

Color And Pattern (The Color Course, Sneak Preview, Part II)

After reading *Part I*, you may be wondering if 'feature walls' are something everyone should have these days, or whether small patterns just aren't that hip.

Please don't go there ... you *don't* 'need' a feature wall, particularly not one with a bold, expressive (even mad) pattern splashed all over it! And for lots of purposes, small patterns are *perfect*.

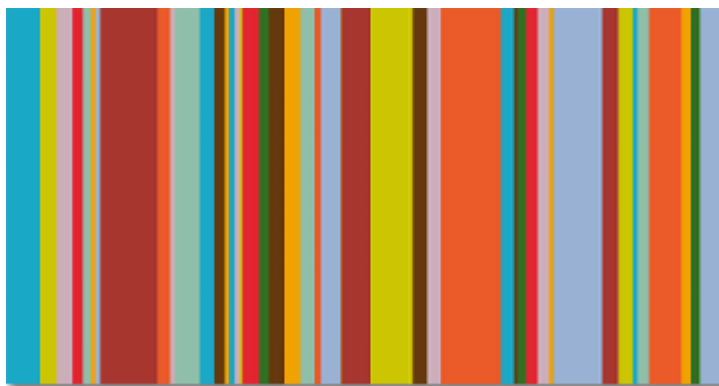
The point of **Part I** was to illustrate how the **scale** of a pattern **impacts** a room and influences the **appearance of a color**. In Part I you saw that ...

... there's no point picking a detail from a small pattern and using it as a starting point for a room color scheme, because the whole pattern will appear to have changed color when you look at it from a few feet away.

Which color will it take on? That depends on the dominant colors in the pattern. To illustrate this, let's look at a more complicated example. Here's a wild '70s color collection:



The dominant color of this group will be the one that **a)** has the largest **proportion** in a pattern, **b)** is the most '**advancing**', and **c)** is the most **saturated**. So let's turn the swatches into a sequence of stripes:



What do you think - **which color** family **dominates** the pattern? [Write down your answer; you'll find the solution @ the top of page 4!]

If you were to use stripes like these in your home, you'd be tempted to contain them as you would a bamboo plant in your garden: with an iron fist.

a) You could use a **small-scale** version for **accessories** – it's the safest way with a multi-colored pattern like this. So ...

- ❖ place mats
- ❖ cushions
- ❖ chair seats ...

... could be used as little islands of daring color. *Or,*

b) you could try a **medium-scale** version (slightly bolder in appearance) as **accent color**, for example

- ❖ on the back of a quilt or a coverlet
- ❖ on the inside of a display cabinet full of white porcelain
- ❖ as a narrow, painted "**carpet**" down the center of a wooden staircase.

But hey, where's the fun in being chicken? Courage, folks. Let's swagger in and put those stripes on that notorious feature wall.



We could go even bigger, but for a **larger-scale** version we'd have to choose which *part* of the pattern should go on the wall. Compare these two, and see how different **sections** of the pattern would **influence the general color** sense in the room:



Now let's go ahead and do another two-step **downscaling** exercise, going from medium-sized to *very skinny* stripes. Check out how the changes in scale affect the overall **color impression** when you look at the wall from the doorway:



How would you describe the wall color we've ended up with?

- ❖ Murky orange?
- ❖ Gray terracotta?
- ❖ Weird brown?

It's clear that **orange** is the **dominant** color in the pattern, but the other colors are influencing its appearance – it comes out dirty, grey, muddy-looking, and at odds with the other, much clearer colors in the room.

So the **single most important** thing to keep in mind when you work with patterns is this:

**Before you buy something patterned,
make sure you have seen it from as far away
as you will see it in your home!**

And here are your ...

... Take-Home Lessons:

1

The **impact** of a pattern depends as much on its **scale** as it does on its color(s), lines, and shapes.

2

The smaller a pattern is (and the further away from the observer), the less important are its **shapes, lines,** and *individual colors*.

3

From a distance, we perceive **small patterns** as near-solid blocks of color.

4

In a small-scale pattern, it doesn't matter what the individual colors are, as long as the **overall color impression** looks good within a decorating scheme.

NEXT UP:

B. Value Contrast In Patterns

C. How To Mix Patterns

(Here ends your sneak preview, Part II!)