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Design in Home Furnishings

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Beauty is perfection of line and shape, harmony of color and texture, space relationships, pattern and light. Two people try to make their homes beautiful. One succeeds; the other fails. Why? To create beauty, we must understand proportion, balance, rhythm, emphasis, harmony, order, and fitness for use.

We do not have to look far to find a pattern. Nature surrounds us with beauty in form and color: flowers, trees, shrubs, drifting clouds, distant mountains, earth and water, a shiny red apple. All are beautiful. We create beauty with simple things in our homes: a splint basket, a tapered dasher churn, a round wooden bowl, simple pottery, or graceful furniture. When we start to improve our homes, we find that understanding the elements and principles of which beauty consists will give us beautiful homes.

Materials Needed

1. Flannel board large enough to be seen by all members of the audience. 2. Construction paper for charts. 3. A piece of No. 1 sandpaper (3'' by 3'') for each chart, pasted on the center back, near the top to hold it to the flannel board.

Following the charts in this bulletin, draw the following with black ink on cream or pale yellow construction paper.

1. Straight and curved lines (Fig. 2).
2. Direction of lines (vertical, horizontal, diagonal) (Fig. 3).
3. Shapes created by lines (Fig. 8).
4. Rectangle and square (Fig. 8).

Illustrations mounted on construction paper:

1. Two windows, same size: one draped with material having vertical lines, curtains on window frame; one with horizontal lines, curtains extending out on the wall.
2. Two chests, one with straight lines, the other with too many curved, decorative lines.
3. Construction paper combined to indicate the proportion of color, shape, line, and contrast (Fig. 9).
4. Wallpaper, rug, drapery, and upholstery fabrics.
5. Two samples of wallpaper (an evenly striped one to compare with an unevenly striped sample).

6. A large and a small object combined with a medium-sized tray, or pictures to illustrate scale.
7. Pictures of formal and informal balance.
8. Picture of room with patterned wallpaper, rugs, draperies.
9. Picture of room with plain walls, rugs, and plain or patterned draperies.
10. Picture to show harmony of ideas, such as a pine panelled room with early American furniture, braided rug, copper, and pottery.
11. Picture of a girl's room showing femininity, soft colors, gently curved lines.
12. Picture of boy's room showing strength with strong lines and colors.
13. Two fabric designs: one showing rhythm and gradation of shape and color; the other showing poor design and color.

As you discuss beauty in the introduction, place the chart shown in Fig. 1 on the flannel board. Point to each element and principle. Tie it in with your introduction.

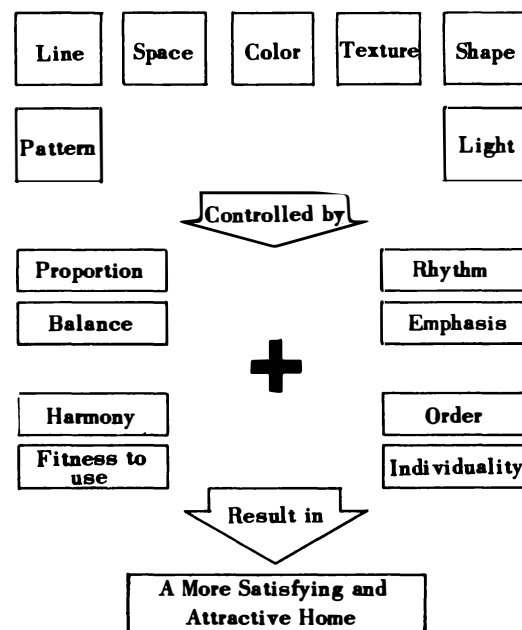


Fig. 1.--Recipe for beauty.

Points to Stress

We create beauty through understanding and appreciating elements and principles which help to make the home attractive.

Line

Show kinds of lines.

Lines are either curved or straight. They may take any of 3 directions: vertical, horizontal, diagonal.

Vertical lines indicate strength and dignity. Horizontal lines are restful and relaxing. When the main features of our rooms take horizontal direction at eye level, we feel less tension. Diagonal lines indicate strong action, restless movement. Too many diagonal lines used together result in confusion. Gently curved lines are gay, graceful, and feminine, but if they are exaggerated, they are confusing.

