A DECORATIVE STUDY OF WALL SPACE: LESSON V: BY MARY LINTON BOOKWALTER

The first impression made upon one when entering the majority of houses is the lack of thought displayed in planning the relation between the woodwork and the wall spaces to be covered by papers or fabrics.

An interesting problem in decorative work is the division of the wall by means of wood treatment. This can be done with three definite purposes in mind: First, if the height of the room is out of proportion to its floor space, the object will be to lower the effect; second, if the wall spaces in the room—as divided by the windows and doors—are not in good proportion, making it impossible to use papers and fabrics properly, the aim would be to simplify the spacing by a few strong lines of wood; third, if the wall spaces have been well considered by the architect, the problem would be to make as beautiful an arrangement in balance of spacing as the wall will allow.

A simple method for beginning the study of the spaces to be decorated is to take each side of the room and lay out to scale the proportions, treating each of the four sides as a lesson in the division of a rectangle by lines. For example, take the end of the hall (No. 1), with the large tree design. This wall space gives a rectangle which is in proportion two and one-quarter by three and one-quarter inches. Make three or four divisions of that space by means of the baseboard, picture moulding and the broad moulding to separate the upper and lower wall. The architect fixes the width of the baseboard, but the width and position of the two upper mouldings are for the decorator to determine.

When the line arrangement has been carefully determined in the problem, then comes the adaptation of pattern and balance in color. In the selection of pattern to fill the wall spaces there are again three points to consider: The effect of giving height to a room which is too low; the line of a design to deceive the eye and apparently lower a ceiling which is too high; or merely the making beautiful of what was good in the beginning.

After the wood trim and pattern are settled, the balance in color plays an important part. Sharp contrasts between sidewall and ceiling are rarely pleasing; for example, a strong red wall with a cream ceiling and dark woodwork. There is truth in the fact that a light ceiling makes a lighter room, but why not have the contrast in color less abrupt, making rather a gradation from dark to light? Abrupt changes in color are like discord in music.

For the style of the hall (No. 1) the tapestry design seems well chosen. The interplay of color in this wall covering is beautiful; the ceiling is in tan, the background color of the sidewall, with the large design in tans, greens and blue, running into the green tone of the base. The woodwork is a deep old ivory, and the mahogany of the handrail and the treads and risers of the stairs is on the brown cast. The wall treatment in this hall is designed to be the entire decoration, as no pictures are to be used.

The second problem (No. 2) presented about all the difficulties possible in one room. There was no symmetry in the arrangements of its parts; the fireplace in one end of the room was not on the axis of the room; the ceiling was much too high and was thrown into shadow; the windows were entirely out of proportion, extending from floor to ceiling; and the baseboard and casings were the only wood trim. When a
PROBLEM NUMBER ONE IN THE TREATMENT OF WALL SPACES: COVERING OF PANELS WITH LANDSCAPE DESIGNS.
PROBLEM NUMBER TWO, SHOWING THE RELATION OF CORNER SEAT TO PANEL, FRIEZE AND DOOR SPACE.
PROBLEM NUMBER THREE, SHOWING AN INTERESTING DIVISION OF SPACE IN WALL PANELS AND FRIEZE.
Problem number four in which the spaces of wall, windows and seat are delightfully proportioned.

Problem number five which shows great refinement of spacing and nicety of balance.
room has no harmony of line to begin with, and the limitations must be accepted as part of the problem, it is a difficult task to bring about a unity of expression.

The conditions in problem No. 2 were overcome in the following manner: A pattern in wood was used on the ceiling, which disguised the lack of unity in the plan of the room; a broad band of wood below the frieze accentuated that height all round the room; the windows were filled in at the top by panels covered with the same material as that used on the walls and in the hangings. The lower edge of these panels carried the line of the broad wood band. The color scheme was from a green on the ceiling through grays, green, brown-red and brown in the frieze to the brown of the cloth on the lower wall. With this careful planning in color and woodwork the room became one of dignity and refinement.

The corner of the dining room shown in No. 3 gives a simple arrangement which can be carried out with small expense and very satisfactory results. The criticism might be made here that the moulding in the angle is too small for the weight of the lower wood trim, but the balance in color in this room is very interesting. The quality of the color is completely lost in the photograph and the light lines of the design are exaggerated. The color combination is from a rich pinkish yellow through the shades of brown, one cool and the other a pink brown, to a deep tan. The plaster spaces in the skeleton wainscot are covered with a burlap in the pink brown tone, and the woodwork is brown.

For the sake of comfort and utility, in planning the seat for the small tea-room in No. 4 the line of the back was made to divide the wall space into almost equal parts. But the effect of the two-toned stripes of the wall covering and the broad horizontal curves of the fabric used to cover the seat emphasized the opposing lines—the wall, because of the vertical lines, looking longer from the seat to the ceiling, and the seat with horizontal lines appearing lower. The color contrasts, a combination of soft yellows, gray and green, also add to the effect produced by the lines. The high windows are an attractive feature in this room, both in size and placing.

The last of the five problems shown in this number is one which has great refinement in spacing and nicety of balance. The room was attractive in its proportions and the decorator's work was to carry the good points on from the foundation given. The walls were carefully spaced for this treatment, and the grounds were bedded in the plaster. The tapestry might be stretched and nailed to these and no stretchers placed on the surface of the wall. This gives a workmanlike finish. The inner moldings around the panels were left loose and put in place after the tapestry was hung. In this problem the kind of wood treatment, pattern of tapestry and color scheme were planned together. A unity of effect is thus produced which can only be obtained when the decorator and architect work with a definite result in mind.

These five examples are given to show that the steps in the problems in design which are met in study, by the division of squares, rectangles and other abstract spaces can be put into practice, giving the student a practical application of his theoretical work. One does not decorate an entire room, any more than an entire house, at once. The problem is taken up a step at a time. When you have planned a space adapted to one side of the room, and have made a pleasing balance of proportions, then the next step is to plan four walls and ceiling in such a manner as to make them a unit.