

BY JANE EYLES-BENNETT



Left and above: Cohesion was created with this property by tying the house and the fence together through a monochromatic colour scheme and the white blinds and flowers

Turning good design principles into good profits

When renovating your properties (whether for profit or otherwise), consider the following design principles and you will be amazed at the results, writes **Jane Eyles-Bennett**

As a property investor, you've probably come across properties that have a certain flair or 'look' about them. They seem to have the designer's touch somehow and you know that because of that, the property in question is no doubt worth more than other properties for sale or rent in the same area. Perhaps the owner over-capitalised – but what they or their consultant did do right was to follow some simple but effective design principles. There are a number of principles that are applicable to all the design disciplines – interior, graphic, product, fashion etc – and with correct use will give either a conscious or subconscious pleasing quality to the places in which they exist.

Balance

This is the 'visual equilibrium' of a space. That is, a space looks balanced when the colours, forms, lines and textures within that space are positioned correctly. A darker colour is visually 'heavier' than a lighter colour. Texture is visually heavier than a plain surface because of its interest. Also, a large object is visually heavier than a

smaller object. Always take into consideration the visual weights of the elements within an area when making your design decisions.

For example, the front face or elevation of a house may have one large window and one small window. The side with the smaller window is visually 'lighter' and needs to be weighted down somehow. A solution to this would be to add a plant to that side of the house or at least create some visual interest there and, as a result, visual weight.

Another example may be with the use of colour. For example, if one side of the house has a deck on it, which is stained or painted a darker colour, then find some way to create more visual weight on the other side of the house so that when viewing the property from any angle, it is balanced. You may be able to add a large sculpture or tree to achieve this balance.

When considering the balancing of textures, try to find a balance between not enough and too much. There is a fine line. For example, a plain vinyl next to a chunky carpet will make the vinyl look insubstantial. If you are selecting a vinyl flooring to sit adjacent

to an existing chunky carpet, then go for something with some visual weight in it; that is, something with a bit of interest (pattern or texture). But not too much – remember to keep it as neutral as possible.

Emphasis

Emphasis is a focal point or one outstanding feature of a space. Try to have only one in each room. The eye is attracted to this location and it becomes the centrepiece. It may be the view out the window or a fireplace that you choose to accentuate somehow. These are obvious focal points, but if you don't have these luxuries, then use your imagination. The focal point may be a bench-top or some strikingly simple white wooden blinds. It may even be the carpet!

Use this technique of emphasising a particular element to draw the eye away from imperfections or undesirable elements. Perhaps you have a ceiling or lighting in shabby condition, in which case, you could dye or replace the carpet with a darker colour, making it the most prominent feature (with the heaviest visual weight) – and therefore



Before and after. Continuity of colour and repetition of lighting help create a cohesive feel in this property

the focal point. Use this technique in reverse too: blend unsightly elements as much as you can into the surroundings. If you were going to 'dress' the house for sale (which I highly recommend when selling a vacant property), then emphasis might be created by a striking piece of furniture, artwork or mirror.

Repetition

Repeat elements throughout the house to create a sense of continuity. This will help to tie one room to the next and create a sense of flow. You can also use this technique to create a better indoor/outdoor relationship: that is, the exterior feels like it's a part of the house you've just been in or are about to enter. You can do this easily by repeating colours, textures, simple patterns, lighting and window treatments etc throughout the property. One of the simplest ways to create repetition is to have all the same treatments on the doors (painted, oiled, stained) and windows (drapes, blinds) throughout the house.

Cohesion

Cohesion or unity gives a sense of order to a space. It is the consistency or similarity of elements throughout. The

simplest way to create cohesion in any house is to ensure the flooring throughout the house is the same. You may choose to use a secondary finish, which is fine as long as the same product is used. So for example, the majority of the flooring is one particular carpet specification (used in the lounge, hallway, bedrooms and dining room for example) and then the flooring for the bathroom, toilet, laundry and kitchen is another specification (vinyl or tiles for example). The next best technique is to use a monochromatic colour scheme. This is where you select one main colour and then perhaps one or two shades lighter for some areas and one or two shades darker for other areas. For example you select 'X' colour for the bedrooms, and double strength of 'X' colour for the lounge, dining room and kitchen (you can get away with a darker colour because usually these are the largest areas of the house). Then you use half strength of 'X' colour for the hallway (which is normally the area with the least natural light so you want to keep it the lightest). You can certainly get away with using a different colour entirely for the toilet and bathroom areas (and perhaps the laundry, depending on its

location) as long as you create cohesion by using the same coloured scotias, doors, architraves and so forth.

One of the best tricks with good design relates to the cohesion of lines. Whenever you are deciding on locations and dimensions of elements, consider what other lines you can tie them in with. For example: you want to add tiles behind the kitchen bench as a splash-back. Where do you start them and stop them? Consider the other 'lines' in the area. You may decide to take the tiles up to the same line as a windowsill or an over-cupboard. Keep the height at this level until you reach the stove area. Again match your lines to other vertical lines in the area – that might be the width of the stove or the width of the rangehood (use the wider of the two). You may decide to continue the height of the tiles up to the rangehood and around a corner. That's fine, as long as where you stop the tiles again marries up with another line in the area. Another example might be when you are deciding on what width bathroom mirror to buy. Consider what other elements are in the room. Probably the mirror will sit over the vanity, so use the lines of the vanity to tie in with and buy a mirror that is that same width as the vanity top.

These few design principles are part of what every good designer considers on a regular basis (whether consciously or sub-consciously) and will help you get top dollar for your property – so regard them as worthwhile learning and implementing. ▲

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