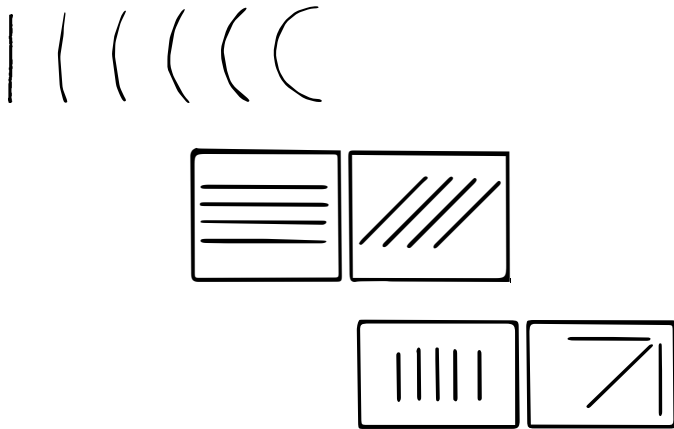


Fig. 2.--All lines are straight or curved.

Place window chart before the group.

The direction of lines can create optical illusions. You can make a narrow window look wide by using curtains with horizontal lines or a wide

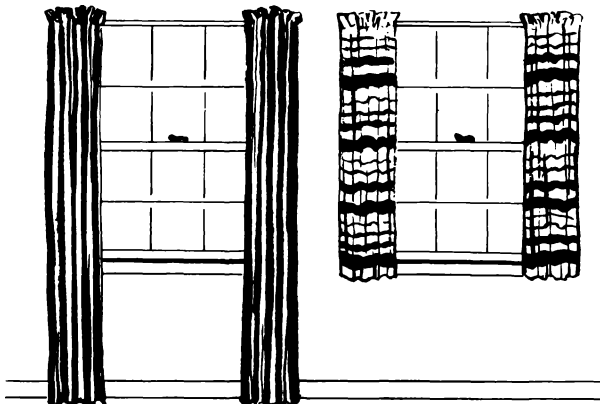


Fig. 4.--The way stripes are used can fool the eye.

window look narrow by using vertical lines. The stripes running up and down in curtains hung on the frame make the window appear very tall and narrow. Horizontal stripes on curtains hung over the frame and extending out on the wall make the window appear wider.

Place the chest chart on the flannel board.

The plain chest has simple vertical and horizontal lines. It may be unpainted and cost only half as much as the over-ornamented one. Lines going in too many directions, like the diagonal, vertical, and horizontal lines of the second chest, are confusing and ugly.

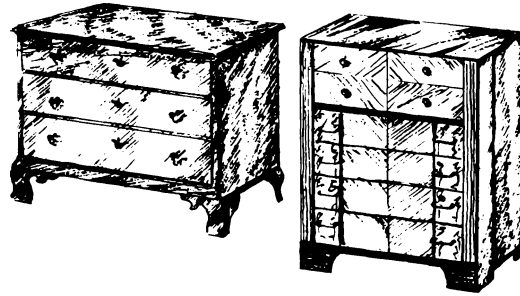


Fig. 5.--A plain chest and an over-ornamented one.

Illustrate curved lines used in the home. Some curved lines are good, but lines of the sofa in Figure 7 are not suited to its use. The legs are weak, because the weight cuts across the grain of the wood. The gentle curve in the legs of the chest permits the weight of the chest to stand on the grain of the wood. Using too many curved lines produces confusion and gaudiness instead of beauty. Ask the members to point out the use of curves in furnishings of the room you are in.

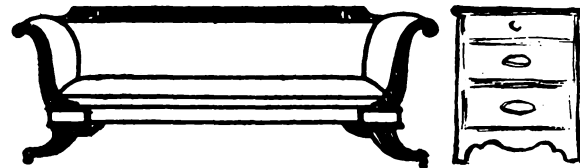


Fig. 6.--Both pieces of furniture have gently curved lines, but the construction of the sofa legs is weak and that of the chest is strong.

Show picture of girl's room.

Curved, dainty lines, and soft colors are feminine. They are right for a girl's room.

Show picture of boy's room.

Boys like strong colors, heavy textured fabrics, and sturdy furniture with straight lines.

Shape

Place shape charts on the flannel board.

