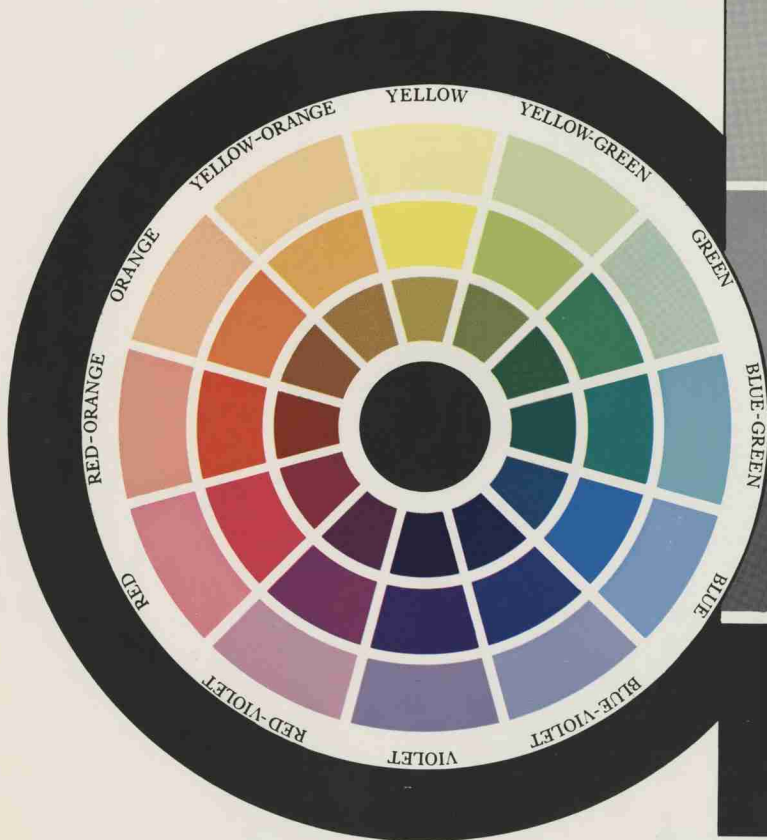# d

design in your home

A GRAY SCALE

A COLOR WHEEL

Creating good design in the home is not always easy. Open your eyes. Look, observe, study, experiment and analyze. If you do this, it will help you to better understand and apply design principles to your own home.

design in your home

Design is everywhere. You see it in nature, in buildings, the market place, your home and in the everyday objects around you. Good design is functional and beautiful.

Furnishing the home is a creative and inspiring form of art. It is a challenge to select good design in each item of furnishings and then successfully combine all parts into a unified whole.

Each time you make a choice you exhibit, consciously or unconsciously, your taste and ability to choose. Good design need not be expensive nor impractical. But, it is necessary in creating beautiful interiors.

What is design? One author describes it as the selecting and arranging of materials with two aims—order and beauty. In interior design this is your goal. How do you obtain order and beauty? How do you know when you have attained it? This is not easy for the untrained eye; but through studying, observing, experimenting and practicing, you will know when you have achieved your goal.

A basis for making decisions begins with an understanding of the terms used to judge and discuss design.

Line, form, space, texture and color are the tools often referred to as the elements of design. The way these tools are used determines whether the design is good or inferior. Balance, emphasis, rhythm, proportion and harmony are referred to as the principles of art.

The terms good taste and good design are often used to mean the same thing. Furnishings of good taste are always good in design and have lasting value.

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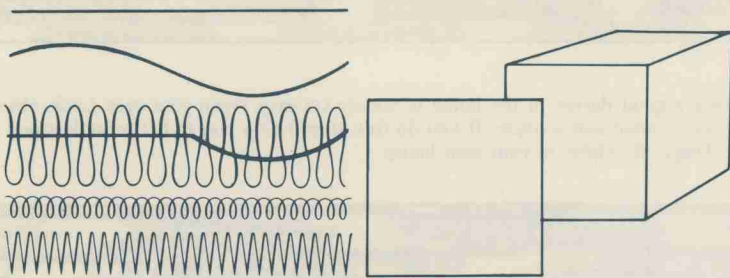
• Lines are a basic element of all design. They may be straight, curved or a combination of both. When you look at a design, it is the line that causes your eye to move from one part to another.

Lines have emotional quality. Curved lines suggest a feeling of softness. Straight lines appear to have strength and stability. Vertical lines tend to increase the apparent height of an object or room. Horizontal lines tend to increase width.

