

arranging accessories



The lamp base anchors this grouping of accessories.

professionals use when accessorizing horizontal surfaces such as cocktail tables, credenzas and mantels to vertical spaces such as bookcase units and wall niches. Interior designers are known for putting together groupings of interesting objects quickly and with ease, and so can you, if you apply their design knowledge to your own accessorizing.

The first step in beginning an accessory arrangement is to "size up" your specific space. Let's say you have an end table that needs accessorizing because it has only a lamp on it. You've analyzed the style and shape of the lamp and have decided that it should stay on the table. Fine. It now becomes one of the accessories on the table. In fact, it will become the required vertical anchor in the arrangement.

Now you are ready to begin accessorizing. The first step is to create a series of "stair steps" with various objects, beginning at two-thirds the height of the lamp base and graduating down to the top of the table. Notice in the photo to the left the sculptural quality of the Italian carved wood lamp base. The placement of the bulbous carving on the lamp base is at the two-thirds height level, so it becomes the top anchor of this accessory grouping.

Next, notice the placement of leather books to the right of the lamp. They are nestled precisely under the bulbous curve of the lamp base. The vertical lines of the books contrast nicely with the sculptural quality of the lamp base. Stair stepping down to their right and adding another interesting shape to this grouping is an antique hexagonal wood box inlaid with different woods. The books and inlaid box comprise level 1 in this accessory grouping. In all well-proportioned accessory groupings, there should be three graduated levels of accessories.

The second level in an accessory grouping is usually comprised of "free form", or highly sculptural, objects. Placed in front of the books and the

the two most
important
secrets

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In interior design and decorating, what is the number one problem that perplexes most homeowners and would-be decorators? It's accessorizing! The reason most people have a hard time accessorizing their rooms is that they don't know how to analyze and strategize like a

professional accessorizer or interior designer.

It's really not hard to do. You just have to be familiar with two key elements of design that are essential to creating beautiful accessory arrangements: gradation and transition. These elements are the building blocks that

inlaid wood box are two interesting, unusual objects; a pair of brass binoculars resting on top of its case and a cluster of topaz glass grapes. The light from the lamp will highlight these accessories, so you need to choose artistic, light-reflecting objects.

The next and last level in an accessory grouping should aid the eye in visually moving down to the table top, and be of contrasting shapes and textures from the other accessories while at the same time have some relationship to them. Notice that the antique inkwells are also glass, like the grapes, and have brass lids, like the brass binoculars. The brown glass inkwell relates to the brown leather of the books, and the smallest object on the table, an inlaid butterfly box with gold and blue tones, relates to the large brass bowl in blue, red and

are boring and uninteresting. Another crucial design element used constantly by professional designers is transition. This is the technique that creates depth in an arrangement. It draws your eye into the layers within an accessory grouping or wall arrangement.

It is important to use transition when you have an accessory grouping on a console table or a credenza that is against a wall. Whatever is on the wall, whether it be a single picture or a group of pictures, needs to have the accessory arrangement on the table be transitioned into it, connecting the artwork on the wall to the artwork on the table.

In the photo below and on the next page, we see a dramatic mixed media painting hanging over an iron console table with a limestone top. To keep the attention centered on the painting



green tones to the left of the grouping. Notice that the brass bowl is large enough and has enough character to be able to stand alone to the left of the grouping and needs no other object with it.

What I have been describing in detail is the design element of gradation. As used in accessorizing, it is the gradual succession of objects, usually occurring in three levels, from high to low and light to dark, with various tones and textures, as seen in the contrasts of wood, glass and brass objects on the glass end table. Gradation is visual movement. A grouping of three levels of stair-stepped objects forces one's eye to move up and down and side to side to take in the entire accessory arrangement. This visual movement is what captures our attention and holds our interest.

Without gradation, a succession of heights, shapes, colors and textures, accessory arrangements

and on the central portion of the iron console base, two pairs of symmetrical objects are placed on the table. Two tall carved wood candlestick lamps with parchment shades are placed close to the sides of the painting, close enough so that the lampshades come slightly into the frame of the painting, thereby creating a connection and transition between the lamps and the painting. Further notice that the top bands of the lampshades are the same height as the dark line in the painting. The shades thus help draw your eye deep into the middle of the painting. This is called transition.

The second pair of symmetrical objects, the Murano glass urns with lids, come directly up into the bottom portion of the painting. Since they are glass, you can see through them into the matting of the painting. This further heightens the connection and transition between the objects on the console and the painting



Two pairs of symmetrical objects on the table focus attention on the painting.

on the wall. Notice also how the height of the glass urns are well proportioned under the lamps, coming up two-thirds the height of the lamp base. The wide glass urns provide a nice contrast paired with the delicate, carved wood candlestick lamp bases.

To focus attention at the center of the console along with interest on the sides, an antique porcelain container on a brass base is placed in the middle of the console directly underneath the painting. This elegant accessory creates additional gradation and transition into the painting.

These are just two examples of how interior designers use timeless design elements to create

dramatic accessory treatments. You, too, can create professional style arrangements for your home by using the fascinating ancient elements of gradation and transition. Try these design techniques with your own accessories and be amazed at the results. ■

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