



2/6/14 Make It Last: Choosing Colors, Fabrics and Finishes Q&A Log Questions from Live Demco Webinar as answered by Jessica Mahne & Janet Nelson

Color

Q: What can you do when you have a color that is part of your architecture and you are stuck with it?

A: Dealing with color in architecture is a common problem. It's best when you choose color in your architectural features that is more neutral but if that is not possible, it is best not to fight it. On one project, maroon laminate cabinets were part of the structure and seemed out of date. We worked to find a color harmony to pull out a complementary or split complementary palette and made those new colors the more dominant colors in the scheme. The result integrated the cabinets in a way that was pleasant. Too often people try to ignore the color or fight it which does not create the best result.

Q: Can you change the color percentage in different areas? For instance blue green 60% in adult but 30% in teen or kids' area? and then the 30% would be 60% in the kid area?

A: Yes that would be a good way to keep the overall building color scheme coordinated, but create emphasis and interest in the individual areas.

Q: What colors can brighten and refresh a library with poor lighting? I want modern and appealing, but not childish.

A: Lighting could be a whole other webinar because it is so complex and technical, but the first step is to figure out if you have cool (often fluorescent lighting is cool) or warm lighting as a place to start. A design professional can help you with this. Most cool lighting has a lot of blue in the light, if you have spaces that are warm colors such as reds and oranges in that space they will appear washed out because the oranges and reds are not being reflected back. Lighter color tones are obviously something that can help to brighten up a space, light blue vs. navy for example, and something that reflects the bluish hue rather than fighting it with oranges or browns. Trying to figure out what the lighting is can really help in your space. Lighting and color really work together.

Q: How do you go about changing a color scheme if you can't afford a complete renovation?

A: Many times it is best to start with the walls because they have so much impact. In doing so, be sure that you don't fight with any architectural features but choose colors that complement those features. With furniture there are two things that can sometimes be done with existing furniture. The first is that sometimes you can find places that will repaint metal surfaces with electrostatic paint which will still provide a durable finish on those items. On upholstered items, you can reupholster furniture rather than buying all new. Overall you should also look at pieces that will provide you with the most impact. First impression spaces should probably have more emphasis vs. spaces that are tucked away.

Q: So would you say it is okay to paint a space a neutral tone and then add color?

A: Yes, absolutely. The neutral tone could be your 60%, then choose two more colorful accents and use one on approximately 30% of the furniture and the other on approximately 10%. If you want just a little more interest in the space, incorporate the 10% color (or a dark/light variation of it) as a small portion of wall color also.

Q: What colors do you recommend to paint for ceiling trims in school libraries? Both low and high.

A: Neutral colors probably – white, light gray, light tan, but it depends upon the individual space. I would recommend repeating the same color both low and high if needed in the same space so there is repetition which enhances the harmony of the color scheme.

Q: What do you do when you have a wall color that is atrocious and dated?

A: First, if it can be painted over in a new color that would be my recommendation. If it has to stay, one trick of the trade is to find a multi-colored patterned fabric or carpet that has that “atrocious” color in it, but is not the dominate color. Then play off the other (non-atrocious) colors and try to add artwork, furniture or accessories that are in those colors. It will look like the color was meant to be there versus ‘fighting’ or ‘ignoring’ it.

Q: We're hoping to add some comfortable seating in our Early Literacy area, for use by caregivers and children. Our color scheme is neutral shades of brown, plus some pops of yellow and yellow-green for accents. What colors would you suggest for furniture?

A: I think violet and/or red-violet would add a lot of interest and excitement to the space. This would be based on a split-complementary color scheme. I would try to have some of the fabrics have a pattern with the violet or red-violet (magenta) as the dominant color, but still have some yellow and yellow-green, and even brown in the fabric. Use www.colorschemedesigner.com - choose the ‘triad’ scheme and then ‘dial in’ your yellow and yellow-green, you should find that the red-violet hue should come up as the third color in the harmony.

Q: We are doing a branch remodel. It is a small space. The front lobby has natural light, but the rest of the library has florescent lighting with no natural light and very high warehouse ceilings. The branch manager selected a floor that is orange with red dots for the lobby area, a neutral carpet with orange and blue scattered throughout, and a light blue with darker blue dots for a children's story area. She wants to use paint on the walls, to brighten up the inside part that receives no natural light. Due to the fact that the lobby flooring choice is so bold, and then the story corner will be visible from the lobby, how can we brighten the inside space without overwhelming everyone with our paint choices?

A: This is a difficult one without seeing the actual space. One thought I have is to use a neutral color of paint, a light tan perhaps, on the upper part of the wall, so that a light colored wall is visible from a distance and won’t compete with any of the other colors in the space, but will reflect what little light there is. Then, choose a more vibrant accent color for the bottom of the wall – perhaps in the blue or orange tones that are present in the space. This way that color would be more visible when you are closer to that corner and there won’t be so much of it as to be overwhelming. There should be material, such as a wood trim (could be painted neutral or be a wood tone) dividing the two colors, this is commonly called a “chair rail”. This sounds challenging! There are also interior designers that can come in and consult with you for a small fee and just do a color consultation; sometimes the challenging spaces need some professional help.

Fabric

Q: Is there anything special to look for when considering vinyl? I am worried about cracking and tears.

Q: Does vinyl crack in commercial seating?

A: Vinyl has come a very long way in its construction and durability. But, if you are leery about vinyl, there is another product, Silica by Momentum Fabrics (https://www.themomgroup.com/silica_pr.shtml) that is made from silicone and has amazing cleaning properties. It also comes in a wide variety of colors.

Q: Thinking of furniture in a children's area, it sounds like vinyl would be an excellent choice. What do you think?

A: Vinyl is a good choice, and affordable. If you want to keep that furniture looking good even longer, you may want to think about the product, Silica, referenced above.

Q: I have an administrator who is concerned about the head lice factor with fabrics. Am I doomed to leather-like choices?

A: From www.headlice.org : *Homes or schools don't get head lice – people do. Head lice are human parasites and require human blood to survive. Vacuuming is the safest and best way to remove lice or fallen hairs with attached nits from upholstered furniture, rugs, stuffed animals– wherever someone with head lice may have rested their head.* One strategy might be to use a seating that either only has fabric on the seat itself – and a hard, plastic or wood back – this could be good to get some color/pattern in chairs that pull up to a table for example. Another idea would be to use benches with fabric instead of lounge type chairs with backs – that would help avoid children resting their heads on the fabric portion of the furniture, at least in theory.

Other

Q: Should flooring always be carpeting for sound barrier or can we use stained cement flooring w/some area rugs? We have had stains on carpeting.

A: Carpet is really the best choice. I strongly recommend carpet tile installations (most, if not all of the carpets pictured in the webinar had carpet tile) because with tile you can actually pull up a stained tile/s and replace it. Area rugs need to be carefully placed if used, so they do not become a tripping hazard or impediment for users who are in wheelchairs, use walkers or canes.

Q: We found arms of lounge chairs show the most stains - recommendations? Wood arm covers?

A: This can be very true. You can use vinyl, Crypton or Silica (referenced above) for the arms, and the seat to increase the cleanability and resistance to stains. Wood arm caps are also good, make sure to only use those in areas where chairs will be used alone, not pulled up underneath tables, otherwise you could get scratches in the wood over time.