• The outlines of shape and form are created by joining lines together. Items of furnishings are round, square, rectangular or irregular in shape. In addition to length and width, there is also depth. This third dimension is referred to as form. Shapes and forms occupy space. As you combine objects, consider how their shapes and forms look together and how they relate to the space and lines of the room. One line or form should predominate, but some variety will add interest.

• Space is what you begin with. Ceilings, walls and floors form the boundary for the space contained in a room. The amount of space you have will help you decide on your furnishings. It will determine the size and number of items to be used. You need enough space to place and use the things for daily living plus those that give added pleasure. Some empty space is needed to give a feeling of restfulness.

• Texture is the surface quality of a material. It may be seen as well as felt. Observe the differences you can see in the texture of wood, metal, fabric or masonry surfaces. Certain textures seem

to belong together. Smooth textures may be used with moderately rough or intermediate ones, but not with very coarse ones. Coarse, nubby fabrics and dull surfaces go well with oak or pine furniture, wooden bowls and copper. Soft, silky, smooth textures are appropriate with traditional furniture, polished silver and fine china. Smooth, soft textures suggest more formal activities; rough, springy, bristly textures are less formal.

A shiny, smooth surface reflects light. This causes the color to appear clear and bright. Rough textures cast small shadows and absorb light making the color appear deeper and duller. The object may also look larger and heavier.

There are no hard and fast rules for combining textures. We must develop a *feeling* for pleasing combinations. Let one predominate.
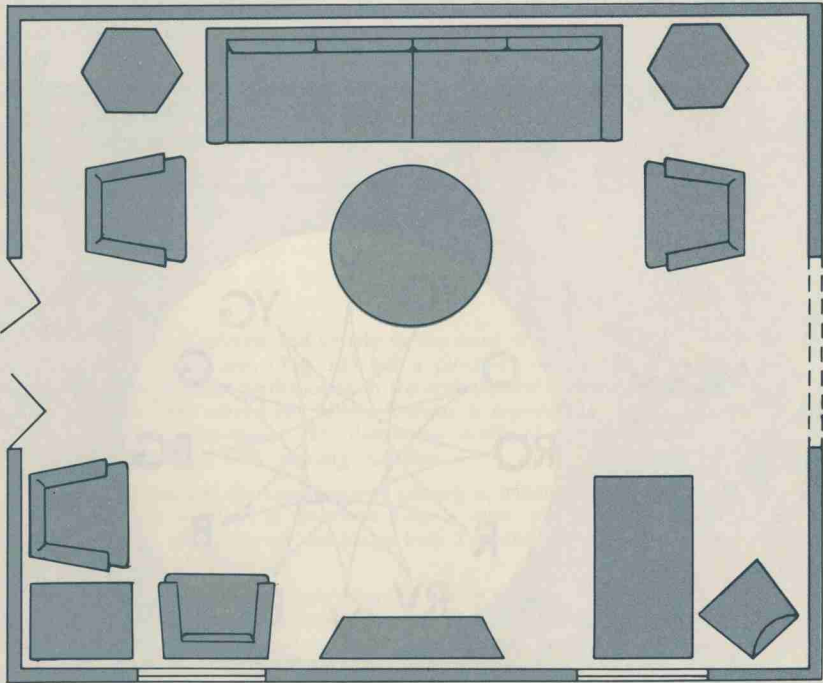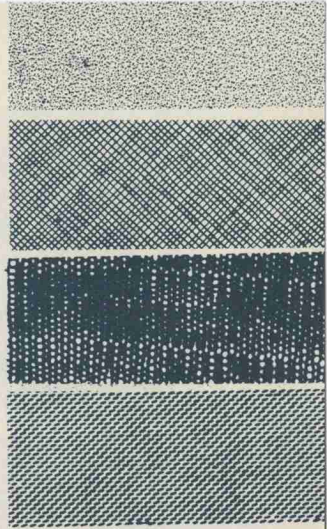
• Color can accomplish more at less cost than any other element of design. You can use it to set the mood or feeling of a room, unify all of the other elements, disguise flaws, create centers of interest or change the apparent size and shape of form and space. More than anything else it expresses personality. Color is usually referred to in terms of hue, value and intensity. In order to see color to best advantage, either alone or in color combinations, these properties must be considered.

