

## ACCESSORIES

A noted designer has stated that "accessories are the costume jewelry of your home." They fall into many classifications and may be as individual as you are.

Choosing and placing decorative accessories in a room is perhaps the most enjoyable part of decorating. This may be because by the time you select accessories, the really hard decisions have been made and partly because they make such a dramatic difference in the appearance of a room. After a room has been furnished with pictures, mirrors, collectibles, plants, lamps, and other beautiful accessories, it suddenly acquires a finished look and a personality of its own.

Accessories create an environment for your own personal lifestyle. They offer a great opportunity for personal expression.

Some accessories are functional: lamps, ashtrays, wastebaskets. Other accessories are decorative: pictures, sculpture, collections. Whether a piece is functional or decorative, it should be used to enhance the total design of your room.

### ROLE OF ACCESSORIES

1. Emphasize your focal point

After selecting a focal point for the room, accessories are placed to enhance or call attention to that area.

- a. FIREPLACE: Hang a picture over the fireplace, arrange objects on the mantel, place interesting fireplace accessories around the fireplace, or frame the sides with bookcases.
- b. LARGE PIECE OF FURNITURE: Put interesting accessories in it, on it, beside it, or over it.
- c. A PAINTING OR OTHER ACCESSORY: Place it where it attracts attention and has a direct light shining on it.
- d. AN AREA RUG: Hang pictures in that area.
- e. ONE WALL: Paint the wall a bright color or wallpaper it with a pattern and arrange accessories on it.
- f. NICHE OR ALCOVE: Put your favorite accessory in it and add special lighting.

2. Give the room a balanced personality

Opposite walls or halves of walls should have equal visual attraction. A wall grouping of artwork can balance heavy furniture on the opposite side of the room.

You can achieve balance by repeating a pattern such as matching patterned pillows on a plain sofa on one side of the room with the drapes on the opposite side.

Balance can be achieved by repeating color. Accessories are one way of repeating color.

Bright colors, bold patterns and textures are attention getting. They can be used to balance more neutral items of a larger size. Place bright pillows on a lightweight chair to balance a more heavyweight chair.

3. Emphasize a foreground or background

To emphasize a foreground, underplay the background. Place a picture, painting, or arrangement of artwork on a plain—not patterned—wall. Keep neutral colors in the background, using the bright and bold for the smaller foreground area. Lighting can also be used for emphasis.

To emphasize the background, if the walls or floors are bold and dramatic, keep the accessories and foreground contrasting. For example, hang a mirror on a patterned wall.

4. Orchestrate colors, patterns, and textures

Accessories are usually used as accents in a decorating scheme. If a room is relatively calm, accessories could be bright and bold. But if a room is wild, accents could be quiet and understated. Patterned accessories can liven up plain surfaces. Plain accents can be used to relieve patterned areas. Shiny textures accent dull, and soft accent hard. If a room is full of straight lines, add a curved accessory and vice-versa.

## SELECTING ACCESSORIES

1. Compatibility of size

The size or scale of an accessory needs to be related to its background or room. A large wall needs a large painting. A large sculpture would need open floor space around it. Small-or medium-sized objects need small-or medium-sized backgrounds, or arranged in groupings. A piece of furniture should not appear to be more delicate and fragile than the accessory above it.

2. Unity with color

To achieve immediate unity when grouping different items, keep them in a similar color tone. For example, in a warm color scheme, choose yellow (or cool colored) accessories to add a dash of vitality.

3. Unity of period

In this approach you need to add variety, but stay basically within a period. For example, in a predominately "Early American" room you could use brass, pewter, ceramic, and old wood carvings.

4. Unity of material

Use accessories made of similar materials. If using natural materials, choose basketry, stone or clay objects accessorize linen, beige textured upholstery fabric, oiled-wood finishes, and leather chairs.

5. Formal or informal

If your room is formal with a symmetrical balance arrangement and elegant furniture or fabrics, you may want to sustain this theme with silver, fine crystal, and delicate porcelain objects.

