

HOUSE & GARDEN®

FEBRUARY
2021



TIME FOR
A RETHINK?
BATHROOM INSPIRATION
STORAGE
MADE SIMPLE
OFF-THE-PEG
OPTIONS

plus
OUR GARDEN
EDITOR CLARE
FOSTER SHARES
HER SECRETS

CREATIVE ENDEAVOURS

FIVE DESIGNERS, FIVE HOUSES, FIVE SPECTACULAR VISIONS



Interior designer
CLARE GASKIN
on
USING PATTERN

ILLUSTRATION ALEXIS BRUCHON

Pattern is something that excites me – I think that it always has. I studied History of Art and Architecture at the University of Manchester, and I had an inspiring teacher who opened my eyes and showed me how even the application of paint can create patterns. She taught me to notice the patterns that surround us in life. This interest began to give my everyday travels new meaning – I'm forever looking up, taking a moment to consider what is before me.

Why, then, can it feel like such a big and scary decision to incorporate pattern in our homes? I think many of us find comfort in what we perceive to be safe and that often means plain (and neutral in colour). That's understandable, as decorating your home is an investment – and not every investor is prepared to go high risk.

Patterns can bequeath an energy to a space. Getting to know our clients at the start of a project informs us on how best to design for them and reflect their lives, interests and desires. Often, there will be hints of what pattern means to them. For some, stripes might have a connection with the formal (think tailored suits or school uniforms). When designing rooms in this category, I have frequently turned to Farrow & Ball's wallpaper collections (farrow-ball.com). Its 'Plain Stripe' wallpaper comes in a range of fantastic colours, from more neutral tones through to stronger shades. For others, stripes may conjure up a big-top circus tent. Among my saved images on Instagram is the red-and-white-striped bedroom that the interior designer Martyn Lawrence Bullard created for Tommy Hilfiger's son – a great example of the fun that can be had with this theme.

I love working where stand-out statements can be made. For a project dedicated to a father's wish to have a fun space for himself and his teenage children, I commissioned the graffiti artist CEPT to turn a games room into a scene of intergalactic battles, with depictions from Space Invaders and Pac-Man. Even in this house, there was a need for some more moderate uses of pattern: iguanas on a black-on-black wallpaper from Timorous Beasties (timorousbeasties.com) are subtly highlighted by the cloakroom lighting.

Such a bold scheme may not be for everyone, so I often make use of patterns that don't involve being brave with colour at the same time. In another project, we upholstered a bespoke sofa in



cream fabric that from a distance looked plain, but was in fact self-patterned with a faint Greek key design. This linked it to the other geometric patterns in the room without being too obvious, or fighting to be the focus. It also reflected a way of investing in a pattern that will not date quickly and that can be incorporated into another scheme at a later time.

Where you decide to use pattern makes a big difference, too. For example, a gentler way of using pattern on curtains or blinds is to introduce it on borders or panels, rather than as the main fabric. I like a patterned lining, which makes the view from outside more interesting. Likewise, upholstery: a bold-patterned occasional chair can act as a sculptural artwork. When you find a must-have fabric but discover it's too expensive or delicate to use for full upholstery on a sofa or armchair, consider making a feature of it on the outer areas (the back and sides), which receive less wear – with a contrasting and more durable plain for the inside back and seat.

I cannot imagine a space that doesn't have some pattern. My advice would be to embrace it, study what it is that you are drawn to and then bring it into your home. Avoid the big trends and go with something that you really love – it will have a far better chance of standing the test of time. In that way, designing with pattern can be a bit like shopping for clothes.

For many, pattern may mean adding a few cushions, or having a bold wallpaper in a downstairs loo. And that's great. But I like to encourage clients to think about being a little braver, going bigger and bolder – and taking them on that journey is one of my favourite things about being an interior designer □ claregaskin.com