Hue is the family name of a color. Just as your family name may be Jones or Smith, colors have names that indicate their family such as red, yellow or blue. Value is the lightness or darkness of a color as compared to black and white. Intensity is the strength of a color—its brightness or dullness. Hue relationships are usually shown on a color chart.
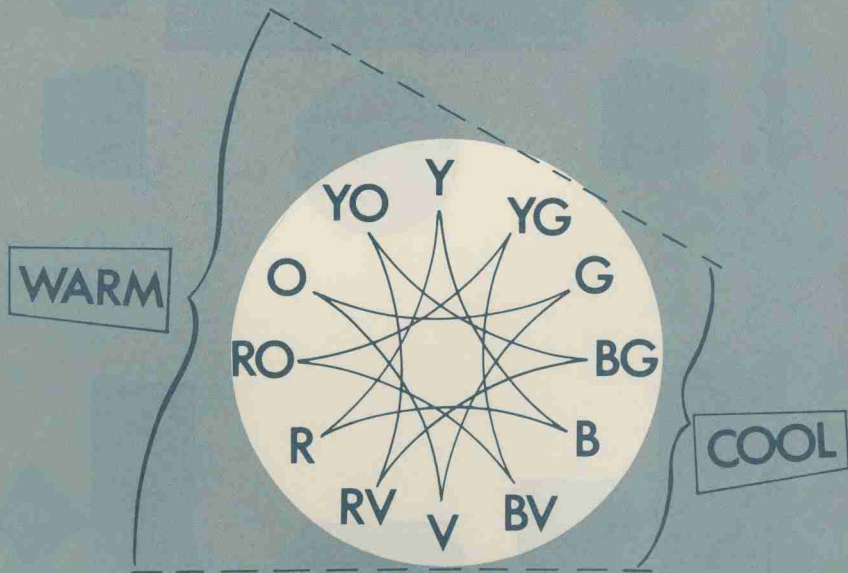
People react to color in different ways. The way you select and combine colors depends on your color preferences, where color is to be used and the effect or mood you wish to create.

The warm colors—orange, yellow, red—are gay, exciting and active. They are often chosen to make a room appear cozy and comfortable. The blues and greens are cool, serene and restful.

Black, white and gray are considered neutrals. They can be used to lighten, darken or gray the hues.

If the right value and intensity are used, any of the hues can be combined. Many persons learn to combine hues successfully by using color plans that have been tested and accepted.

The one hue or monochromatic color plan uses one color in different values and intensities.

Hues next to each other on the color chart are friendly and easy to combine because they have one hue in common; for example, blue, blue-green, green. This type of harmony is often referred to as adjacent or analogous.

When hues which are opposite each other are combined, they harmonize. Because of the contrast, they work best if used in different values and intensities. For example, one hue could be used in a light value or dull intensity for the large areas of a room; the more intense or brighter hues could be reserved for the small areas.

Before you start a color scheme, decide on the mood you wish to express. Select a key color. It will probably be the one you like best. Decide if the color is to be used for backgrounds or accents. Backgrounds are usually best in medium to light values and dull or soft intensities. Accents may be used in darker values and brighter intensities.

If you wish to combine two, three or more colors, experiment with using them in different proportions, values and intensities. The best way to do this is by working with a collection of fabric swatches, paint chips, floor covering samples and wall material samples. Let one color predominate. Do not use equal quantities of any colors.
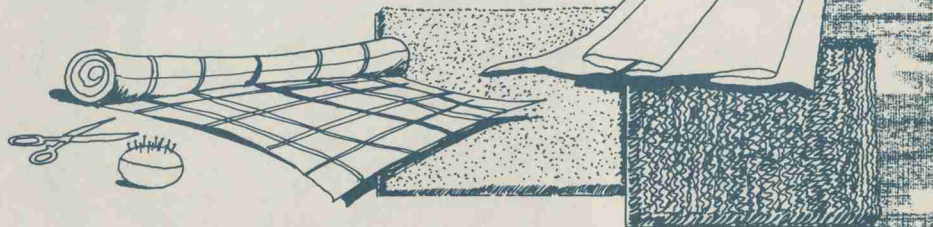
You may have been in a room where you had a sudden urge to turn an object around or move it. Do you know why you felt that way? There were probably too many lines, forms, spaces, textures or colors at one end of the room; and it seemed out of balance.
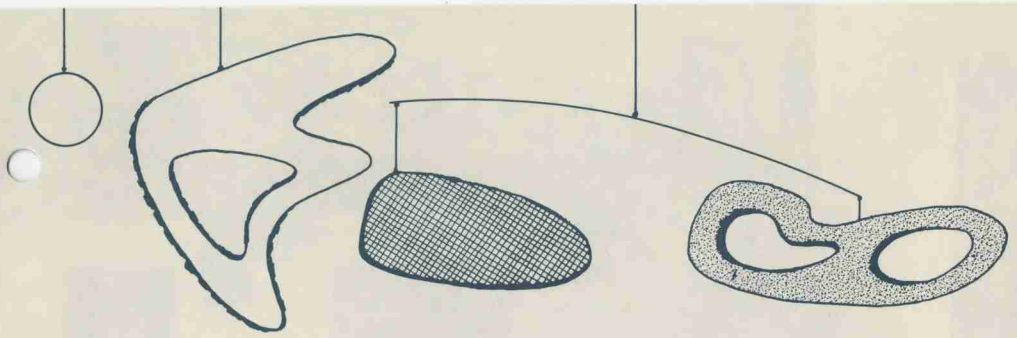
BALANCE