Oft times, when every detail is correct, your room may begin to look like a museum. Take a beautiful 18th Century room and add a steel and glass table. Top the table with contemporary objects and your room seems to take on new life.

## CATEGORIES OF ACCESSORIES

Basic accessories can be placed into seven categories: lighting, wall hangings, table top or furniture top objects, collectibles, sculpture, flowers and plants, and party decorations.

### Lighting

Perhaps the most useful accessories in a room are the lamps. Light itself is beautiful, and lamps do not have to call attention to themselves by overscaling and overdecoration. Their selection should be based upon the same logic and judgment that have gone into the selection of the other design elements of the room. The color, texture, and material of a lamp is as much a part of the room decoration as that of a chair or an area rug.

In general, traditional rooms look best with the traditional shapes such as urns, candlesticks, and ginger jars. Modern shapes look best in a modern setting. However, rules are meant to be broken and at times the addition of a modern lamp to a traditional room may be just the touch that was needed.

The placement of lamps will be determined to a large extent by the arrangement of your furniture. Each grouping of furniture will require its own source of light. The size and makeup of each grouping will determine the types and number of lamps or light sources that will serve it best.

## Wall Hangings

When discussing wall hangings, paintings immediately come to mind. However, paintings are only one kind of wall hanging. Photographs, collages, posters, etchings, lithographs, maps, weavings, baskets, mirrors, or fabric wall hangings may fit more with your personal tastes and interests.

**Pictures** have long been a favorite decoration for rooms. The term "picture" may refer to several different types of art, including oil painting, watercolor, etchings, lithographs, photographs, and framed needlework.

Today with the many ways of reproducing, printing, and creating pictures, almost anyone can afford the type of pictures he/she likes. (Many posters, which were once considered to be for teenagers only, have become collectors' items.)

Choose art work that reflects your personality.

A work of art is not ready for hanging until it is framed. The frame depends upon the kind of art and the size of the picture. The smaller the picture, the narrower the frame should be. Oil paintings are framed without glass or border mats. Watercolors, original prints, and drawings are matted with heavy cardboard and then framed behind glass. Both serve as protection for the watercolor or print.

Mats vary in width and serve as borders between frames and pictures. Mats give visual importance to small pictures. Mats also help visually separate a picture from a patterned wall.

The color of the frame should complement with the picture it surrounds and harmonize with other colors and tones in the room.

**Groups of photographs** need frames that look good together. When arranged in a collage, photos need a subject matter (such as weddings) to tie them together. Since these arrangements are full of small details, they should be hung in small intimate rooms or along hallways.

A **mirror** achieves much of its beauty from the image it reflects. A mirror on an end wall can open up the area and create an illusion of space. Placing a mirror opposite a stunning view or opposite a wall of artwork is an excellent choice. Do not hang too many mirrors. This can create confusion of reflected patterns and space in the room.

**Baskets** are basic to all cultures--primitive and sophisticated. They are used in a variety of ways; wall hangings, filled with dried flowers, or arranged in groups.

**Oriental rugs** and hand-woven blankets can be hung on walls. They give a room much color and warmth.

Before arranging a **wall grouping**, one should:

1. Consider the scale, proportion, and balance. The relationship of the scale of the individual items to each other and of the overall composition to the room must be compatible. The placement of items against the wall and the proportion of wall to be covered must be carefully planned.
2. The wall arrangement and the furniture beneath should seem like a unit. You can hang your wall arrangement 6-12 inches above the furniture. Typically, the distance between the two should be less than the height of either piece.
3. Remember the Golden Mean. Avoid having the center of the picture or group of pictures midway between the floor and the ceiling. A single picture must not seem to float by itself. It could be part of a grouping--well-related in scale and proportion to the piece of furniture forming the "anchor" (the positive, negative relationships). It may have a pleasant spatial relationship to the wall itself.
4. Hang a large picture on an important wall at average eye level. On this basis, the center of a large picture should be about 5 1/2 feet from the floor. Pictures over mantels may be exceptions to this rule. The height of the ceiling and of the furniture beneath or near the picture also influences the level at which it is hung.
5. Keep an imaginary line around the outside of a grouping of pictures, so the arrangement will have unity.
6. Typically, use no more than one dominant grouping or picture in a room.
7. In groupings, hang pictures of moderate size so that the lower edges are even with the lower edge of the largest picture near them. (There may be exceptions to this rule.)
8. If furniture is arranged for formal balance, the pictures can be hung in formal balance.
9. Straight lines can be relieved by curved lines. Rectangles and ovals can be used more often than squares and circles, since their shapes are more pleasing.
10. Uneven numbers are more desirable than even numbers and will be less tiring.

