

## THE FEAR OF COLOR

This is the first part of a two-part series on Color for your home. This week, color palletes and how to determine your decorating style are discussed. Next week, learn about the feng shui of color and check out this season's color forecast.

Many elements go into making a beautiful room. One of the most important is color; certainly it is the one we can most easily control, often with profound results. The effect of painting a room is far greater than simply coloring the walls. The color interacts with light and all the other elements in a setting to create an atmosphere. This in turn has direct bearing on something intangible yet real: how we feel when we're in the room.

The number one fear in home design: choosing color. The thought of having to choose color can make the most courageous break out into a cold sweat. Making paint decisions at the paint store is like grocery shopping when you're starving—NOT a good idea.

There are hundreds of samples in paint displays because you're supposed to take them with you and make these critical decisions in the comfort of your home, where the color will actually end up. This seems obvious, but you'd be surprised how many people put themselves on the spot in the paint store and try to make decisions in that distracting environment. They ask the opinion of an employee who has never been in their home, and probably worked in the lumber department the day before. They end up playing it safe and arrive at home with white, beige or nothing. How many of you can identify yourselves with this story?

We hide behind white because we think it's safe. To compensate for lack of color, we spend thousands of dollars on upholstery, rugs, window treatments, and accessories to keep our interiors from looking cold and sterile. You will forever be fighting to make your rooms look warm and inviting if you don't paint with color! Even museums hire color consultants to advise them on complementary colors that will enhance the artworks and make their galleries less intimidating.

White creates hard-to-deal-with contrast. Dark wood furniture appears darker against white, and rich accent colors and fabrics turn into black holes in a white room. Accessories are left to float in space against white, and we place the burden on them to bring a room together. By contrast, the proper wall color can unite a room, showcase your objects and work wonders for the ambiance.

Only in some exceptional cases will a white room work. If you want a Manhattan loft feel, if you live close to the water and the house is flooded with light, or if you're seeking a post-modern, monochromatic look, then use white. But keep in mind that there are hundreds of shades of white. The warmer the white, the better the look. If you want a room to be white but without glaring, a pale beige will look white on the wall. White accepts natural light better and is more flattering to skin tones.

### HOW TO MAKE THE RIGHT PAINT DECISIONS

At the paint store, select a handful of swatches in a color range you might like and that is present in the furnishings you already have in your home. If you're interested in blue, take home all the color swatches in blue shades. Find a quiet moment when you have time to sit down and play with the colors. Start by putting color combinations together that are pleasing to your eye. Rarely settle for your first arrangement. Let colors sit out for a few days, walk by now and then and rearrange them until you go back to the same colors. Discard colors that you don't like, and by the process of elimination you will be left with a handful of colors that please you.

This process works. Given the right atmosphere, it's amazing how we all instinctively have a sense of color. Without knowing it, we are subconsciously reacting to color every day. It could be a flower, a shade of lipstick, or simply the sky. We're so used to living in a world of color that we take it for granted. By giving the selection process plenty of time, you will feel more secure in the choices you make. Remember, in the end, if it doesn't look right, or if you feel you made a big mistake, you can always re-work the colors and/or repaint the room.

### When a White Palette Is Your Pick

Remember that white has no color pigments, but variations on a neutral white tone is very elegant.

The keys to make a white-on-white monochromatic palette interesting are diversity of tones—from deeper shades to lighter tints—as well as texture and pattern.



When selecting paint, upholstery, flooring, draperies, and accessories, include a range of whites, from pure and cool to creamy and warm. Add interest to the palette by incorporating white-on-white patterns and using contrasting textures on the fabrics of your choice.

A white foundation fades into the background and places importance on the colorful art and toss pillows on the upholstery group. Because white places a supporting role—the bold artwork and toss pillows create a focal point—the textural and intensity changes of the color are less important. The black wrought iron coffee table grounds the furniture arrangement.



A warm white sofa supports a trio of toss pillows in golden hues, showing how white can be very inviting, even in cold climates. The sense of coziness in this living-room is amplified with the addition of textural elements and warm tones: the natural rug, napped-fiber upholstery and wood accents.



## Understanding the Use of Color

Perhaps the biggest mistake people make in choosing color is not knowing the difference between a background color and an accent color. As women we understand cosmetic terms, so think of the background color as the foundation you put on your face and the accent color as your lipstick, eye shadow or your blush. Wall color is

designed to show off accessories in your room and accent color is designed to call attention to one particular color tone you like, one that depicts one of the accessories you chose to stand out amongst all the others.

Here is a cautionary tale to exemplify the difference between background color and accent color: There was a time when jewel tones—deep, royal colors—were all over. People bought into the trend and painted their walls in these bright accent colors, rather than in more suitable background shades. When it came time to add accessories, they had no place to go. That cobalt blue vase was the same color as the wall, and rather than adding a splash of color to the room, this accessory simply disappeared. The goal of the background color is to find the most neutral shade that goes with everything you have and love. By choosing a neutral shade and a background color that is evidently abundant amongst your furnishings, a tone-on-tone of that particular color shade, you will always succeed in bringing the best out of your furnishings and accessories. From palest to deepest, every color has its most neutral shade. Find the most neutral shade of that color that is the most versatile.

