

Breathe

and make time for yourself



A sea of meaning *Where the wild things are* Perfect paradox *The art of patience* Root cause *Creative blossom* For the love of art *Down to earth* With care and gratitude *New lease of life*

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Taking shape

Geometry has been part of human symbolism for thousands of years. Today, it's used by designers to inspire, elicit emotion and focus energy. But how can a circle, triangle or square produce these effects? Read on to find out and discover how to channel their unique powers in your own home

Circles

This universal symbol has sacred connotations in almost every culture on Earth. It stirred ancient civilisations to build stone arrangements, carve spirals onto church walls and dance around fires. To the human eye, circles are common in the natural world – from the Sun and Moon to ripples in water and tree rings. Abstract concepts such as the circle of life, the passing of time, eternity, oneness and divine protection are all illustrated using circles. Infinite, inclusive, flowing and whole, they inspire feelings of completeness, togetherness, unity, perfection and love.



Triangles

Have you ever wondered why hazard signs are triangular? Or why images of people conquering mountain tops are often used to symbolise success? Triangles are associated with different attributes according to their position. An example with a broad base feels robust and well-balanced. With its pinnacle at the top, this shape lends itself to ideas of perseverance, achievement and movement, and naturally leads the eye in an upward direction. Conversely, an inverted version with its downward-facing point feels top-heavy, unbalanced, disruptive and risky – hence its use in give way signs on the road.

In the ancient world, triangles were symbols of the masculine and feminine. An upward-pointing one – traditionally called a blade – was associated with ascendant movement, the element of fire and dominant, assertive energies whereas an inverted triangle, usually called a chalice, was associated with downward-flowing movement, the element of water and soft, receptive energies. The shape of this triangle echoes the womb and genitalia of an ancient goddess, and is one of the oldest symbols of feminine divinity.

Squares and rectangles

In ancient times, the square symbolised substantial, earthy and material matters. With its four corners, it also illustrated concepts relating to the number four – seasons, directions and elements. Squares and rectangles, with their orderly lines, right angles, balanced form and mathematical associations inspire feelings of trust and authority. If you've ever felt the urge to tidy things away into neat boxes, you've felt the energy of this shape. On the flip side, too many can feel restrictive and predictable, inspiring an urge to 'think outside the box'.

Sacred geometry

This is the study of ratios, patterns and shapes that appear in the natural world across many different forms, from spiralling seashells and galaxies to hexagonal snowflakes and honeycombs. For ancient people, these patterns were the building blocks of the universe, written in miniature, and they held the secrets of life. With this in mind, they broke them down into mathematical formulas and recreated them in human-made structures, artworks and communities.

Sacred geometry appears in many spiritual traditions – including Judaism's Tree of Life, the Celts' Book of Kells, the Chinese yin-yang symbol and in the Mayan pyramids – and its shapes have long pleased the human eye. The geometrical proportions of the golden ratio, for example, are thought to have informed Leonardo da Vinci's *Mona Lisa*, Salvador Dalí's *Sacrament of the Last Supper* and Piet Mondrian's abstract compositions. According to Adrian Bejan, professor of mechanical engineering at Duke University in North Carolina, the US, the appeal of the golden ratio lies in how it's interpreted by the human eye. 'We're able to decode images based on this arrangement faster than any other. 'When we see the proportions in the golden ratio, we are helped. We feel pleasure, and we call it beauty,' he explains.



Shape up your home

According to London-based interior designer Emily Rose, ancient sacred geometry can be used almost like a contemporary vision board. 'Laying out crystals in a geometric pattern, such as the flower of life, amplifies their power,' she explains. 'It allows us to set intentions and manifest our desires through the power of shape. Try setting out crystals in geometric patterns under glass domes or terrariums in the centre of a room to create a powerful display.'

Emily works with shape in many ways to create balance in the home. 'We all have masculine and feminine energies within us,' she says. 'The more we balance these, externally and internally, the more unity we feel, and the more flow and abundance we attract into our lives.'

'Everything is energy and geometry will impact a space. There's no right or wrong, but you can be clever with it to improve the feeling of a room. When using shapes, do so mindfully, but have fun and enjoy the process. It's all about being creative and expressing what feels right for you to create harmony, balance and calm.'

Don't know where to start? Emily begins her design process by looking at the attributes and constraints of an existing space. Then she brings in colours and shapes to maximise its potential. 'Playing with these aspects of a room can totally change the feel,' she says. 'Take a rectangular room. By painting the shorter walls a shade darker, you make them feel closer, so the space feels more balanced and square.'

'Another tip is to consider the ceiling height in terms of the shape it creates on the wall. To make a room with high ceilings feel cosier and more lowly, consider where the paint line finishes. You can lower the ceiling by painting it and the area above a picture rail the same colour.'

Emily uses lighting to create a similar effect – hanging a low pendant from a tall ceiling dramatically affects the feeling of the

space, drawing the eye down and giving a cosier feel. She also uses shapes to help rooms flow and work in conjunction with each other. 'From an architectural perspective, using shape to create apertures from room to room is always lovely. It's nice to have your eye drawn through a doorway and then outside via a window, for example, or to catch a glimpse of artwork in another room through an archway. This usage creates a kind of architectural pause. You could think of it as punctuation for space.'

Geometry is also important when it comes to accessorising. In a project that involved a long, narrow room and central square chimney breast, Emily looked for opportunities to introduce circles to soften the feel, trick the eye and balance the room's proportions.

'Rugs, tables, artwork, vases, mirrors and lamps – they're all shapes,' says Emily. 'Consider how you lay them out to allow as much flow as possible. If your existing space has lots of dynamic energy – in the form of squares, rectangles, triangles, stars or diamonds – bring in calm and create beautiful contrasts by introducing waves, curves and circles, or vice versa. Don't be afraid to be bold. These are easy things to move around, customise or replace if you have second thoughts.'

'If changing items isn't an option, upcycle them or transform their energy. Sometimes painting furniture or reupholstering a chair can make its shape feel different. If you've got a hard, heavy-feeling timber cupboard, for example, paint it the same colour as the wall, so it softens and blends into the background and doesn't feel so domineering.'

'Whatever you do, use shapes you love,' she says. 'Aim for balance, swap in different textures and materials to have fun with the silhouette in conjunction with space, flow, scale, proportion, texture, colour and material. Look for an even spread of variation, to ease the energy inside of you. That's interior design.'



92

EMILY'S SHAPE-SHIFTING TIPS

• Shake things up by moving 21 items of varying shape around in your home. According to feng shui principles, this moves the energy or chi to create change. Even light decluttering or rearranging can have a significant impact.

• Chevron or herringbone shapes create beautiful patterns on tiles and are a subtle way to make small rooms appear larger. Their directional shape moves the eye along the surfaces. Likewise, using oversized chevrons can downsize a large room.

• Want to shift the energy of your space quickly and powerfully? Use a Merkabah. This shape combines upward and downward facing triangles, placed on top of each other. From early Jewish mysticism, it signifies the union of light, spirit and body. It also symbolises harmony between divine masculine and feminine energies.

• Channel the power of sacred geometry to create a grid spanning the whole of your home. Place crystals in all four corners to feel more grounded.

• Utilise ancient Chinese wisdom and place a wealth vase in the south-east corner of any room in your home – the area that relates to prosperity in feng shui. The curved triangular shape of this vessel allows it to fill up, symbolising abundance.

Words: Judith Hurrell

To find out more about Emily's work, visit emilyroseshomedesign.co.uk

