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INTERIOR DECORATION

1. Scope and Affinity with Architecture

By TERRY WATKINS

An instinctive urge for decoration has been felt by human beings since earliest times, when man first scratched crude designs on the walls of his cave, or daubed his primitive dwelling with muds, pigments and anything else at his disposal.

The urge to decorate still persists, and though our concepts and interpretations have changed throughout the ages, today's young housewife decorates her home to suit a changed environment and the living conditions of a socially developed community.

Our lives are influenced to a great extent by the nature of our surroundings, and in this respect the home plays an important part. Those who work away from the home, return to it for mental relaxation, rest, and some recreation, and an environment that is harmonious, comfortable and pleasing to the eye will contribute largely towards this end.

For the housewife whose activities are largely centred in the home, the daily round will become less tedious and irksome when her domain is one in which there is a high degree of good taste and beauty and in which she can feel pride and satisfaction.

Such a consideration is of even greater significance to the country housewife, who, for obvious reasons is unable to leave the home as readily or as frequently as her city sister. Children too, will derive much from an environment that is aesthetically satisfying, for here will be laid the foundations on which their artistic and creative appreciation will be later developed.

What is Interior Decoration?

Interior Decoration is everything within the four walls—and including the walls—of a dwelling which will contribute towards its appearance, function and comfort.

Interior Decoration is not simply a matter of surface embellishment. One must know how to use proportion, and create an impression of good proportions which may not actually exist: to make the most of lighting, both natural and artificial: to know and understand colour, its subtleties, variations, and many uses. In any successful scheme, one must know how to achieve harmony—harmony of materials, objects and ideas: harmony of space relationships in respect of furniture grouping and placement of accessories: harmony in relation to architectural openings, wall spaces and centres of interest. It is necessary to acquire balance in a room, either formal, informal or implied.
and to understand the importance of emphasis, the how, what and where.

It is also necessary to have some knowledge of the history of furniture in order to know how a cherished antique can be successfully incorporated in a modern setting, or if the setting be a traditional one, how to highlight the best and subordinate the less attractive pieces.

These are the underlying principles of good design, a knowledge of which will result in a house that is decorated, in contrast with one that is merely furnished.

The Affinity of Interior Decoration with Architecture

Since the house is the skeleton on which Interior Decoration is placed it is also necessary to know something of the basic rules of house planning, whether you are embarking on the exciting job of building a new one, or merely renovating and bringing up to date an old one.

A noted architectural writer has made history with a terse summing up of the essential characteristics of good architecture as “commodity, firmness and delight.” These three attributes apply not only in the wider fields of architecture, but are of equal importance to that small child of architecture, the modest six roomed dwelling, it’s inside, outside, it’s furnishings and decoration.

**Commodity**—in its planning, convenience and the arrangement of furniture.

**Firmness**—in excellence of workmanship and rational use of materials.

**Delight**—in its impression on the beholder occasioned by the two former attributes, combined with colour, proportion, good taste, and the reflected personality of the owner.

Building Trends

There has been a dramatic change in Australian home design in the post war years, and though the change has been most apparent in the larger cities and suburbs, more and more modern style homes are beginning to appear on country properties and in the rural areas of the State.

The main changes apparent in post war house design could be summarised as follows:

Integration of the home with the out-of-doors, by means of large areas of glass, and rooms linked by courtyards, terraces and patios.

Open planning, which is simply doing away with inside walls to allow greater spaciousness and ease of function.

Provision for informal and carefree entertainment by means of outdoor living spaces, opening off living and dining areas, and conveniently placed for easy access to and from kitchen.

A merging of house with landscape by contour siting and maximum retention of trees and natural vegetation.

This change in home design represents a complete break with the old traditional styles current at the turn of the century and which have persisted—with a few minor alterations or additions—up until fairly recent times. This falling back on ruling English standards was inevitable during the early days of colonisation, but was done with little thought to the vast differences in our climate, living habits and geographical conditions.

But a new form of architecture is now emerging, one clearly designed to fit the Australian way of life, our love of outdoor living, informality and with regard to the unique quality of our Australian landscape.

And what has all this to do with Interior Decoration you may ask. The answer is everything, for this new interest in our surroundings has led to a much wider use of natural materials in home interiors, which in turn influences our choice of furniture, furnishings and accessories. Warm honey-coloured timbers have found their way into interior wall linings, ceilings and built-in fitments. Beautiful stonework, full of rich earthy colours, is to be seen in fireplaces, traffic lanes and indoor garden strips. It is used too, to gain dramatic effect as feature walls and panels. Painted brickwork in room interiors is ousting smooth plaster finish and has the added advantage of being a great deal cheaper. It is texturally interesting and attractive and has a faintly rustic quality.
The distinctive character of our native flora has at last begun to permeate the Australian conscience, and this is reflected in the changing character of our gardens. Flat, formally laid out flower beds, exotic shrubs and closely clipped hedges are losing their appeal for us, and the trend now towards rugged rocky sites, flowering native shrubs and eucalypts.

These new developments in home design make exciting news for country dwellers, where a less formal way of life calls for more informal type of planning. Broad rolling meadows, unrestricted by dividing fences and neighbouring properties allow greater scope for imaginative home planning, and the craggy wooded “new” look to garden layout, is the answer in places where water, if not an actual problem is always a major consideration.

But the exciting job of building is for the few; the many are obliged to live in homes planned to accommodate a way of life vastly different from that now in existence. They were built in many cases, at a time when people were only too thankful to have some sort of roof over their heads, and were not very critical as to their form or function.

For the home decorators faced with such a problem, the outlook need not be bleak. The problems associated with older type homes are not insurmountable and ways and mean of overcoming them will be discussed in the next of these articles. With their large airy rooms and lofty ceilings, these homes have a charm of their own, and when equipped with modern plumbing, up-to-date domestic appliances and geared to present day living, the results can be very pleasing indeed. It is possible to combine the best of both eras in a manner that will reflect both charm and dignity and which adheres to the basic principles of “firmness, commodity and delight.”

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HAVE YOU REGISTERED YOUR ORCHARD?

The annual registration of orchards became due on July 1, 1963. Under the regulations single fruit trees must also be registered.

Registration cards are available from shire council offices, clerks of courts, police stations and most post offices.

FEES CAN BE PAID AT:

- Treasury Buildings, Cathedral Avenue, Perth (Department of Agriculture Office), Monday to Friday, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., until Friday, August 2.
- Department of Agriculture, Jarrah Road, South Perth, Monday to Friday, 8.30 a.m. to 4.45 p.m. each week.
- Fremantle: Water Supply Office, Market Street, Monday to Friday, 10 a.m. to 3.30 p.m., until Friday, August 2.

ALL COUNTRY DISTRICTS: Clerk of Court’s office, during July only. Officers of the Department of Agriculture will also collect fees at:
- Kalamunda district office, Fridays, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., during July.
- Harvey Irrigation Branch office, Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., during July.
- Bunbury Police Inspector’s office, Wittenoom Street, each week during July.
- Brunswick Hall, Thursday afternoons, 2 p.m. to 4 p.m., during July.
- Waroona Irrigation Office, each Tuesday during July.
- Donnybrook Court House, Fridays, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., during July.
- Pinjarra Court House, Fridays, 10 a.m. to 3.30 p.m., during July.
- Mandurah Police Station, Mondays, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., during July.