

research of materials & finishes.

While this is not a comprehensive guideline to each material, color, finish, and design component, it is a quick overview of interesting points throughout my research including lighting, color, materials, acoustics, space & proportion, and biophilic design.



lighting.

Lighting is one of the most direct influences of mood that we experience on both physically and psychologically.

A new joke around the internet is how everyone hates “the big light” in a room. This typically refers to the bright white light at the ceiling installed to create the most neutral environment for a landlord to set in a rentable apartment, or the fluorescent light that beams above us in a dentist’s office. While it is comical, there is a genuine reason why everyone tends to agree that we want soft, ambient light that makes us feel good in all of our spaces.

Light directly affects the way we see a space (literally), and our visual sense of a space is the most powerful in all of our senses. We take in visual information immediately, and decide how we feel in a space from there. Not only does light affect our emotions in a space, but it can also determine the energy you feel in a room. Along with all of this is the argument for natural or simulated light, and its direct benefit to your health. Having more access to natural light is universally preferred, and can have an influence on mood and health.



Along with this, we should be changing our lighting throughout the day to get the best benefits. As lighting affects mood and energy, we can make the light around us work to influence these things purposefully. Having brighter lights when we want to get work done and softer, more ambient lights when we want to calm down are extremely effective, according to “Mood Changers: Why Lighting is the Most Important Design Feature” from Archdaily. The reason for this is our body science - our circadian rhythm. We rise in the morning and wind down at night after the sun sets. This is also why we all feel more upset when the sun sets in winter at 4pm.



The basic lighting designs in interiors are different layers of light, meant to be paired with one another to achieve the right mood: ambient lighting, task lighting, accent lighting.

Some fixture types include: surface lights, pendants, recessed lights, track lights, portable lights, and landscape lighting.

Light is measured in Kelvin, the affects of them are described below

Warm Light

Typically described as having a “cozy” feel, warm yellow/orange light is typically found in a lounge type space to help relax, and is best before bed/late afternoon.

Mood / Influence

- comforting
- sleepy
- shorten the space
- soft
- lessen anxiety

White Light

Neutral light sources are what we typically get from natural light during most of the day, and is best used in bathrooms, kitchens, and hallways.

Mood / Influence

- clear mind
- fresh
- productivity enhancing
- energy & focus
- lenghten a space



“exposure to natural light improves mood and can help make falling asleep easier. Spending your day in areas that are enhanced by natural light can improve the function of your circadian rhythm, which can increase your happiness and energy levels”

- Mood Changers: Why Lighting is the Most Important Design Feature, Archdaily

Cool Light

Blue light is one of the most simulated light degrees in our spaces, including fluorescent lights, and is a direct copy of our blue skies. Blue light wakes us up!

Mood

- energy
- productivity enhancing
- uncomfortable (sometimes)
- from our screens
- brings attention to space

Our circadian rhythm throughout the day relies on blue light in the morning to wake us up, neutral light throughout the day to keep our energy, and warm light in the afternoon to allow our body to naturally come to a rest.

This means that when we are on our screens late at night, the blue light transmitting from our phones and computers is hindering us and keeping us awake due to our natural bodily response to blue light.



color.

Color is experience visualized.

Color is one of the first things we perceive in a space, and has arguably one of the most direct influences on our mood. While there are a few dozen blogs around the internet that will tell you that blue is a calming color and yellow is happy... there is quite a lot more to color and its influence on mood than just how pretty it can make a space look.

Color can also define the shape or size of a space, making it perceive larger, longer, smaller, shorter, etc, often referred to as advancing or receding a space based on not only the tone or hue of a color, but also due to where in the room a color is placed. Typically, warm hues advance a space, as they can be perceived as closer than they truly are, while cool colors recede, as they have the opposing effect. Along with this, placing lighter or cooler colors towards the top of a space can make it seem taller, while the opposite will do, of course, the opposite. Placing different types of accent walls will have different effects following this same format, shortening, elongating, stretching, shrinking, and changing a space entirely.



A large amount of color psychology is also based upon the association. Green is go and red is stop like the street light tells us, green and blue are calming like nature, and yellow is bright like the sunshine. These associations affect our mood just as the object they reflect do. Colors can also be associated with the time periods they made up. Lots of tones of blues and oranges can feel mid-century modern, pinks feel like the renaissance era they inhabited, and so on. Color also goes beyond the 3 primary and 3 colors, but the tones, hues, and values that can hide themselves in each of these - and the combinations of them we choose.



red.

Red can raise body temperature, pulse rate and blood pressure. When red is reduced to a tint, it becomes pink and loses some of its psychological intensity; lighter pinks in particular are associated with femininity and delicacy.

orange.

Red mixed with yellow produces orange, which retains some of the intensity of excitement implied by red. Orange tends to produce a cheerful response which is why it is widely used in commercial settings.



yellow.

Among the warm colours, yellow has the least intense impact. It is considered less aggressive than red. Yellow is the colour of sunshine, happiness, activity and mild stimulation. Yellow tints considered pleasant background colours.

green.