Balance is the feeling of equal weight. There are two types of balance—formal and informal. Most individual pieces of furniture are an example of formal balance; the lines and forms on each side of the central point are exactly alike.

The structural and decorative lines of both the commode and mirror (Fig. 5) illustrate the symmetry of formal balance. The placement of candlesticks at equal distance on either side of the mirror and flower arrangement further emphasize the formality.

Figure 5

Pieces of furniture may be arranged in the room to create formal or informal balance. For example, by using identical tables and lamps at the ends of the sofa, you have established a formal grouping.

Fig. 6. The major accessories, sconces and pictures, hung over the sofa further express the feeling of formality. The choice and placement of small accessories add the only variation.

Figure 6

Figure 7

Informal balance gives the feeling of equal weight, but the objects are not alike. Let's start with a sofa with similar lines and design. Fig. 7. Again we can use identical lamps but place them on end tables that are quite different in style—one is of the low-closed chest type and the other has a low open shelf. The open shelf above the sofa holds a variety of accessories that add a further note of informality.

A room is usually more interesting when both formal and informal groupings are used, but one type predominates. Formal balance provides harmony and order; informal balance adds interest.

Balance of form, space and color is basic to arranging furniture. Furniture pieces represent the forms in the design; walls and floors between groupings are the spaces. Fig. 8. In arranging furniture, you would not put all of the furniture on one side of the room and leave the rest of the room bare. Neither would you place all of the large pieces of furniture at one end of the room and all of the smaller ones at the other.

Often, because of doors, windows or other architectural features, it is necessary to place most heavy pieces of furniture on one side of the room. If you have to do this, it may be best to keep the colors of these objects subdued and use brighter colors in the smaller pieces of furniture. A small area of bright color can be used to balance a larger area of a lighter or duller color.

Figure 8

RHYTHM

Rhythm is movement. It is all around. Even your name has movement as you write it using an easy flowing rhythm. There are several types of rhythm. Let's illustrate them. We take for granted the rhythm of seasons—spring, summer, fall and winter. They always appear in the same order—the seasons never change. In homes, rhythm can work in the same, easy flowing way to keep the eye from darting from one article to another. To accomplish this you need to plan repetition. If every article you choose is exactly the same pattern, style or color, you would soon find the result tiring.

Figure 9

Rhythm can be created by repeating with variation. You do this by making the elements of design—line, form, space, texture and color work for you. You can vary these elements by changing the size and direction. For example, articles displayed on open shelves become more interesting when there is variation in color, line, form, texture and placement. Fig. 9.

Rhythm can be created by radiation. This means the eye starts from a central point and travels from that point back and forth.

For example the eye tends to encircle the octagonal shape of the dining table top. Fig. 10. The center pedestal and placement of the chairs follow the same general lines of radiation and add to the feeling of rhythm.

Rhythm can also be created by progression. This suggests that the eye is drawn from the most important article or grouping to the least important. Again, this can be done by varying size, form, space, color, texture and/or direction.

An important architectural feature or piece of furniture is often the starting point or center of interest. If a room has a fireplace this often becomes the focal point. Fig. 11. The furniture and accessories are chosen and arranged so that the eye naturally travels from the fireplace to the sofa grouping to the left of the fireplace, across the coffee table which has been effectively placed in front of the fireplace, to the pair of chairs on the right, and back to the fireplace.

