

Layers



Designer

Nicola Manganello

OF NICOLA'S HOME ON THE POWER OF TEXTURES, PATTERN, AND LIGHT

“I want the inside of the house to reflect the outside—there’s a happiness and an ease to living on the coast and I want my designs to echo that.”



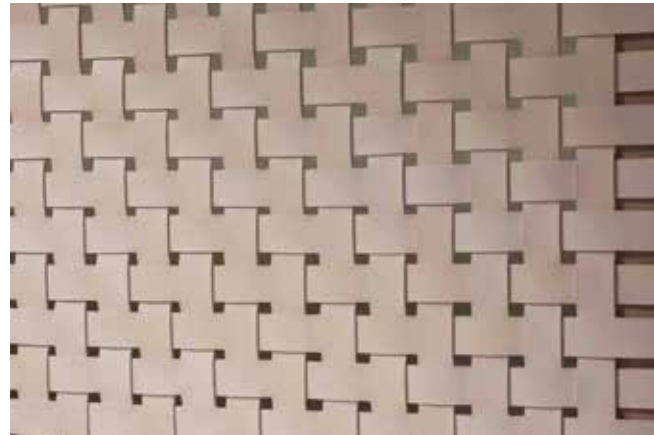
MH+D ASKS MANGANELLO TO TELL US MORE.

Q. You are known for your use of layered textiles and textures. Can you tell us a little about your selection process?

A. Anyone who knows me knows I love pillows and linens. I use them in areas I choose to make cozy. Fabric choices play a big role in achieving that sense of comfort and familiarity. I gravitate toward fabrics from small, boutique brands that have a more vintage feel, with earthy colors that have been hand-dyed and machine-washed for a warm, weathered look and feel.

Since we live in the real world, I use a good amount of family-friendly performance fabrics as well. A great place to use the nice, high-end designer fabrics are pillows. They allow your design to be changed out over time and the client will not tire of it.

Along with the textiles, I bring in pattern and texture through how I use salvaged goods and apply woodwork and wallpaper. All these things introduce texture into what maybe could be considered a very simple room. The next step of the layering process comes in by introducing these elements and using them sparingly, not overdoing it. For example, I love the restored farmhouse look. And I think a beautiful white plaster wall with a striped pine door for either the closet or main door to the room is such a simple, beautiful, sleek look. It's weathered and worn. That really appeals to me, and I think it's appealing to the general public as well. They're responding to that sort of neutral design, but then having fun with the fabrics on the furniture. In bedrooms nowadays, I find I'm heavily layering the bedding with neutrals, but then adding pops of color through quilts, throws, and Euro pillows.



Q. How do you approach the lighting for your spaces?

A. Whether it is natural or artificial, lighting is key to creating ambiance in a home. Not all lighting is meant to be functional; I think some lighting is clearly just created for effect. Lately I find that I'm gravitating toward using more woven fixtures, they seem to be having a moment. When we're doing wide open neutral spaces, the patterns and textures of the natural materials let the light shine through and add another element to our layered design.

I like to let the fixture speak for itself about the way that it wants to light the room. This might be by casting a beautiful pattern of reflection on the ceiling/table or by simply bringing sparkle and reflective qualities. Although if we're talking strategic / task lighting, it's important that the area be well lit for the client. In that situation we introduce secondary lighting. We like using small, recessed lights that are dimmable, so there's still the ability to create ambient lighting for evening.

During the day, natural light is always the best light. When we do our big photo shoots, many of the best photographers do not use or bring in lighting. They let the room speak for itself. This is the reason why, when I design a room, I always think of how it's going to photograph in the natural light. It determines if we drape the windows or use another treatment. It's important that we're not blocking too much light. There are ways of using

the exterior influence of light. This might mean having fewer but larger windows to create more wall space and better light.

Q. What's one element that brings the interior together?

A. I would say a rug. It's where I start in a room: I go from the ground up. If people are struggling with design in their own homes and want to know how to tackle a space, they should start by choosing a rug and then build from there. Often people will find a fabric they love, and they want to design a room around it. I find that is a much harder way to approach design; the fabric will usually end up on the wrong piece, because you make it the biggest thing in the whole room. When you start with a rug, you're often led to a fabric that you love and that works with the overall design.

I think that if people tried this approach, whether it's a bedroom or a living room, they will find that the design is easier to tackle and would naturally come together. You're building on the rug and then you add in the furniture. In essence you start covering up the rug. Then you can bring in other patterns and textures that complement and work well with the rug, and that's when it all starts to really meld and flow. It's at this point that you may find that this fabric you originally loved so much may end up only being used as pillows in the room. Whether it's one room or an entire home, that's how I go. I move from room to room with that sort of methodology.



Q. Any new materials you will be using in 2023?

A. I've noticed a surge of interest in a product I found (dare I say, in the early 2000s) when I was in the very beginning of my career and flipping houses. It's a marine grade rubberized, glue-down product that comes in 18- x 18-inch sheets. The company provides you with a mold-resistant glue so that water or any sort of liquid doesn't permeate this flooring. The floor looks woven in texture (so there you go, texture again) and it comes in a bunch of different colors and patterns. Years ago I used a blue and white striped pattern in my kitchen. It was great when my daughter was young, as well. It's warmer to step on than tile so it's great in bathrooms, mudrooms and basements as well. It's different and I think it works well. I already have it booked into a bunch of jobs.

I am also loving restored Swedish mid-century modern furniture. I took the women who work with me at Nicola's Home to Texas in search of this particular style of furniture. We were lucky enough to find a lot of great pieces which I am excited to incorporate into my designs.

Q. What is the secret to successfully layering patterns and textures?

A. That's a difficult question. Everyone is using Instagram now; you see all kinds of design from super high end to a good do-it-yourself project. I think you can tell when layering goes badly; it's generally obvious. I do layer a lot of patterns, sometimes it can make the room outrageous. I'll take a floral paper from the walls up to the ceiling and then use a variety of patterns on the bedding. I think this approach can be quite dynamic and thought-provoking.

Since I come from an art school background, I am not afraid to try something new. I am always trying to test my boundaries with pattern and texture. Some of my biggest discoveries are made through failure. I'm constantly learning how to push my design and try new things. How to layer well is learned over time. I hope that's what people see when they see my designs layering wallpaper, rugs, and lighting, and patterns, woven baskets, and different materials inside a space.



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