

White on White Color Scheme



You know I find it interesting that in the hundreds of rooms that Matt and I have decorated, we've only done one room in a simple white on white color scheme. Or I guess I should say it was decorated in an off-white on off-white color scheme.

It was a lovely guest bedroom with a string look on the walls, soft sheer fabric at the windows, and layers of creamy bed coverings and pillows on the bed.

In contrast, a black wrought iron four poster bed with black painted furniture pieces and wrought iron lighting gave the room depth and drama. So, simple though it sounds, a white on white scheme can be a challenge and does take some planning. Here's what we did to create a very successful white on white scheme.

We started with texture and painted the room's walls in a string look, also called a combing technique. To create a look like this in your white on white room, start with a light off-white paint in a semi-gloss finish for your base coat. Once the base coat is dry, roll on a couple of roller widths of your topcoat color, which is slightly deeper than the base coat.

Your topcoat should be a satin finish, so the walls don't end up too shiny. Then, immediately start pulling the "comb," which is a window squeegee cut in a saw tooth pattern, through your topcoat color, creating a string like pattern. After you've pulled through the paint several times, wipe off the squeegee, roll on a couple more widths of paint, and continue "combing" the walls. Don't stop in the middle of a wall, because you don't want your topcoat to dry and leave a heavy overlap line.

For the windows, wrought iron drapery rods made sense because they matched the wrought iron bed, and they added contrast. We simply measured from the floor to the top of the rod and back to the floor, added one more yard, and cut our pretty off white sheer fabric.

This no-sew treatment allowed us to drape the fabric over the rod, pull the front half of the fabric to one side and the back fabric to the other, then dress it onto wrought iron tie backs. Our tie backs were mounted unevenly, so the overall look of the finished window treatment was asymmetrical, but very soft because of the excess fabric pooled on the wood floor.



Selecting the bedding was fun and easy, knowing we needed lots of cream, texture, and a variety of layers. We started with a cream dust ruffle and cream sheets on the bed. A single coverlet and two different cream pillow shams added to the variety. Cream on cream patterned accessory pillows finished the bed off with flair.

One of the best ways to create drama in a room is to select an accent color that is in total contrast to the main color of the room. Well, you can't get much farther away from the white families, than with black. The beautifully thin posts of the wrought iron bed add strong but controlled contrast to the room.

Matt and I chose to add simple side tables painted black with natural wood tops. We used black wrought iron for lighting accents, and the dark antique trunk offered more than just additional contrast. For a guest room, it's the perfect place to greet guests with a basket of gifts. Try luxury bath products, or reading material ... of course we thought that homemade chocolate chip cookies would be the best way to say "welcome!"



On the opposite side of the room, we added a 48-inch black wall shelf mounted at about 24 inches off the floor. It held a couple of wrought iron sculptural pieces and some books and magazines. We placed a wrought iron and woven rattan chair in the corner, with a very large multi-colored abstract painting above the shelf. In this position, the wild punch of color was an unexpected surprise once you entered and then turned around in the room.

So, in short, to have a simple white on white ... done right, you need texture, pattern, layering, variety, contrast, and something a little unexpected. Once again, the things that look and sound the easiest...aren't. However, once you master the subtle nuances that define a white on white room, any other color scheme will seem elementary.

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