

DRAPERY & DESIGN PROFESSIONAL

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Serving the Custom Home Furnishings Industry since 1993

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Correction - In the article 'Uplifting Custom Shades' in Volume 10, Issue 4, Finestra® and EZ-Rig™ were incorrectly noted.

About the Cover - Chateau in Loire Valley, France



The Art of Mixing

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Midlothian, VA

The best designed rooms don't come packaged in a box ... they evolve. Furniture and fittings are layered upon and built over time. Rooms reflect the homeowner's style as well as the location and setting of the house itself. Combining different furniture finishes and materials in design creates spaces with both depth and character. Great design is based upon balance and contrasts. Nothing screams hotel lobby or prefurnished apartment more than sets of furniture and exact matches of color, metal or wood.

Rooms where everything is uniform and matching are boring and easily passed through. They tend to be flat and uninteresting. They are also "safe." People are scared of making a mistake with decorating. There is a cost in redoing. If the furniture is sold as a set, if the paint colors and fabric colors exactly match, if all the metal finishes on the cabinet hardware, drapery hardware and lighting are an exact match, then it has to "go" and can't be wrong. Right?

Design is not absolute. There are no set rules for mixing finishes. Style is personal. This doesn't mean we cannot help our clients through the process. We need to let them know it's OK and preferable to combine styles and finishes.

Nature is the best example of how things that do not match work together beautifully. One single tree contains hundreds of shades of green. It's this same mix of shades, the play of contrasts, and the blend of textures that make a room interesting.

I posed the question of mixing finishes to three current designers located on opposite sides of the United States but who all have clients worldwide. Their responses offer insight not only to their personal design perspective but also suggest advice we can all incorporate into our work.

Washington, D.C., interior designer Barry Dixon frequently uses the surrounding landscape of a home, incorporating exterior elements into the home's interior design. Lumber from the property is used in con-

struction of the home itself or its furnishings. Outdoor colors are often inspiration for his interior palettes. Nature played a large role in the design of his new fabric line available through Vervain. Many of the pieces of his furniture have nailheads accentuating their lines. He also uses various woods and combinations of fabrics in his upholstery. Barry speaks of mixing finishes this way: "Not only do I love to mix finishes in a room, but I prefer to mix them. I love the way this relaxes a space. I'll tell my clients to avoid the 'bridesmaid's approach' — i.e., dyed to match — in favor of a harmonic blend of metal and wood finishes. Find some catalyst that coerces the mix, an inlaid box or chest of multiple wood tones and species for example, and mix away!"

Susan Jamieson of Bridget Beari Designs in Richmond, VA, offers this insight on working different finishes into design: "My key to mixing finishes is always to have balance within the room. If the floors and dining table are wood but the chandelier is metal, I think there's enough balance within the room to use wood drapery rods. It also depends on the look or style I want from the room. A more contemporary look would call for metal, but, again if I'm mixing in antiques or wood pieces, the wood pole rod would fit right in."

Californian Barclay Butera is known for his varied design themes based on location — beach, city, desert, mountain, and town and country. His fabric line for Kravet Couture is based on these same themes. As with the other designers, exterior surroundings influence his interiors, and his choice of finishes relate to balance and diversity. He responded to my question about rules for mixing this way: "I always believe there are no rules in interior design. Working with drapery, I love to mix oil rubbed bronze rings and end caps with burnished bamboo rods. Also, nickel rods and rings with tangerine linen drapery banded in oyster white linen. Because I do work throughout the country, I have the opportunity to mix styles in many environments."

The consensus is to "mix away," but not with reckless abandon. There must be consideration of the theme of the room, the location of the home, and a balance of elements in the space including wood, metal, color and texture. Choose the mix thoughtfully and purposefully. ✕

- Mix It Up
- Mix contrasting fabric textures, such as smooth linen with fuzzy chenille, or slick leather with wool.
- Blend exotic woods with metal in drapery hardware, like bamboo with oiled bronze.
- Look for furniture that contains a blend of woods and use it to guide your selection of other elements.
- Balance the use of wood and metal in the room.
- Use nailheads to accentuate lines on a cornice, a headboard or a chair.
- Select a kitchen island in a painted finish while staining the cabinets.
- Use a chopping block wood top on an island and select granite countertops elsewhere.
- Tile a backsplash in natural limestone and insert a band of slick glass or metallic tiles.
- Choose cabinet hardware that is unique and not an exact match to the appliances, lighting and plumbing fixtures.
- Break up sets of furniture and repurpose them. Lose the labels. Just because a table is sold as a nightstand doesn't mean it can't be an end table. Chests of drawers are excellent for storing dining room linens.

