

HOME & GARDEN

Transformative power of color

BY S.A. "SAM" JERNIGAN

Special to The Union

Truly one of the most powerful tools in our decorating kit is color. After more than two decades in the design business, I still remain in awe of its transformative properties, especially when well implemented.

The overarching principle to keep in mind is that your eye is always searching for contrast. This means your visual scan keeps moving until it notices a contrast in color.

This is true across the board (which is why wearing head-to-toe black is so slimming, for example) but it's especially apparent in terms of how we perceive an individual room.

This visual property can be employed to keep the eye moving past problem areas of architectural irregularities. By correctly introducing color contrast, you can emphasize the items or features in your home you want to highlight.

The same principles apply to your home's exterior design, as well.

This is why I always scratch my head when I see a

home's drain pipe painted in an accent color. Instead, it should be painted the same as the body color so this utilitarian element visually disappears.

How to get the "IT" factor

There are a few simple concepts that can be readily adapted to your own personal taste and style. My favorite method is to employ a strong two-color story, using an additional neutral color as an accent.

If you want to create a lively environment and like punchy looks with high contrast, choose opposite colors on the color wheel, such as navy paired with saturated yellow.

Keeping to two main colors throughout the room and distributing these colors equally will lend balance and a welcome harmony to the space.

For a softer look, choose related tones like camel and burgundy (e.g., staying with either the "cool" or "warm" families of color).

Another technique is to choose a color to use throughout a room, which results in a soothing monochromatic look.

See COLOR C3



Submitted photo

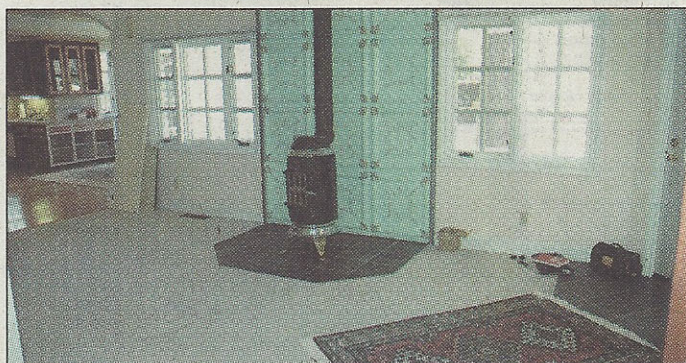
With a combination of vintage golds, warm berry tones, creamy ivories, and darker-yet browns, the end result is inviting, shows off the 1880s-era home to its best advantage

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Submitted photos

TOP: Here's the way we re-imagined the room as the clients specified they wanted a more cozy environment for this small sitting area. **RIGHT:** Here's the way the small living room appeared initially.



COLOR: Continued from C8

This creates a sophisticated effect when the surfaces and materials in a room are all in, say, rich gray tones of varying values (e.g., light through dark) with accents of one or two neutral hues (perhaps ivory and black).

Incorporate a variety of textures in floor covering, pillows, upholstery, etc., to add visual interest — like nubby wools, embossed linen or tooled leather. More than any other single element of design, proper application and distribution of color throughout a space is the key to a successful interior.

“Before and after” case study

For clients who own one of Nevada City's lovely Broad Street Victorians, I was brought into their project at the outset when the couple had just gotten the keys to their new home.

The vintage pressed tin (rumored to have originally come from the Foundry) was what drew your eye immediately

because of its focal placement at eye level, as well as its strong color contrast adjacent to the neutral walls and trim.

But notice, too, the heavy color contrast of the black stove and dark tile floor inset.

See how both these areas stop your eye?

And here's the way we re-imagined the room as the clients specified they wanted a more cozy environment for this small sitting area whose main function was designed around hosting relaxed fireside conversation with guests.

Now the newly installed medium-hued carpet anchors the space and continues under the new stove (a sheet of clear safety glass was utilized as a base), again expanding the small space visually by using uninterrupted color underfoot.

The room also features a show-stopper ceiling embellished with detailed woodwork.

When the walls were painted nearly the same color as the ceiling in its previous incarnation, that lack of contrast

downplayed this important architectural element as, again, the principle of contrast was not being properly utilized to draw your eye upward.

With the walls now richly colored in a Benjamin Moore shade called Pony Brown (think Hershey's milk chocolate bar!), the natural light in the room was also maximized by introducing an oversized mirror on the back wall.

With a combination of vintage golds, warm berry tones, creamy ivories and darker-yet browns (including the finish on the new front-and-center stove), the end result is inviting, shows off the 1880s-era home to its best advantage and welcomes the homeowners' friends and family in warmth and style.

Always determine the overall mood you're trying to create in a room, then harness the transformative power of color to achieve your vision of the ideal space.

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