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How to Add Texture to Your Home: Lessons from a Designer

Want to add more texture to your home? This family home designed by Joy Chao of John Henshaw Architect Inc. is full of inspiration.

By Maansi Pandya / January 3, 2025

Adding texture can completely transform a space, giving it depth and a unique, timeless style. Best of all, there are no real “rules” when it comes to incorporating texture. The key is to trust your instincts.

For the design of this 7,000-square-foot custom family home in Shaughnessy, lead interior designer Joy Chao leveraged the client’s love of traditional design with modern touches. The result is a home filled with texture in clever, thoughtful ways.

How to Add Texture to Your Home According to Joy Chao

Start with a Base

“In design, we look at texture in terms of colour, layers, and material,” says Chao, “If we take the term at face value, adding texture can refer to anything from materials and trim to furniture, accessories, light fixtures, curtains, and even drywall.”

Photo: Andrew Latreille

Not sure where to begin? Start with one aspect of your home you really love, whether it’s a piece of existing furniture or artwork, a wall colour, or an accessory, and use it as an anchor for the rest of the space, says Chao. Even your favourite piece of clothing can be a great base to create a mood board.

The anchor of this home was the opulent, 100-year-old black and bronze marble fireplace in the living room, sourced by Chao and her team and inspired by designs the client came across on her many travels. The rest of the space features plenty of nods to the fireplace, including the textured plaster on the ceiling, the glass millwork, and the striking brass brackets in the archway.

Leverage Opposing Elements

Don’t be afraid to mix and match. Having an anchor piece allows for plenty of flexibility and still makes a space feel cohesive, even while you layer with different colours and patterns.

Back in the living room, the light and dark brown chunky sofas and white and black marble feel right at home despite being opposing colours. Similarly, in the foyer, the floor features multiple layers and materials against the herringbone to soften the space.

Photo: Andrew Latreille

“It was a collaborative process,” says Chao, “The client loves a more traditional style. In the living room, we explored adding a large brass mirror, but in the end found this beautiful contemporary piece of artwork at a gallery that felt like it balanced out the already traditional aspects of the space really well.”

The dining room also integrates these two opposing styles, with warm, personal touches. The Asian-influenced wallpaper honours the client’s heritage, juxtaposed with the modern textured light fixture above the dining table—grated brass in keeping with the home’s anchor piece.

Give Depth to Monochrome Spaces

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It’s possible to add texture while keeping a space timeless. For example, white kitchens are likely here to stay; but if your all- white kitchen needs a bit of a pop, a few thoughtfully selected accessories can do the trick.

Florals alone can pack a punch in a monochrome space. “If your kitchen is all white, add a decorative vase filled with white hydrangeas or Baby’s Breath to add textured flare.” shares Chao.

Design for Beauty and Function

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Form and function go hand in hand when incorporating texture. In the bedroom, the client wanted a headboard that was high enough to support her as she was reading, with a material that was both stylish and durable.

Inspired by soft, spa interiors, it's a modern custom piece that still feels one with the rest of the home, courtesy of the brass light fixture, white marble nightstand, and warm accessories.

"There is so much opportunity to explore designing with a variety of styles and textures," says Chao, "It's a fun time to mix and match, so don't feel stuck to one style!"

This story was originally published in April 2024.

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