11. Avoid hanging pictures against patterned wall paper unless the pictures are matted or the subject is strong enough to hold its own against the wall paper.
12. Make a trial grouping of your wall arrangement on the floor, then you can change and rearrange to your heart's content without poking holes in your wall. Carefully plan a wall before hanging things up.

Above all, remember: A BARE WALL IS BETTER THAN A WALL WITH THE WRONG SCALE OR TYPE OF WALL HANGING!

### Table-Top or Furniture-Top Accessories

Table-top or furniture-top accessories cover a wide range of items. Ashtrays, vases, candlesticks, clocks, bottles, and carvings are just a few. The most difficult challenge can be deciding what not to display. Display too many objects and your home could end up with a cluttered look.

Tabletop arrangements are three-dimensional. Observe them from above and from the sides from which they will be viewed.

### Collectibles

We are a nation of collectors. Americans collect everything from stamps and postcards to beer cans and antique Chinese porcelain. Collectibles are fun to gather but careful discernment must be practiced. Arrange your collection on a shelf or table or display it in a curio cabinet or shadowbox.

### Sculpture

Sculpture must be considered a major design element in a room. Since sculpture is three-dimensional, it should be placed so it can be examined from all sides. The sculpture may be isolated in an important area of the room, or it may stand in front of a window where it will be emphasized by daylight. It may dominate a corner. (The Greeks often put sculpture in niches.) If you choose to put it on a pedestal, select one made of a material that flatters the sculpture. Glass or Plexiglas will seem to disappear. Rich woods are handsome, as are shiny metals. Small sculptures may be placed on shelves or etageres, or on an occasional table. Take special care not to crowd small sculptures. Direct accent lighting to dramatize sculpture.

### Flowers and Plants

Flowers and plants bring the outdoors inside. Their leafy branches seem to soften the hard edges of wood furniture. To use plants effectively, you must understand the life demands of the plants you choose. Some plants can live and flourish only in bright, direct sunlight, while others do well in indirect light.

The amount of humidity is another important consideration. (Artificial greens should be used only if they are high quality.)

Plants can be hung from the ceiling in baskets or placed on window sills, tables, shelves, step ladders, library steps, pedestals, glass shelves mounted within the window frame, or in independent planters.

To arrange a large grouping of plants on the floor, begin with the largest plant first. Try to achieve balance by intermingling plants of different heights, shapes, colors, and textures. Finish the arrangement with low-flowering plants, perhaps in clay pots. Select containers that blend with the decorative elements of your room.

Flowers add a complementary note of seasonal freshness. The size of the container should suit the size of the flowers. The color of the container should be harmonious with the flowers and the room. Unusual containers, like old teapots or mugs, can be fun.

Place dramatic arrangements in empty areas.

Keep dinner table arrangements low, it is uncomfortable to feel you have to cut down the jungle brush in order to see the person opposite you at dinner.

Silk and other fabric flowers or dried arrangements may seem expensive, but can provide long-lasting beauty.

### Party and Holiday Decorations

Most homes have decorations to create a festive environment for various holidays.

Various ornaments and lights, door wreaths, table-top decorations, and other holiday accessories are put on display in December.

Accessories may also be changed for New Years, Valentines, St. Patrick's Day, Easter, May Day, Independence Day, Halloween, Thanksgiving, and birthdays. Seasonal dinnerware and centerpieces are also often displayed for various holidays.