

SCALE AND PROPORTION

The terms scale and proportion relate to the size and shape of objects. Proportion is used to describe the ratio of one part to another part or to the whole. For example, all the parts of a piano are in proportion to one another. Scale relates to the absolute size of an object or space compared to other things. For example, a lamp would not be larger than a sofa.

A good system for determining proportion was devised by the Greeks. It is called the Golden Mean. (See transparency "GOLDEN MEAN".) According to the Greeks, a square room is the least pleasing proportion for an enclosure. A rectangle, with its sides in a ratio of 2:3 is most pleasing. The Golden Mean is the division of a line or form so that the smaller portion has the same ratio to the larger as the larger has to the whole. For example, the progression 2, 3, 5, 8, 13, 21. Each number is the sum of the two preceding numbers. The creative use of color, texture, pattern, and furniture arrangement can create illusions of properly-proportioned space.

The scale of an object is usually described as large or small, relative to another object. Large textures, patterns, and bold colors tend to make an object look larger than it is. Small-scale textures, patterns, and subdued colors tend to make an object look smaller than it is.

The human scale is an important consideration in interior design. Most people are between five and six feet tall and weight between 100 and 200 pounds. Living spaces that are correctly scaled make people feel comfortable.