Rhythm and emphasis are closely related. In fact, we could say rhythm has two parts—repetition and climax or emphasis. It can be repeated with regular accents or with variation. The variations of the elements of design can flow, progress, radiate from a central point or they can march in regular rhythm.

Figure 10

Figure 11

EMPHASIS

Every arrangement needs something of interest that catches the eye and holds the attention. This quality may be referred to as the *center of interest, point of emphasis, or dominant area*. The eye sees the most important part of the room first and then travels to the less important areas.

There are several ways to attract attention to the important part of a room. They are: use of (1) contrasts in hue, value and/or intensity; (2) contrasts in lines and directions; (3) unusual detail; (4) unusual grouping or placing of objects; (5) contrast or variation of texture.

The eye is quickly attracted by strong contrasts of dark and light, bright and dull. Contrasts of hues, especially if they are also different in value is an easy way to create a center of interest or focal point in an arrangement of any type.

This principle is often used in selecting backgrounds to show items of furnishings to best advantage. For example, deeper colors for walls and floors form a striking background for light tones of furniture and floral pattern in carpeting. Fig. 12.

Figure 12

Figure 13

Contrast in line gives interest and variety to the room and keeps the observer from being bored. The dining area (Fig. 13) has a pleasing combination of curved and straight lines. Straight lines predominate in the architectural features of the room and furniture. However, the curved line of the doorway is repeated in the chair backs, in the area rug and in the accessories. The decorative motifs of the buffet also combine curved and straight lines with pleasing variation.

No doubt you have had the experience of passing a window where something unusual attracted your attention. It may have been a color, picture, accessory or other item. You turned to take a second and longer look. You were attracted strongly because the object was unusual—different.

A decorating plan might effectively begin by taking advantage of an unusual feature as shown with an attic apartment room. Fig. 14. The sloping wall has been enhanced with beams that extend across part of the ceiling. The furniture has been selected and arranged to complement the architectural features of this wall.

15

Figure
14

Figure
15

Figure
16

A grouping of objects may attract more attention than a single article. Group them so that the eye leads from the most important article to the least important.

This is often an effective way to group several small pictures, art objects, or other items you wish to display to advantage. Fig. 15. Notice how the pictures over the chest have been grouped along with the accessories on the chest so that they become one composition. Your attention is also drawn to the grouping of sculpture in the window and the grouping of accessories on the coffee table.

You can create interest in a room by contrasting textures such as combining brick with a paneled wall. Several methods might be combined in a single room. Fig. 16. However, if there are too many points of emphasis, the effect may be confusing. The answer to "how much" is "keep it simple" or "when in doubt—leave it out."

The bedroom (Fig. 16) illustrates a combination of interesting contrasting textures. The textures of brick in the walls, wood and leather suggest both smooth and rough textures. These are softened by the soft piled texture of the carpet and bed cover.

Backgrounds should be less conspicuous than the objects, forms or colors seen against them. If you do not wish to emphasize an object, shape or color, blend it into the background. Emphasis may be removed from an unattractive piece of furniture by blending it with the wall and using a contrasting accessory over or on the piece of furniture.
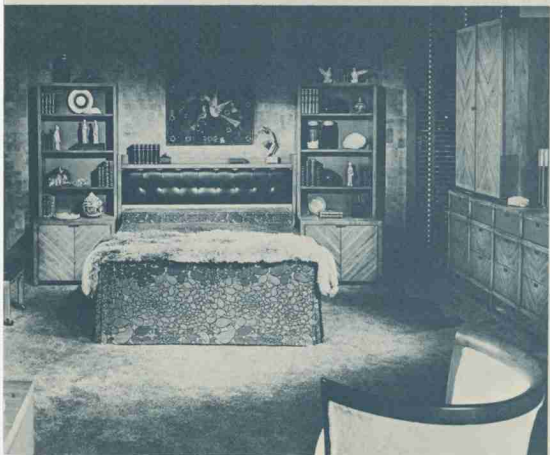
Some rooms have a natural center of interest such as a fireplace, picture window or bay window. Maybe you have both a picture window and a fireplace. If so, let seasons guide your furniture arrangement. In the cooler months, group the furniture around the fireplace. As the seasons change

Figure 17

the outdoor scenes to colorful pictures, group the furniture around the window to take advantage of nature's beauty.