Color-Understanding the How to Read the Paint Fan

Ref. Sherwin Williams paint fan deck

## How to Use the Paint Fan



Most manufacturers offer at least seven paint strips in every color grouping. On each paint strip there are six to eight shades ranging from very light to very dark. Each of the color groupings is in a specific order. Find those six to seven tones you like, say you like green, find those six to seven green strips, and the most neutral green strip is almost always in the middle. So, if there are seven strips, choose the fourth strip. Ta-da! It's that simple. The green strip located in the middle of the group is the most influenced by all the colors. Reread this paragraph until you absorb it.

Now you are holding a single paint strip containing some six to eight green shades ranging from very pale to very dark green. If you've chosen the correct and most neutral strip, the green shades should have a muted, dusty quality to them. The color may look a little subdued to you, but remember it's a background color (accent colors come later). In makeup terms you're about to put on your foundation, with the eye and lip colors to come later.

It's about time to pick three colors from your neutral paint

# Home Solutions

strip for the walls, ceiling, and trim. On your neutral paint strip there are usually two very light shades, two medium shades, and two dark shades. For the walls, go to the two medium shades on your paint strip. Paint the walls the darkest of the medium shades in a flat finish. It may look dark on the strip but once the color is up on the walls it will look more like the lighter of those two medium colors. Trust me!

You must paint the ceilings, too. Introducing rich color on the walls while leaving the ceiling white will make your room look as if you've spread a big bed sheet over it. The ceiling will actually seem lower if left white. If your ceilings are lower, paint the ceiling two shades lighter than the wall color also in a flat finish. If your ceilings are 9' or 2.80 meters or higher, paint them one shade darker than the wall color. By using two shades of the same color for your walls and ceiling, the light will now reflect evenly throughout the room.

The very lightest color on your swatch is for the trim (moldings, doors, windows, and built-ins); use semi-gloss or eggshell, unless your intention is to create a traditional American Colonial look. I recommend keeping the trim color light. This will attract the eye out through your windows and doors, rather than creating a visual barrier. Darker trim colors, including natural wood, can often look cartoonish, while light trim is fresh, crisp, and contemporary.

And if you live in a one story home or in a home with multiple floors, and you want to integrate the rooms using color, use the same color palette throughout the home. So, in order to bring interest to the different rooms using the same color tones or the same colors, take the wall color from the previous room and make it the ceiling color. Or take the ceiling color and make it the wall color, but always keep the trim color the same throughout the home.

Hopefully, after reading and re-reading the steps on how to use the paint fan, you will feel confident enough to lose your white walls. If you have been living with white walls for a long time, the first stroke of the roller might give you a heart attack. This is natural. Don't make judgments about your color choices until all references to white are out of the room. Only then will you have a clear vision of what the room will look like. Warn, wary loved ones, too—there's no sense getting a divorce over color. Wait until your project is finished and then assess your work. Make sure to take before and after pictures as a picture can speak for a thousand words!

## Selecting a Paint Finish

The LUSTER, or FINISH of paint can dr

FINISH



amatically affect the way a completed room will look. Along with color, it is one of the important elements to be considered in the process of figuring out your space. Often walls and ceilings are painted in a flat (matte) finish, with higher-gloss paints used for doors and detail work such as moldings. There are no hard and fast rules, however; it is a matter of personal preference—and what looks good to your eye in the space.

Paint with a flat (matte) finish is duller and will tend to make surfaces visually recede; more glossy paints appear brighter and harder and tend to visually advance. The flatter the finish, the greater the illusion of depth. Especially in a flat paint with full-spectrum pigmentation, there is a feeling of a dematerialized surface, a softer plane whose exact distance from your eye is difficult to determine. With higher-gloss paints, surfaces become visually harder. A shinier finish is often appropriate for window or door frames and emphasizes the difference between their structural purpose and the adjoining plaster walls. Flat paint can make a decorative crown molding, regardless of its material, look more plaster like and reveal more delicate detail.

High gloss paint is a great luxury, requiring the most preparation and application time. But surprisingly, it can be an exception to the "flatter the finish, the greater the depth" rule. By bouncing so much light off its surface, high gloss can also be an effective way to disguise an imperfect surface. Between these two extremes, it is usually safer to stay as close to flat on walls and ceilings as practical considerations allow.

For woodwork and trim, higher-sheen products are problematic: oils will yellow over time; latexes (water-based) dry too fast to level out and, when viewed up close, show plastic-looking textures of brush or roller marks. In general, eggshell, pearl, and satin are sheens that will wear well and look good.

Choosing the right finish can be confusing since labels on paint cans often don't reflect the actual finish.