The shapes on the chart are: circle, oval, oblong, triangle, diamond, rectangle, hexagon, and combinations of straight and curved lines. Can you think of types of home furnishings that are examples of these shapes?

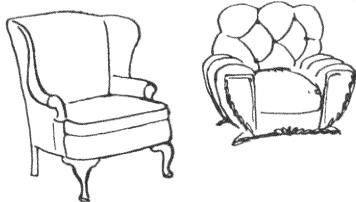


Fig. 7.--Contrast the gentle curves of the chair on the left with the overdone curves of the chair on the right.

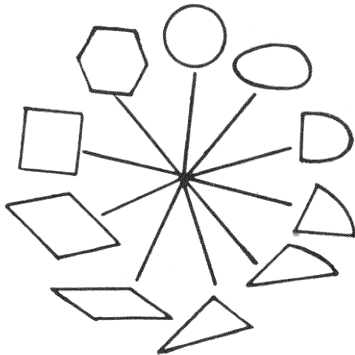


Fig. 8.--You may form many different shapes with both straight lines and curved lines. Proportion is apparent in squares and circles, but you will find that oblongs and ovals are best in home furnishings.

Similar shapes, or those adjoining on the chart, used together create a harmonious design. Designs should be dominated by shapes that are alike. Used sparsely, contrasting shapes are pleasing, but if we use in equal number and size, we create a design that is too busy.

Show fabric or wallpaper.

Point out the shapes used in the design of a wallpaper, of a fabric, of furniture. Which look best together?

Color, Shape, and Line

Show card indicating how color, shape, and line are combined.

Use vivid colors for accent, subdued colors for large areas. Point out which color predominates. What is the accent color? Which shape predominates? Each room should have one light, one dark, one neutral, and one accent color.

Using Figure 9, point out that the lightest green may be used on the walls, the deep green for the rug, the gray for draperies, the red as an accent.

The over-all rectangle is dominant. The small square gives emphasis. The free form in lighter tone gives contrast. The diagonal across the design serves to link the square, the freeform, and rectangle. In this illustration, the black accents the whole design. Use accent colors with restraint, or they lose their value.

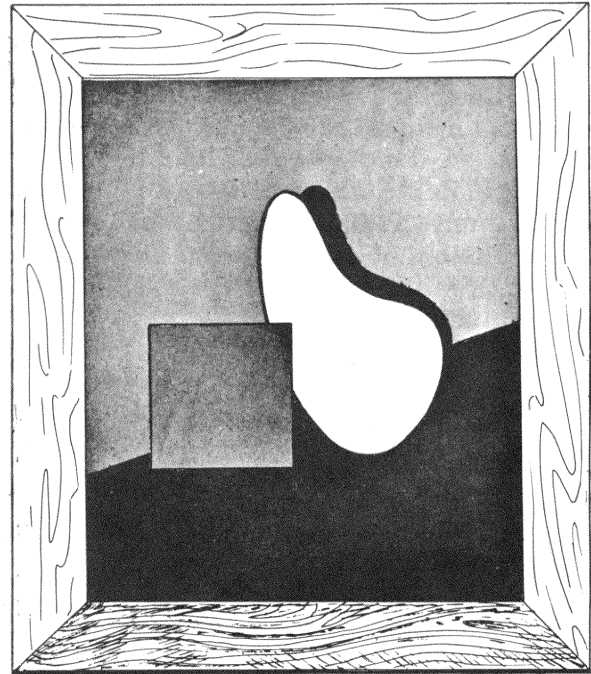


Fig. 9.--Copy this picture in the colors mentioned. Then study it for color, line, and shape. You may apply the principles used here in making your plan for a room.

Show picture of sofa, drop-leaf table, or desk with accessories which are squared and have gentle curves.

We can use the same principle in furnishing the home: the sofa, table, and desk are oblong. The chair seat is square. Combine rectangles with gentle curves in chair arms, bowls, lamps. The rectangle will dominate the furnishings.

Show card on which you have pasted samples of rug, wallpaper, and drapery and upholstery fabrics to show the use of line, color, texture, and pattern. What texture is most in evidence? What lines are used most often? What shape dominates? Does the texture correspond with the shape in each?