Its association with grass and trees, makes green calming and restful to the eyes. Green is regarded as the most natural colour with connotations of health and wellbeing. Tints of green share these characteristics in reduced intensity; shades of green signify dignity and solidity.



blue.

is the coolest of the cool colours and appears restful and calm. Its associations with sky and water suggest spaciousness, simplicity and purity. It can lower body temperature, pulse rate and blood pressure. Blue is thought to encourage contemplation.

purple.

Pale tints of violet are thought of as playful and feminine. Deeper shades of purple can be dignified, mystical and even threatening. It should be approached with caution as they incorporate the conflicting values of warmth and coolness, of dynamism and calm





black & white.

Black and white are commonly used as accents within design palettes, both used throughout history with different meanings between cultures, attitudes, and styles. Each are truly classic. Each are timeless, classic, and considerably useful. Each can also be varied to warm or cool tones, with slight undertones of each being remarkably useful in creating separate moods. One acts as a blank canvas while the other can communicate a void or the opposite, as it seems filled. Each alone in a palette can be overwhelming, yet when used carefully and intentionally can strongly elevate each design palette, as seen in many palettes shown on this page. These colors also play along with visual cues, associations, and styles much like the others.

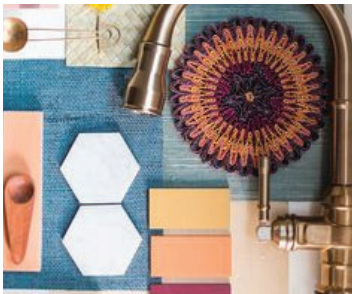
According to Design Cafe, the importance of color in interior design can be categorized into emotional impact, mood enhancement, visual perception, and personal expression.



Hue vs Value

Hue is defined as the pure form of a color
Value is the amount of black or white added to it

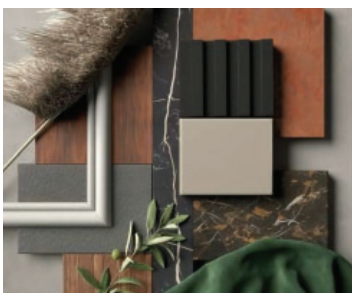
This effects mood in the way that we react to light versus dark colors, as well as pure hues.



Tint vs Shade

Tint is defined as the amount of white added to a hue
Shade is the amount of black added to a hue

This effects mood in the way that we react to light versus dark colors



Intensity Vs Tone

Intensity is commonly referred to as saturation, or strength of a hue

Tone is how neutralised a hue is

These create a more intense or calming reaction



material.

Materials are the first thing people think of when it comes to interior design, and should be chosen with intention.

The definition of material in an interior space goes far beyond the finishes and aesthetics we choose for the space. Material includes the construction, the behind the scenes, and the things we don't see when we enter a space. Every one of these is chosen my hand, and hopefully, chosen with intention. There is a speech given by a designer who shows a room with 4 white walls, a white floor, white ceiling, can lights, and no windows. He then asks the audience to discribe what they think the space could be used as and many people say offices, hospital rooms, classrooms, etc. The final answer was a sensory deprivation center used for psychological torture. This means that while it is known as beneficial to design with well-being in mind, it can actually be harmful not to. The materials we use should protect our health, environment, and safety. Material finishes are also the largest impact on the look of a space, which directly creates how we feel in a space and about a space. Each material is has a different need, impact, and usage.



"Architecture is a social art that shapes the world around us. It gives us what we need to nurture as a society. Our well-being, abilities, responses, efficiency, are all formed by the spaces we work, eat, sleep, and enjoy in. The critical choice comes when one has to choose the material to sculpt those spaces. Without 'material,' we cannot bring life, originality, and character to our spaces. It is, therefore, necessary to be aware of which material triggers what part of our brain, which material is suitable for which milieu, and which material functions better in a certain setting."

- Rethinking The Future



stone.

Stone brings a huge natural element to a space, and yet different from what we feel from most natural elements, it has a visual and physical weight to it. Stone can be natural or engineered, and different tones can communicate different moods. Darker tones communicate sophistication, whites bring a clean feel to a space, and natural stone make a room feel more luxurious.



glass.

Glass is a form of communication between spaces. It allows for people to see between spaces, allows for privacy, and allows for visual interest and texture in a space. Having interior panels of glass between rooms can make a space change based on clear, textured, or frosted glass, each creating more and more privacy and less visual communication as it goes on.



wood.

Wood is one of the natural materials that truly brings in the benefits of the outside in. It gives more of a comforting feeling of warmth and "home" to a space, and different tones of wood/natural versus engineered materials (similar to stone) can communicate different moods and emotions as well. Natural materials carry their stories with them, and we can truly feel it in our spaces.



fabric.

Different types of upholstery textures and materials serve a multitude of different purposes, and communicate a multitude of different emotions on top of matching budgets, colors and standards. All of which cannot be covered in this writing, but are equally important to think about. How soft is this material? Is it being used on a piece that should offer comfort? How does it make my client feel?



notes on texture.

Texture in a space is a huge part of our visual interest to it.

