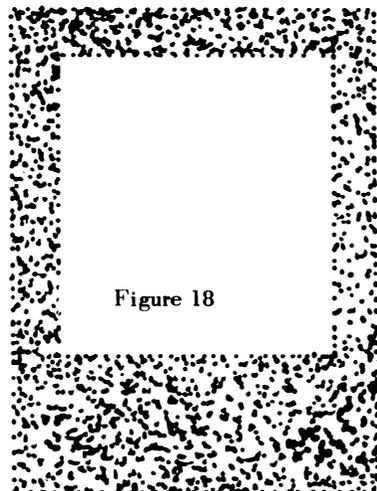


Figure 18

**Harmony-** could be expressed as the total look of the arrangement. Note that we select and arrange elements of design for a particular purpose. If we have failed to apply any one of the principles of design, then the resulting design will also lack harmony.

For Study: Note this design and the ways in which the various principles of design have been planned.

Informal balance has been used, with different "tree" shapes placed different distances from the center but so neither side seems to be heavier than the other nor have a greater power of attraction. Sufficient dark value and larger shapes have been used in the lower part to give a feeling of stability and yet there is also some dark value in smaller amounts in the upper part to carry the eye upward and balance the whole composition.

Unity with variety in the proportions has been achieved. The tree shapes are all triangles, but they vary both in size and in the decorative manner in which the space is broken in each one.

Emphasis has been placed on the small figures of the elk by making them dark in value and surrounding them with a light background. The "trees" are also clustered around them to center attention on them. Rhythm has been attained by means of repetition, gradation, and continuous line movement. There is gradation of size of the triangular shapes from the small ones at the top to the large ones at the base. They have the same basic shape, even though each "tree" has a different pattern of "branches." A feeling of continuous line movement has been achieved by overlapping the shapes in differing amounts so the eye is led in a rhythmical path from one shape to the next. The straight lines of the "trunks" also lead the eye from the base of the panel to the top. The composition lends itself to its use as a decorative wall panel. Thus, because all the principles of design have been applied appropriately, there is harmony in the composition. The lack of harmony would enter into the problem if one used this design as a wall panel with formal, traditional furnishings. It suggests an informal, contemporary setting.



Figure 19

## Important Points To Check

- Select enrichment that is meaningful to you, contributes to your home, and has interest.
- Think first in terms of a few large and important objects in scale with your rooms and furniture.
- Concentrate enrichment at important points related to the structure and other furnishings.
- Study the design of arrangement as an artist studies the composition of a painting.
- Change accessories for variety; the seasons, holidays, and other special occasions.
- Plan convenient storage for those objects not always used.
- Consider breakage hazards if you move often.
- Weed out, and upgrade the collection from time to time.
- Have courage to try something different, to express your own ideas.

Remember--Accessories suggest the interests and the needs of people who use the room.

### References

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The Doubleday Book of Interior Decorating  
Design For You by Jane Beitler and Bill Lockhart  
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## Notes and Ideas

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