

A Design Guide for Creating Harmonious Rooms



ROCKPORT

Harmonious

Interiors

Ann McArdle

HARMONIOUS INTERIORS

A DESIGN GUIDE FOR CREATING HARMONIOUS ROOMS ANN McCARDLE

ROCKPORT
PUBLISHERS

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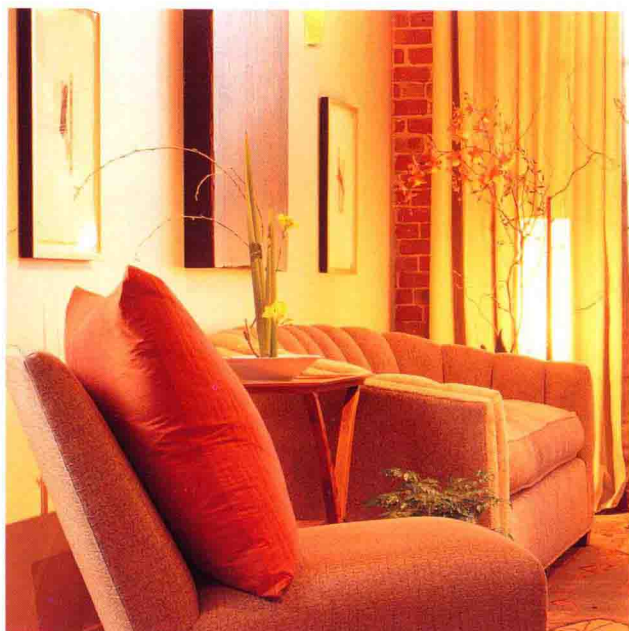
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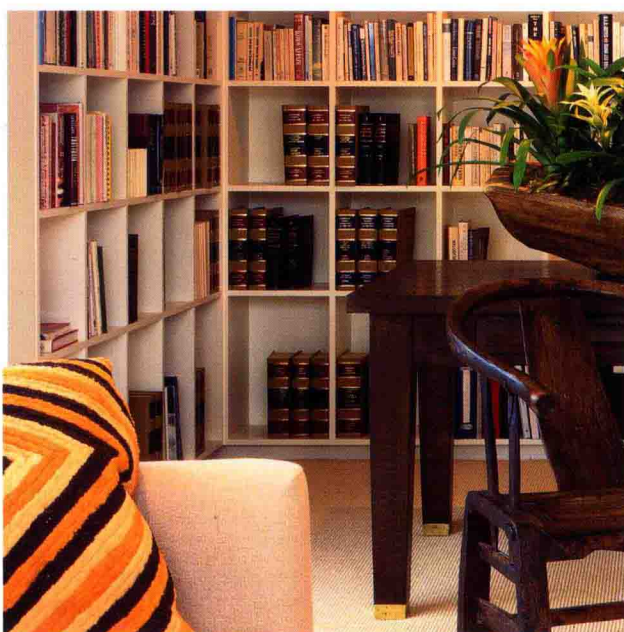
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INTRODUCTION

REFUGE IS INCREASINGLY DIFFICULT TO FIND AS MODERN LIFE IS LIVED AGAINST THE BACKDROP OF FAX MACHINES RINGING, CELL PHONES INTERRUPTING EVERYWHERE WE GO, "YOU'VE GOT MAIL" POPPING UP ON THE COMPUTER SCREEN, AND TRAFFIC JAMS AT ALL HOURS OF THE DAY. THE SANCTUARY THAT HOME CAN PROVIDE BECOMES ESSENTIAL. WE NEED A PLACE TO SHUT OUT THE CACOPHONY OF THE DAY AND LET THE TRANQUILITY OF HARMONIOUS SURROUNDINGS REJUVENATE US.

IF YOU HAVE EVER WALKED INTO SOMEONE'S HOME AND AT ONCE EXPERIENCED A FEELING OF COMFORT AND WELL-BEING, YOU KNOW THE MAGIC OF A HARMONIOUS INTERIOR. YEARS AGO, I WENT WITH A FRIEND TO VISIT FRIENDS OF HIS AND WAS IMMEDIATELY AT EASE IN THE HOME OF PEOPLE I HAD JUST MET. THEIR LIBRARY WAS ARCHITECTURALLY INVITING—DARK MAHOGANY PANELING OFFSET BY LARGE IRON CASEMENT WINDOWS. THEIR FURNITURE CONSISTED OF A HUGE LEATHER COUCH AND COMFORTABLE, VELVET-UPHOLSTERED SIDE CHAIRS. THERE WERE ACCENTS IN THE CLASSIC MODE: A BUST ON A MAHOGANY TABLE, OLD PRINTS IN DARK FRAMES ON THE WALLS, AN ORIENTAL RUG, AND A CRACKLING FIRE IN THE FIREPLACE. BUT THE QUALITY THAT ENDEARED IT TO ME WAS NOT ITS BEAUTY SO MUCH AS ITS COZY AMBIENCE. THERE WAS NOTHING THAT SEEMED TO BE THERE JUST FOR SHOW. TWO SMALL CHILDREN PLAYED A BOARD GAME ON THE FLOOR; THE ROOM WAS DEFINITELY LIVED-IN. IT ALL LOOKED WELL USED AND LOVED, AND IT BORE THE STAMP OF ITS OWNERS.

