



It's not about the price

A well designed home exudes a feeling of cohesion; everything feels just right. There's a magic ingredient – subtle, yet powerful – that will help you achieve this. It's called 'rhythm' and is a key interior design principle. By Donna White.

One of the biggest truths I know is that an endless supply of money does not guarantee the most stylish interior design. Purchasing the most expensive decorative ceiling pendant because of some misconception that a big price tag equates to creating the elusive wow factor, is nonsense.

This is especially true if the renovator does not know the basic principles of design. A poorly executed interior design is a risk to anyone who does not understand these principles. As a result, any budget can fall prey to an interior design disaster, or a 'ho hum' space.

You know what it feels like to walk into a well designed home. You can sense how everything feels cohesive - just right. One of the magic ingredients that creates a beautiful space is subtle, but powerful. It is called Rhythm and is a Design Principle.

To achieve rhythm think of the home as a totality; a series of spaces linked together by halls and stairways. It is, therefore, appropriate that a common style and theme runs throughout the home. This is not to say that all the interior design elements are the same, but they should work together and complement each other to strengthen the whole composition.

Architectural style and colour will unify a collection of spaces. To this end, I advise my clients to choose the same style skirting board, cornice, architrave profile, internal door and joinery throughout the house and paint them in the same colour.

Repetition of colour, texture and profile is rhythmic and links separate areas. Each part of the house will have its own identity, whether a bedroom or a laundry, but each part will relate to all the other parts that constitute the whole

plan. Wall colour will add personality and identity to individual rooms. By all means have a palette of three or more colours throughout a home, but repeat them in varying shades, because repetition maintains rhythm.

“Understanding interior design principles will give you the edge.”

A colour scheme using one colour can have variations of tints, shades and tones, and different gloss levels. These add interest, and are necessary to avoid monotony. Within a room establish rhythm by repeating a colour. For example, use a painting for inspiration, and repeat a colour in cushions, or other accessories.

A stylish room will have a focal point, or emphasis. Emphasis is another design principle. A room where everything gets equal importance will seem scattered, or boring. Stylish rooms direct attention to a few important elements and these are the focal points. They provide a centre of interest, but relate to the 'quieter' areas, because it is this variation that catches your eye.

Architectural spaces often have focal points such as a fireplace. How you arrange your furniture will emphasize it. In a room that lacks a built-in point of interest, you can create one through groupings of furniture, or by highlighting a large or unusual piece, or through artwork. However, all parts cannot command attention. High points should be balanced against those of lesser importance.

How you arrange furniture and accessories around a focal point is a

question of balance. There are three types of balance: radial, symmetrical, and asymmetrical. Radial balance is achieved when there is a central focal point with other elements radiating around it. For example, a round dining table with chairs arranged around it.

Symmetrical, or formal balance, is achieved when one side is the exact reverse of the other half – in fact a mirror image. For example, two sofas on either side of a coffee table is symmetrical balance. With asymmetrical balance, for instance, a sofa can be balanced by placing two chairs on the other side. Our lifestyles are less formal today, and so asymmetrical balance may be more at ease with the way we live.

Lastly, there is scale and proportion and they involve every aspect of interior design. Proportion is concerned with the relationship of one part to another. Our eye is pleased with good proportion and disturbed by poor proportion.

However, the choice is a personal judgement. Consider a tiny coffee table in front of a 3-seater sofa. Proportion in selecting colour, pattern and texture, can be solved with the $\frac{2}{3}$ to $\frac{1}{3}$ rule. For example, $\frac{2}{3}$ of the main wall colour, $\frac{1}{3}$ of the accent colour; $\frac{2}{3}$ matt surfaces to $\frac{1}{3}$ shiny and so on.

Scale is concerned with the size of one object compared to another. At home our houses should be suitably scaled for the people who occupy them. Consider a family with strapping young rugby-playing sons. They are not going to sit comfortably on antique Louis dining chairs. Human scale is important.

Money does not necessarily buy style. However, understanding interior design principles will give you the edge. ■