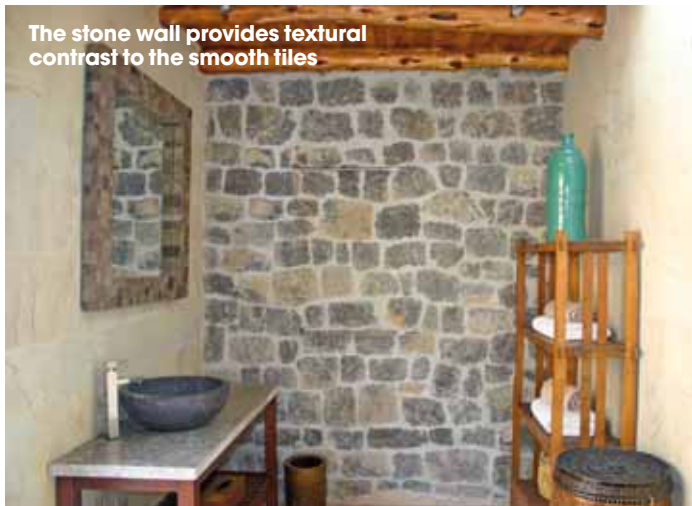


Textures and Patterns



By interior designer Azra Zakir

Along with colour, texture and pattern will help a home to take on a uniquely individual feel. Although the joy of patterns will not appeal to all, a home devoid of textural contrasts will also lack comfort and warmth. The space will be a far cry from a home that is a welcoming haven.



The stone wall provides textural contrast to the smooth tiles

Modern bathrooms, with their combination of chrome taps, porcelain bathroom suites and ceramic tiles can often end up feeling cold and sterile – rooms that are purely functional, with little sensory pleasure derived from time spent there. Bringing in a wooden storage unit or inseting a basin into a wooden top, appropriately sealed, will immediately inject warmth into the room. Oversized soft fluffy towels will instantly create a feeling of luxury; pleasure gained from the most basic of actions.

Different textures can be employed to make a space feel bigger or smaller. Textures that reflect light – smooth, flat, shiny – enhance the feeling of space. Matt textures or uneven ones absorb light and make a space feel smaller. In a small kitchen, white high-gloss units that bounce light around will make the area feel more spacious than the same white units in a matt finish.

A home needs more than just visual appeal, it also needs tactile appeal. Our homes would be very boring places without any difference in textures. Different textures take on an even greater importance if a home is decorated with a white or neutral palette. Different textures can help to add character, contrast or comfort in a home where colour is kept to a minimum. An environment with too many hard surfaces will feel sterile and soulless, a noticeable lack of warmth. For any fans of modern, minimal interiors, if your home feels “oh so cool” with its minimalist chic, but lacks a certain cosiness or comfort, throw in some more natural textures for an immediate injection of warmth and interest. However, the pendulum can swing too far the other way. An interior with too many soft surfaces will feel fussy – the trick is to achieve a happy balance between the two. Also take care when adding soft materials in areas that are mainly hard surfaces – if the contrast is too great, the effect can be startling and uncomfortable.

Sleek, shiny surfaces can be balanced with natural stone or wood. Shiny, colourful Vernon Panton chairs, teamed with a solid wood dining table, a wooden bowl on top of a glass and chrome table – natural, organic elements help to add contrast to sleek, modern surfaces. Polished concrete floors contrast well with wood to create a more balanced and harmonious space. Materials that provide an instant feel-good factor – wool, velvet, silk, suede – can help to make your home as luxurious as you want it to be.



An unusual headboard brings texture and colour into this bedroom

Bringing patterns into the home

Pattern can easily be brought into the home, even for the most conservative or minimal of decorators. Pattern helps to add interest and warmth, some personality in an otherwise neutral environment. Using pattern in the home doesn't mean you have to cover entire rooms in a particular style. A touch here and there does the job without ending up being too overpowering.



If you're new to using patterns in the home, opt for pattern on a single wall, perhaps to create a feature or a focal point. Alternatively, use pattern to create artwork by placing a selection of wallpaper or fabric in a frame and up onto the wall. Other options for introducing pattern into the home include patterned cushions, lampshades, vases, blinds and curtains. Think about using boldly printed fabric to cover photo albums or filing

boxes, adding instant appeal to shelves or places of storage.

The trick to getting it right when choosing pattern is to go for something you love, particularly if you're going to use wallpaper in the chosen style. Trust your instincts and choose something you're naturally drawn to, as opposed to something that is just okay. Patterns are very individual and speak volumes about your personality, but there is no right or wrong when it comes to making personal choices, if you love it, go for it!

It is advisable to use small patterns in small spaces as they could easily be overwhelmed by large, bold, brightly coloured prints. However this type of print could be used in a small space in an equally small dose – a cushion cover or lampshade or blind – and create a striking focal point in an otherwise neutral setting. Add interest by using pattern you would normally expect to see in one place in a completely different setting. For example, the bold floral print of surfer shorts used to make cushion covers or a lampshade. If there's a particular pattern that you love, use it in an unusual setting.

Textura and pattern in a harmonious home

Textures and patterns can be used throughout the home to create a unified and harmonious feel. Choose one signature pattern and introduce it in different ways in different rooms. The same can be done with textures – matt chrome switches and sockets teamed with matt chrome door handles throughout. Or choose your favourite type of wood (in my case it would be walnut) and see how this can be used in different rooms throughout the house – as a counter in the kitchen and to make bespoke storage in the bedroom. Using textures and patterns in this unified, cohesive manner will give your home the touch of professionals, as well as creating a truly harmonious home environment to dwell in! ■





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