

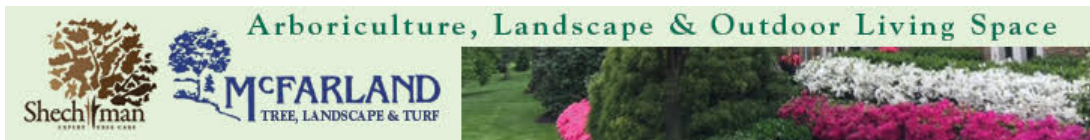


# Chestnut Hill Local

(/)  
Saturday, March 30, 2024

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## BY DESIGN

# Design principles that work in all styles of homes



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**A modern space with all the right elements: balance, proportion, color and style.**

Posted Thursday, February 29, 2024 12:00 am

by Patricia Cove

As in many cities, the housing inventory in Philadelphia and its suburbs covers a wide range of sizes, styles, layouts and configurations. Shelter magazines and websites tend to focus on airy, spacious rooms in new, state-of-the-art, contemporary buildings, or the grand and elegant quarters found within elaborate historic structures.

I was chatting with a fellow writer recently, who asked if I could talk more about appropriate design within more modest structures. Cottages, ranchers, and row houses were a few examples that came to mind.

No matter what the size, style, or layout of a building may be, there are a few design guidelines that can be applicable no matter what the scope of a project. Some can even be modified or adjusted to work beautifully within spaces that prove to be more challenging.

Some of these guidelines can be the subject of articles all on their own, but for simplicity’s sake, we will take a brief look at a few important ones, and how they can apply to any interior design project.

**Balance, proportion and scale**

The overall size of your room will determine the sizes of your upholstery and case good pieces. A scaled floor plan will assist in determining exactly how large your sofa, chairs, and accent pieces should be, allowing for adequate walk space and traffic patterns. An out-of-proportion element will automatically create a disjointed, unsettling appearance to the space.

Start by determining a focal point within the room. It could be a large window, a fireplace, or another important architectural feature. Your seating arrangement can revolve around that feature.

A design professional can easily complete a detailed floor plan, or a design website can assist almost anyone in completing the layout themselves, which then would become invaluable when shopping for those all-important pieces.



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**Style**

A question most often posed is “Should my interior design match the style of my home?”

It has always been my feeling that a home should flow effortlessly from the front door to the back. Creating that flow involves the seamless transition from the outdoors to the indoors.

That does not mean that if you own a Federal home, your furnishings need to be Federal antiques. Or if you own a modern, or contemporary home, you cannot incorporate your inherited Victorian sofa. On the other hand, I have never encountered a client who purchased a distinctive Arts and Crafts style home and did not want to furnish it using Mission or Shaker style case goods, or Morris and Co. fabrics and wallcoverings.

To assist in imparting a seamless transition from your house’s style to your interior design, it will be important to seriously consider the key architectural elements found in your home’s style, and make a real effort to reference them within your interiors.

The tenets of balance, proportion and scale will make a huge impact in this regard. The Victorian sofa placed in just the right position within the open space of a huge contemporary, can create a distinctive point of interest, and a fascinating topic for design-focused conversations. Surrounding the sofa with more modern, clean-lined pieces in the right proportion and scale will then reference the style of the home, and create the perfect seating arrangement.

### **Color, pattern and texture**

Not understanding how important the relationship is between color, pattern and texture within a space can sabotage the most ardent design efforts.

The color of the walls, ceiling, and trim is one of the hardest decisions anyone can make. Natural light, artificial light, angles, windows, and reflective surfaces all affect the finished color, no matter what it looks like on the swatch. Can a small room be painted a dark color? Should my trim match my walls? Should my ceiling be white? These are all questions that depend on many circumstances, and not considering those circumstances can make for a very unfortunate, not to mention, expensive, outcome.

The patterns and textures of other critical design elements like wallcoverings, window treatments and upholstery should all be meticulously considered, as they should all work together in harmony to create a well-thought-out, compatible and comforting space.

In the coming weeks, I plan to use these guidelines to concentrate on specific architectural styles, and address questions about how to incorporate them within homes of varied architecture, both modest and grand.

