

ENTICING COLOURS OF THE ORIENT

Colour consultant Samantha Bacon helps us harness the exotic and dramatic design elements of the Far East to create comfortable and elegant interiors.



The ancient Silk Road opened up the exotic influences of the East to Europe and for many centuries country homes were graced with delicate artefacts from China. Magnificent silks, just one of the many prized treasures traded along this route, brought refinement and elegance to many decorated rooms. Fabrics with oriental themes of birds, flowers and landscapes were very popular in the Georgian and Empire era and many designers, including Thomas Chippendale, incorporated elements of Chinese design into their furniture. It is therefore no accident that the motifs, designs and colours of the Orient work so well in modern country-style homes.

The colour red is most auspicious in Chinese culture and symbolises good luck, joy and vitality. Rich reds that contain more blue are also believed to bring money and recognition. The pairing of black and red is synonymous with Chinese design, and these two hues are often seen in many beautifully lacquered and handpainted pieces of furniture, their deep tones combining successfully to create a mood that is unmistakably oriental. An introduction of yellow or gold to this palette works well, as it's an uplifting hue that cuts through the intensity of red and black.

▲ Try your own mix of rich colours with Eastern influences. Shown here, Kewick bookcase, Henshaw desk, Carver chair, Murphy Anglepoise lamp – with Marciana rug in cranberry and Lori wallpaper in cranberry – all from Laura Ashley.

Laura Ashley recently rediscovered patterns in its archives that have inspired an oriental theme in the latest catalogue. Fabrics, furniture and wallpaper in gold, cranberry and black are combined to create a classic-country-style scheme with an eastern oriental influence. Porter's Paints have some excellent colours to suit this look, including Chinese Firecracker, Riverstone and Silk Road. The key to ensuring this palette doesn't become too overbearing is to use the reds and blacks for upholstery, furniture, accessories and window dressings, and use lighter yellows on the walls and off-white for the ceiling. Dark-stained floorboards work well with this look, or try lighter yellow-based carpets as an alternative.