Point out that when you choose wallpaper, drapery fabric, rugs, and fabric for the furniture, you should consider blending of colors and textures, harmony of shapes, and lines. In Figure 10, tweedy fabrics, horizontal lines, and oval shapes dominate. These fabrics are all in shades

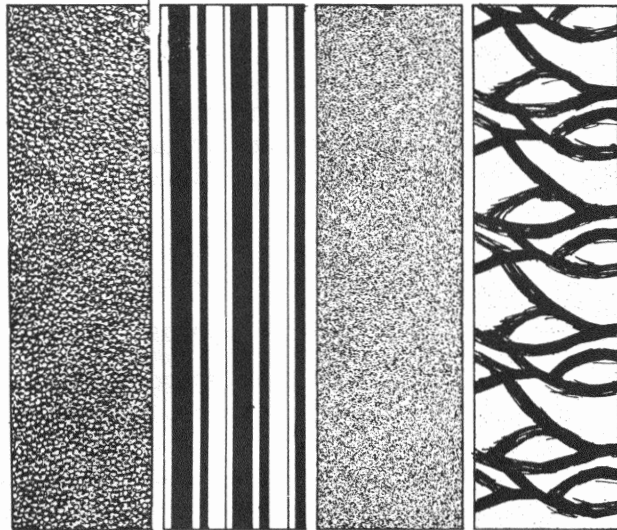


Fig. 10.--Try all patterns, lines, color, and textures together in planning a room.

of green and brown. Creamy white gives accent. Use only one pattern in a room. If draperies are patterned, have the walls and rugs plain to emphasize the window treatment.

Proportion and Scale

Place chart with oblong, rectangle, and square, or compare proportion and space.

If we are to have beauty and order in our homes, we must understand good proportion and space relationships. The Greek oblong (rectangle) of 2x3 or 3x5 is a standard of good proportion. When we apply this rule in selecting a table, a rug, a picture, etc., we are likely to have furnishings in good proportion. A long rectangular table or picture is more pleasing than a square one.

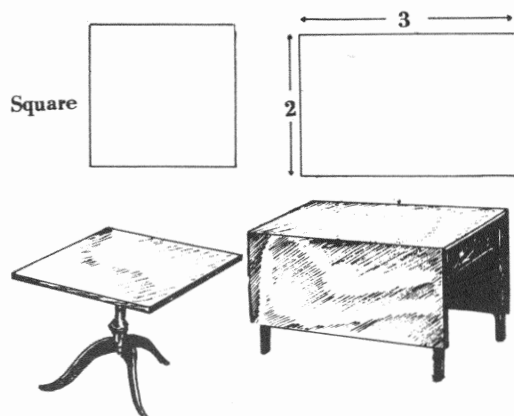


Fig. 11.--The oblong follows the "Golden Rule" of 2 by 3. See how it fits better than the square into your room.

Show an oval rug of good color arrangement and a round rug.

An oval rug is in more pleasing proportion than a round one because its proportion is based on the Greek oblong.

A rug 2' wide should be 3' long, while 3' wide should be 5' long.

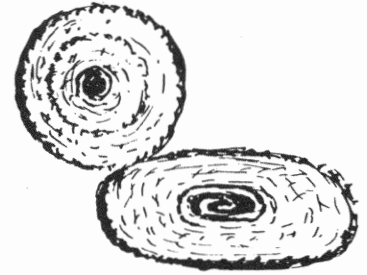


Fig. 12.--The oval rug will fit most floor plans better than the round rug. Make your braided rugs oval.

Compare 2 striped wall papers, one evenly and the other unevenly striped with repetition and rhythm in the design. Explain why the evenly spaced stripe is monotonous. Instead of carrying the eye up, it forces the eye to jump from stripe to stripe. Explain how the second stripe is distinctive. It has good proportion in spacing. Its broken lines repeat a design. Choose a stripe like this for a room with a low ceiling. The repeated design in the stripe carries the eye up and makes the ceilings appear higher.

Scale

To explain scale, compare a tall object, such as a vase of flowers, with a low one, such as a box or a book. Point out that when 2 objects so dissimilar in size are used together, one appears larger and the other smaller by contrast.

Place a medium sized tray behind the vase and box.

Explain that scale means the relationship of all objects used in an arrangement. In Figure 13, the tray, larger than the book and smaller than the vase of flowers, bridges the gap between them. The arrangement has a progression of sizes. Three objects are better than 2.