IN CHOOSING FURNISHINGS FOR MY NEW LIVING ROOM, I HAVE BEEN GUIDED BY THAT MEMORY. MY SOFA WAS NOT AT ALL WHAT I WAS LOOKING FOR, BUT IT RESONATED WITH ME IN A WAY UNRELATED TO DIMENSION, STYLE, OR COLOR. NOT ONLY DOES IT MAKE THE ROOM LOOK RIGHT, IT HAS TURNED THIS NEW HOUSE INTO MY HOME.

FEEL YOUR REACTION TO ROOMS THAT YOU SEE IN THE HOMES OF YOUR FRIENDS, TO PHOTOGRAPHS IN BOOKS AND MAGAZINES, TO ARTWORK. GET A SENSE OF WHAT KINDS OF FURNISHINGS, WHAT COLORS, WHAT LIGHTING MAKE YOU FEEL RIGHT AND STRIVE FOR THAT IN YOUR OWN HOME. IF FLORALS MAKE YOU FEEL CHEERFUL, USE THEM FOR RUGS, UPHOLSTERY, OR DRAPERY FABRIC. OR USE FLORAL ACCENTS FOR A SMALLER DOSE WITH A SIMILAR IMPACT. IF LEATHER FURNISHINGS AND WOOD PANELING SUIT YOU, CREATE THE MOOD WITH THE RIGHT FABRICS, COLORS, AND TEXTURES. NATURAL WOOD TRIM, OR DARK RATHER THAN WHITE PAINT, MIGHT BE ALL THAT IS NECESSARY. DEEP BROWN, TEXTURED UPHOLSTERY CAN TAKE THE PLACE OF LEATHER AT A FRACTION OF THE COST. YOU CAN GET THE LOOK AND FEEL YOU WANT WITHIN YOUR OWN CONSTRAINTS.

PERFECTION IS NOT THE GOAL. COMFORT, EASE, TRANQUILITY, COMPATIBILITY WITH THE INHABITANTS—THESE ARE THE QUALITIES THAT ENCOMPASS THE IDEA OF A HARMONIOUS INTERIOR. *HARMONIOUS INTERIORS* WILL GUIDE YOUR DECORATING CHOICES TO CREATE A RESTFUL AMBIENCE TO BALANCE YOUR HECTIC LIFE AND BRING YOU A SENSE OF PEACE AND COMFORT AT HOME.





IN SEARCH OF HARMONY

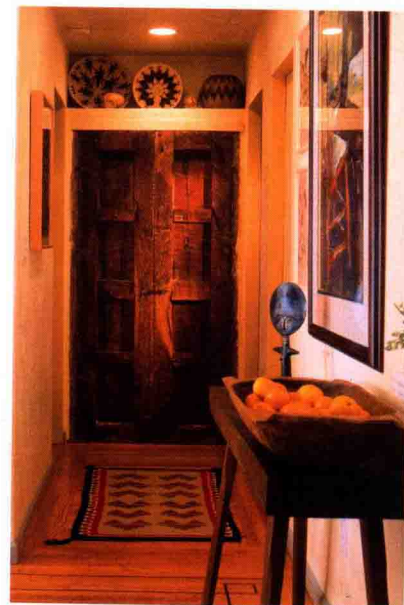
DESIGNS THAT REJUVENATE



PREVIOUS PAGES: Give a sunny room a golden glow with pale ochre walls that lift the spirits. Burnished-wood tables from around the world echo the warm tones in the antique Oriental rugs. To promote lively, yet relaxing conversation, introduce a chaise lounge into your living room seating arrangement. Photo: www.davidluncanlondon.com

ABOVE: Muted red walls and soft pillows combine peacefully with natural wood and available light, creating an inviting space to read or relax. Photo: Peter Margonelli Design: Benjamin Noriega-Ortiz

OPPOSITE: Create tranquility using natural elements in an entryway. Primitive artwork is visually stimulating and provides a calming, rustic accent to the compact space. Photo: Coll Photography Design: Doree Friedman



Understanding harmony is the first step to achieving it. According to the dictionary, harmony is congruity—the combination of parts into an orderly, peaceful whole. We know it best in music where voices join together to turn a simple tune into a spine-tingling choral piece. Simply singing the right notes, however, does not make music. The subtler, intuitive components of loud and soft, sweet and harsh turn the notes into song.

So in our lives, components can coexist—career and home, work and play—but in order for life to be harmonious, there needs to be balance among them. In today's world this is becoming more and more challenging. As we scramble to meet increasing demands, it is ever more difficult to take time for ourselves to rejuvenate body and soul. The more successful we are, the more demands we create for our time and money. The scales begin to tip and life becomes less manageable.

This is where the harmonious home becomes indispensable. A home that welcomes and comforts is restorative. If one can open the front door at the end of the day and instantly feel a sense of calm, the rejuvenation begins even if there is still dinner to make, the dog to walk, laundry to fold, and homework to supervise.

Home does not need to be a showpiece to provide tranquility, but it does need to be composed thoughtfully. Like the melodic soprano voice in a choral piece, a beautiful sofa in a room with compatible fabrics, lighting, pattern, and other forms becomes more lovely as part of its setting. Some element must link furnishings and accessories for a room to be harmonious. The style, color, size, or shape of furnishings and accents should be in accord. This does not mean they should perfectly match, but there must be some thread that ties them together. Choose pieces with some association or connection to contribute to an orderly, tranquil setting. A club chair can work in a delicate, feminine décor if upholstered in a soft color or floral fabric. Or an ornately decorated mirror can work in a casual room if linked by size, color, or material.

Perhaps most important, the décor of a home should be in accord with its inhabitants. As you select furnishings and colors, feel their impact on you. Choose pieces that agree with your own tastes and lifestyle so your home will reflect yourself for a truly harmonious interior.