In the meantime, send me your questions via my website, [patriciacove.com](http://www.patriciacove.com) (<http://www.patriciacove.com>).

*Patricia Cove is Principal of Architectural Interiors and Design in Chestnut Hill, and Chairs the Historic District Advisory Committee of the Chestnut Hill Conservancy.*

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#### OTHER ITEMS THAT MAY INTEREST YOU

**[The historic character of our neighborhood is a design ... \(/stories/the-historic-character-of-our-neighborhood-is-a-design-all-its-own,31644\)](#)**

**[Sometimes you need a contractor who can say ‘no’ \(/stories/sometimes-you-need-a-contractor-who-can-say-no,31545\)](#)**

**[When sleuthing helps you care for your historic home \(/stories/when-sleuthing-helps-you-care-for-your-historic-home,31459\)](#)**

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**LOCAL CALENDAR**

<p>Thu, Apr 04 @3:00pm</p> <p><b>Build-It! Club</b></p> <p>Sat, Mar 30 @7:30pm</p> <p><b>SANCTUARY Sound Bath Saturdays</b></p> <p>Practice Yoga Co-op Sat, Mar 30 @6:00pm</p> <p><b>Live Music with Aaron Quarterman</b></p> <p>Chestnut Hill Brewery Company Sat, Mar 30 @8:30pm</p> <p><b>A Cabaret To Save Philadelphia From Climate Change</b></p> <p>FringeArts</p> <p>All Events (<a href="https://chestnuthilllocal.com/events/">https://chestnuthilllocal.com/events/</a>)</p>	<p>Fri, Apr 12 @4:30pm</p> <p><b>Decibel Metal &amp; Beer Fest...</b></p>	<p>Thu, Apr 18 @7:30pm</p> <p><b>Silas Stewart Sextet</b></p>	<p>Thu, Apr 04 @3:00pm</p> <p><b>Build-It! Club</b></p>	<p>Fri, Ap @4:30</p> <p><b>Decil &amp; Be</b></p>
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**THE LATEST**



**Josephine Bonitatibus, 101 (/stories/josephine-bonitatibus-101,31655)**  
Josephine Bonitatibus, 101, passed away on Wednesday, March 27, 2024, in her daughter's home in Erdenheim surrounded by loved ones. She was born May 6, 1922, the sixth of seven ...

(/stories/josephine-bonitatibus-101,31655)



(/stories/joan-levy-coale,31654)

**Joan Levy Coale (/stories/joan-levy-coale,31654)**

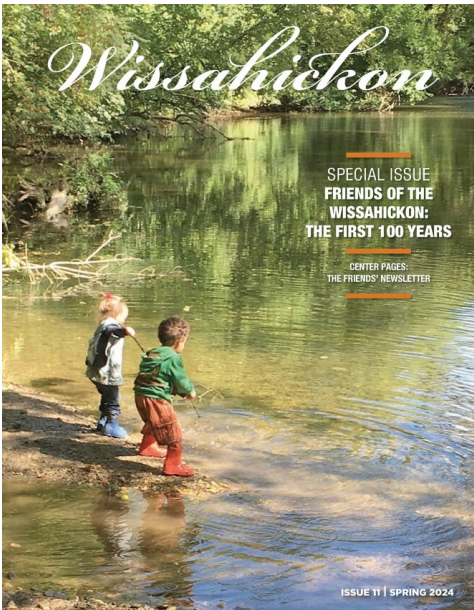
Joan Levy Coale, adored mother and grandmother, lover of the arts and the Wissahickon, and resident of Mt. Airy and Chestnut Hill for nearly 100 years, died peacefully at home on February 25th, aged ...



(/stories/alexa-kane-nee-charbonneau,31653)

**Alexa Kane (nee Charbonneau) (/stories/alexa-kane-nee-charbonneau,31653)**

Alexa Kane (nee Charbonneau), 89, of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, passed away on March 25, 2024, in the presence of her loving children. Alexa was born of the late Exilda (Pelletier) and Arthur ...



(/stories/mar-28-2024-issue,31652)

**Mar 28, 2024 issue (/stories/mar-28-2024-issue,31652)**

**'From Womb to Womanhood' through March 31 (/stories/from-womb-to-womanhood-through-march-31,31651)**



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