Again, I will not touch on every texture in the book and the way it makes you feel, but the texture of a material is what I have noticed most designers exploring first. Whenever we have a rep come in to show us all the new materials they have, the first thing most designers do every time is touch and feel the material. After sight and sound, touch is one of the more significant ways that we explore our surroundings. Children touch everything they see, and I know I'm not the only one that feels all of the clothes in a store or pillows in a Home Goods. Even in clothing and everyday life outside of interior design, texture is a huge part of our lives. The way this sweatshirt feels on me (and the way I wouldn't buy velvet pants), the soft blanket on my lap I use to make my cat cuddle with me while I work, the texture of the chips I am eating and getting all over my keyboard, the keyboard itself, and the remote for the TV as I watch "The Intern" and how my thumb searches for the right buttons to feel what purpose they have because my eyes are tearing up from the sweet ending.

We experience the world through our 5 senses, and touch is another one of the senses we design specifically for, and should continue to do so.



acoustics.

Sound is the second most perceived sense.

Personally, noise in a space is one of the most impactful elements in consideration to my anxiety levels. Having too much noise in a space is not only not enjoyable, but it can lead me to become very overwhelmed in my environment. Along with this, having too little noise in a space can make someone feel uneasy (silent spaces are even used as psychological torture). Being intentional with noise levels and the function and impact it has in a space is extremely important, and does not end at putting pretty felt panels in an office space.

Each different type of space has a very specific need in relation to acoustics. For example, meeting rooms should be sound proofed to increase productivity and decrease the travel of conversations. Concert halls sound reduce echo and enhance the quality of music throughout the entire venue. Hospitals should be careful about the travel of beeping machinery and operation equipment between patients. Apartment buildings should insulate walls to reduce sound traveling between units, and much more.



When designing, it is best to consider your senses in a space, as well as how they make you feel. How does this space sound?

In Emily Anthes's book "The Great Indoors: The Surprising Science of How Buildings Shape Our Behavior, Health, and Happiness", she talks about designing for adults with autism in chapter 5: Full Spectrum. In this chapter, she goes into depth about the impact that designing apartments with even a bit more insulation and sound proofing between units and purchasing quieter machinery/equipment. When designing to be inclusive to the disabled community, sound levels and acoustics can be a major determining factor if a space is functional or further disabling.



scale & proportion.

We could all learn a little more from Alice In Wonderland.

In a past semester at UC, we were tasked with designing a play space based on Alice in Wonderland, this meant playing a lot with how scale and proportions can make you feel in a space. Many can agree that being in a space that is too small feels cramped and anxiety-inducing, while staying in a space that is too large makes us feel small and childish. The Wonderland project allowed us as designers to create an intentional feeling for children to play in and experience.

Creating an intentional feeling in a space does not only refer to the literal size of a space, but the scale of materials, the proportion of furniture, and much more. An extra large scale wallcovering can make a space feel filled with art and larger, furniture that is too small for the client's needs can be frustrating and useless, cabinets that are too short for wine glasses or too tall to use are all things to be kept in mind. While there are codes and typical measurements for much of this, going outside the norm can completely change the way someone feels and interacts with a space.



scale.

is defined as the size of an object or space. It can also be used in consideration to its relation to the human body, according to Master Class. The goal when using scale and proportion in a space is for visual harmony, with consideration to architectural elements, furniture selections, materials, and relation to other spaces.

proportion.

is closely related to the visual weight and perception of an object and its relation between objects in a space. Proportion doesn't only refer to the relation between one object and another, but also to different parts of the same object. A couch can have large cushions in proportion to the frame, and this can change a project entirely.



biophilic research.

Biophilia directly translates to “love of life”.

Through my study of the research presented on designer Nicole Craanen's website, I learned that there are 14 common known “patterns” or strategies that designers use to add biophilic touches in their spaces. Biophilia is commonly referred to as plants, the impact it can have on a space as well as its use in interiors reaches far past simple “plants”. Biophilia reaches beyond this and brings every aspect of nature inside. This can be done in these “14 Patterns”: Visual Connection, Non-Visual Connection, Non-Rhythmic Sensory Stimuli, Thermal & Airflow Variability, Presense of Water, Dynamic & Diffuse Daylight, Connection with Natural Systems, Biomimetic Forms & Patterns, Material Connection to Nature, Complexity & Order, Prospect, Refuge, Mystery & Enticement, and Risk & Peril. Many of these strategies discuss both natural and simulated connection to nature, and different tactics that designers can use to incorporate these into spaces. Craanen also discusses how each pattern affects the following well-being benefits: emotional, social, environmental, intellectual, and physical.



Craanen continues her research by creating 6 goals that a designer can use to accomplish different needs: Interdependence, orientation, information richness, control, meaningful connections, and restoration.

The use of biophilic design in spaces is focused on the human need for a connection to nature. We seek out views and vistas in our chosen habitats like offices and homes, and choose to visit naturalistic places to feel better on vacations. Not only does biophilic design have a direct impact on our health and wellbeing, but on the planet as well. Building spaces that are nature forward can have a positive impact on many things, and choosing to ignore this area of design can be actually harmful in the same regards.

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