Judging proportion and scale is a matter of training your eye.

If chairs and sofas suggest comfort, if tables and desks are easy to use, they are likely to be

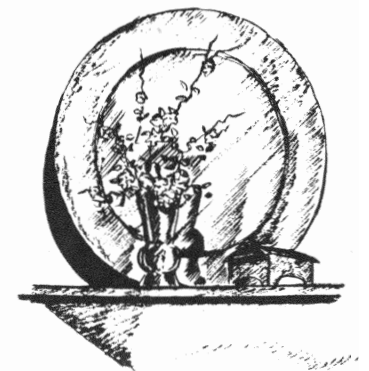


Fig. 13.--The objects in this arrangement are in scale. Note the progression of sizes.

in good proportion. If lamps and accessories are interesting and attractive, they are likely to be in scale.

Balance



Fig. 15. (above)--Try creating informal balance by using related objects of different sizes.

Fig. 14. (left) -- Formal balance is often unimaginative.

Show how to create formal and informal balance.

Balance creates harmony by equal distribution of weight in a grouping of objects or in room arrangement.

Formal balance places objects of equal weight an equal distance from the center, like weights on a seesaw. We have over-worked formal balance in many of our homes (Fig. 14). By moving the heavier object toward the center, we get more interesting, informal balance. We balance it with a progression of smaller objects to create a pleasing arrangement (Fig. 15).

Rhythm

Hold up a card on which you have mounted fabric showing rhythmic movement.

Explain that rhythm is related movement, an easily connected path along which the eye may travel. We get rhythm through repetition of shapes, gradation of sizes, color, and easily connected line movement. Ask: "Is this an example of rhythm? Why?"

Show similar fabric which does not connect line movement easily.

Ask members to tell what they see in the fabric. Is there rhythm in the figure and lines, or is the pattern spotty? Why?

Regular rhythmic movement produces a feeling of restfulness and should be used in decorating. Each room should have a center of interest: a fireplace, a picture window, a large piece of furniture, or a picture. If an arrangement has rhythm, it carries the eye naturally from one unit to another.

Emphasis

Compare pictures of 2 rooms: use one in which walls, rugs, and draperies are figured, the other with plain walls and rugs, and plain or figured draperies.

Explain that emphasis attracts attention, and that simplicity is the keynote to emphasis. Show that too much pattern creates a feeling of restlessness and confusion (Fig. 16). The background may be less conspicuous than the furnishings or the furnishings may be the focal point of interest.

Compare a restful room with one full of objects.

Let members tell which is best and why. A restful room is one in which a few important objects stand out against a background that enhances each. Put away those not needed.



Fig. 16. -- Too much pattern creates restlessness. This flower arrangement is lost against patterned wall.

Harmony

Use the same room.

Show how good proportion, balance, emphasis of color, line, shape, and texture combine in a

restful room to make furniture, rugs, draperies, pictures, and ornaments a harmonious whole.



Fig. 17.--Plain wall, rug, and sofa with patterned drapery fabric make a room easy to live in.

Harmony of Ideas

Show pictures of a simple, early American room.

Explain that there is need for harmony of ideas. What type of fabrics, rugs, and accessories are

in harmony? Compare suitable combinations with dressing properly for an occasion: blue jeans for work or play, dress clothes for parties. A satin fabric is not appropriate in a casual room; neither would unbleached muslin harmonize with mahogany.

We achieve harmony by orderly use of similar shapes, lines, colors, and textures arranged to fit the needs of the family. We avoid monotony through contrast.

Individuality is the keynote to making the best use of the elements of beauty. We need to collect ideas, to put them together in such a way that they appeal to us, and discard those that are not in harmony. Only when everything we have chosen seems suited to our needs, surroundings, and personalities will we have satisfying beauty in our homes.

1. Know and apply principles of design in choosing, making, or using furnishings in the home.
2. Be individual in making choices that suit you and the way you live.
3. Be a planner: collect ideas, reject those that do not suit you, and use those that you know are good.
4. Enhance beauty through order.



Fig. 18.--This room is full of objects, each fighting for attention.



Fig. 19.--Create harmony by storing all articles not needed in the room and rearranging the useful ones.

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