Below is a listing of kinds of finishes in order of increasing shininess:

- Matte or flat enamel
- Eggshell, low-luster, or angular sheen
- Pearl
- Satin or soft gloss
- Semi-gloss
- Gloss, high gloss, and/or lacquer

See Home Solutions, continued on page 30



## DECORATING STYLE

Every change of season brings about change in us and the urge to change our environment to reflect the season.

When it comes to planning your home décor you might feel lost, a little insecure and nervous about taking that daring step to spend the money and make that long-talked-about CHANGE of color and style!

Bring change to your home by adding color that you love to wear. You won't go wrong there! Look in your jewelry box, purse or closet. Do you dress for casual comfort or love to dress up in elegant styles? What colors make you happy, content, serene or energized? Do you love bold patterns and strong color contrast or are you drawn to classic patterns and time-tested color schemes? Take note of which décor magazines and stores inspire your style. True personal style reflects your changing life experiences. What you will like now is based on past experiences. What you will like in the future is based on the look you're building right now.

### YOUR STYLE EXPLORATION:

To discover what you really like, start by gathering objects, colors and patterns that draw you in or elicit a strong positive response.

The objects you collect could include a leaf gathered on a walk, a photo pulled from a magazine, a postcard, a paint chip or fabric sample, a vintage button, pages from decorating books or magazines or a funny greeting card. Keep your options open and leave the editing for later. Right now you're in the business of uncovering the style that's personally yours.

As you gather the objects glue them in a scrapbook. Carry them with you wherever you go so that it can be used as a reference when you are ready to make buying decisions.

What do your objects say about you? Look for consistent elements such as colors, shapes, patterns, textures, and scale that turn up again and again. Study the mood of the objects you collected. Are they romantic, playful, creative, classic, rich, simple, graphic or serene? Ask a few friends to interpret your style concept so that you have an outsider's objective opinion.

Continue the process of discovering your style by answering questions similar to the ones asked below. There are no right or wrong answers. Also consider answering the questions that begin each thought in your mind. Keep a list of your responses to help your style story unfold.

### DISPLAYED ON YOUR WALLS YOU HAVE:

Several framed pictures of family and friends  
Only on or two items  
Items that follow a theme (chickens, topiaries, fruit)  
Prints that are commonly found in large department stores  
Original art pieces by people you know

### YOUR KITCHEN COUNTER IS USUALLY:

Very clean – you can't stand to have anything out  
Cluttered – a display of old cookie jars and cookbooks  
Congested – full of random kitchen gadgets and a TV  
Covered in dishes, pots and pans

### WHAT ITEM IS MOST PREVALENT IN YOUR HOME?

Books and magazines  
Baskets and candles  
Photographs  
Clutter

### ONE ITEM YOU BRING BACK FROM A TRIP IS:

A stack of pictures

A good tan  
A souvenir sweatshirt  
A one-of-a-kind piece of local art

### WHAT'S YOUR FAVORITE COLOR SCHEME?

Neutral – beige, tans, black and white  
Warm – reds and yellows  
Cool – Blues and Greens  
A variety of color schemes

### WHAT TRAIT DO YOU VALUE MOST IN YOUR HOME?

Creative influence  
Aesthetic value and style  
Physical comfort  
Emotional sanctuary

### WHEN DO YOU SHOP FOR DECORATIVE OBJECTS FOR THE HOUSE:

Anything goes – if you like it you buy it  
It's erratic – depends on timing and finances  
It's hectic – you would rather pick for only a few selections  
It's slow and deliberate – you search for the right thing

### IF YOU HAD A BIT OF EXTRA MONEY, YOU WOULD:

Buy new expensive bedding just for you  
Buy whatever strikes you in the first store you see  
Treat yourself to a small cappuccino and put the rest away in a savings account  
Go on a trip.

Even if you are planning on getting help to bring your desires to life, you will need to delve deep inside to find out what your personal style is.

If you find yourself attracted by a variety of styles, you should learn how to create an eclectic style that incorporates a range of looks without it feeling fractured.

If you find yourself even more lost and unmotivated to continue to search for your personal style, start by grouping all the different objects you have been collecting. Give each of the groups (or the looks separated into groups) a name pairing them up with colors and fabrics swatches that you feel look better in each of the groups you created. Compare the elements collected, compare the groups and use your best judgment to select the group that represents more of what you like, the group that most closely supports your decorating dreams.

If you find yourself back to the same color, pattern, the same look you have had for years and years in your home you should embrace it. If a single color or pattern exerts a strong emotional pull, it's sure to provide the foundation for a look that's right for you.

If you feel you need to consult a professional to help you narrow your choices and find your personal style contact Category of 1 Interiors at 233, Shan Xi Nan Road on the corner of Yong Jia Road (5466-0222). Interior Designers Bya Patzner (bpatzner@categoryof1interiors.com) and Luke Van Duyn (lduyn@categoryof1interiors.com) will be happy to schedule an appointment with you.

**Bring your AWCS Spirit magazine along with your Scrap Book and receive a 10% discount on the consultation fee.**

Reference to the article written above taken from New Decorating Book – Better Homes and Gardens, Meredith Books Des Moines, Iowa, U.S.A.