If your room does not have a center of interest, make one. One way to create a center of interest is to play up one important object. A good picture with beautiful colors or an interesting wall hanging can be used together with your most important grouping of furniture.

You can also use an important piece of furniture to create emphasis, such as a bookcase or table. If you have an unattractive view or poorly designed windows, cover them with a lovely fabric and well-designed draperies. This can become your center of interest.

PROPORTION AND SCALE ✕✕✕✕✕✕

Proportion is the principle of design that involves the relationship of objects to space. This refers to all parts of an object as well as its relationship to the space it occupies. Scale refers to measurement (size)—large, medium or small—light or heavy. If an object or a group of objects is out of proportion, the relationship of its size to its space is not pleasing. Its scale needs to be changed.

There are no rigid laws in applying the principles of scale and proportion. One suggestion, however, might be to introduce enough variety to add interest. In general, shapes that are just as wide as they are tall are not so pleasing as those which vary in width and height. How you plan to use an article and where you will put it may determine to a great extent the ways in which you apply the principle of proportion. For example, in selecting a chair you would need to decide if you want a lounge chair, a medium-sized living room chair, a small "pull-up" or "side" chair. Body measurements, the way the chair will be used and space available may help you make this decision.

You should be especially conscious of scale when selecting furnishings for a room. Because the chair on the top is upholstered almost to the floor and has no lines to give it height, it appears even more heavy and bulky than it really is. Bulky pieces of furniture tend to make a small room look crowded because they are out of scale. The center chair is medium in scale. The tall back and curved arms contribute to the "lighter" look. The openness of the bottom chair as well as the actual size make it light in scale. Fig. 17.

In choosing sizes of articles for an arrangement, such as a grouping of pictures on a wall, accessories on a table or open shelf, or parts of a centerpiece, each part must be considered in relation to the others and to the whole. Observe and experiment, and you will increase your awareness of good proportion and scale.

Very often you can seemingly change the appearance of an area without actually doing so. This is known as optical illusion. For example, lines running in a vertical direction tend to slenderize and make an object appear taller. Lines running in a horizontal direction seem to make an object shorter and broader. As mentioned earlier, color and texture also affect proportion.

Scale may play an important role in creating optical illusions. Too many large or heavy pieces of furniture combined with patterned upholstery, draperies, wallpaper and/or floor coverings tend to make a room look smaller than it really is. But the same room will appear larger if the background colors and heavy pieces of furniture are light in value and grayed in intensity and if the bright intensities or dark values are used in small amounts.

In order to evaluate the principle of proportion and scale correctly, an entire room arrangement must be visualized. Each part is dependent upon every other part. One part may seem correct when seen by itself, but it may be entirely out of proportion when seen with other parts.

HARMONY

Harmony may be defined as "fitting together" or a feeling of "oneness." This is your goal in applying the elements and principles of design. If you have failed to apply any one of the principles of design, then the result may be lack of harmony.

Let's use the arrangement in the picture to consider the way in which the various principles of design have been applied.

Informal balance has been used in arranging the furniture for the living and dining activities. Fig. 18. The large window area with its handsome patterned draperies is a center of interest. Dark values predominate in wood tones and are used to balance the light wood tones in the dining area. The floor is medium to light in value and gives a feeling of unity to the background and furnishings.

Rhythm has been created by the use of dark and light values, repetition of color and lines. Observe how the eye moves from the draperies around the room to the fireplace, across the sofa area and back to the window and dining area.

Emphasis has been created by the use of the hue—red and by the window treatment and grouping for the dining area.

The furniture is in scale for the room and activities. Accessories are in good proportion and arranged to complement the furniture groupings. Because all of the principles of design have been applied appropriately, there is harmony in this room.

Harmony is achieved when the elements are combined according to the principles of art. Elements might be compared to the ingredients of a cake. The principles are the directions for mixing the ingredients. If the ingredients for the cake are correct, measured properly and combined according to the directions of the recipe; the product should be successful. Planning a room is much the same. If you understand the elements properly and combine them according to the principles of art, then you can expect the results to be successful. If you are not pleased with the result, you may need to think about each element and principle of design and determine where and how the mistakes occurred.

Generally, the personality of each family member is considered when planning rooms to be used by the entire family. Strong likes and dislikes may be confined to an individual's bedroom or other personal room. However, as a family, you should strive to create a feeling of oneness or unity throughout the house.

Figure 18