

H O M E

+GARDEN

# Design

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This stately and wholesome-colored abode is just a shocking-pink throw pillow away from outright madness.



REID NEUBERT

## Your true colors

Psychoanalyzed by the spectrum? Well, color us impressed...

BY SHELLEY SHEPHERD KLANER

*'I think it pisses God off if you walk by the color purple in a field somewhere and don't notice it.'*

—Alice Walker

Some say the color of the car you drive and the paint you choose for your walls says a lot about your personality. The psychology of color has been studied and it has been found color not only affects mood, it relates directly to individual style and even has cultural significance.

Mike Galatolo, a custom color expert and owner of ColorFast in Novato, sees a direct correlation to the personalities of his customers buying paint and the colors they choose. "The outspoken, flamboyant

person will have color everywhere," he says, and "the more relaxed individual will stick with earthy green colors and pastels." Men are more prone to choose something basic such as off-white or Navajo white.

So if you drive a red sports car, red is the most emotionally intense color. According to the California Design College, red stimulates a faster heartbeat and breathing and red cars are popular targets for thieves. In decorating it is usually used as accent color and red furniture attracts attention.

When choosing paint colors about 70 percent of people entering a paint store have some idea of what color they are leaning toward, Galatolo says. Most homeowners play off a piece of art, furniture or carpet

colors. "To many people color choice is very important. It's personal."

Galatolo says he is seeing more bold colors than he has seen in years, finding the colorful change "fun." Recently, the trend has been toward warmer tones, with yellow, red, mahogany and wheat shades popular, as well as the more earthy shades such as oatmeal and sage green.

But what is really hot are pinks and turquoise. "It's the '70s all over again," Galatolo says. "I wouldn't be surprised to see plaid bell-bottoms and Afros back in."

A home Galatolo visited that was recently remodeled had a brand new kitchen, featuring turquoise appliances. "It was a new kitchen that looked like *Leave it to Beaver* and they are loving it," he laughs.

Thinking about painting a room pink and afraid it won't turn out well? Galatolo points out it only costs \$25 to \$30 to paint a room; you can't even buy a bedspread or sheets for that. "It's an easy fix," he says if the color doesn't work: "just paint over the top."

He advises basic rules that can prevent the need to repaint. People get tired most often of red, > 24

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## HOME + GARDEN DESIGN

◀ 23 Your true colors

yellow and blue. Orange usually can become tiresome the first month. Yellows are questionable; nine out of 10 yellow shades need to be cut in half from what the swatch indicates to show up the color expected.

He also recommends avoiding the cookie-cutter type of room layout from the '60s and '70s, when each room was a different color with a different shade of carpet, making a house look chopped up. The best formula is to paint all of the ceilings in the house the exact same color, as well as the trim, with off white the best shade. This uniformity makes a home more consistent as well as works better in today's open floor plans. If off-white doesn't appeal, use 25 percent of the shade of the wall color as the ceiling color.

If figuring out what color to paint the walls is too much of a challenge you can always call a color consultant. Though, to some, the use of color consultants for psychoanalysis is dubious.

Architectural color consultant Moira O'Sullivan in San Rafael would beg to differ. She has helped homeowners, as well as architects and interior designers select interior and exterior paint colors for the past 11 years. Prior to that she painted murals, and worked in faux finishing and glazing, helping her hone her skills to know how light affects paint colors and how paint reacts to walls.

When O'Sullivan takes on a new project she will first learn who her clients are—touring their home, experiencing their furniture and color choices, as well as whether their tastes lean toward contemporary, country or modern. She also looks at cabinetry, counter tops and carpeting to see how the whole house ties together and how it flows. "I am there to help my clients get the best environment for their homes," O'Sullivan says.

The color consultant's biggest compliment came from a Belvedere client who told her their architect said she "used color appropriately." O'Sullivan explains color is subjective and each is interpreted in a certain way. Her goal is longevity, choosing colors that will appeal through the years.

Choosing the correct colors may be more important than we think. In 1976 Rikard Kuller conducted a study on the effects of color. Six men and six women were asked to stay in two rooms, one more colorful and complex, and one more gray and sterile. EEGs and pulse rates were recorded as well as the feelings of the participants. Results showed heart rates were faster in the gray room than the colorful room. Men became more stressed and more bored in the gray room than women did.

One study found weight lifters perform better in blue rooms and another study found babies cry more in yellow rooms.

Colors don't only have psychological implications they also have cultural significance. In India, blue is associated with Krishna, green with Islam, red with fertility (used as a wedding color) and white with mourning. In most Asian countries, yellow is the imperial color. In China, red is symbolic of celebration,

luck and prosperity and white is linked to death and mourning. In Europe, colors are more strongly associated with political parties than in the U.S. In many countries, black means conservatism and in Western culture is associated with death. Red is linked to socialism and brown is related to the Nazis.

Colors are also associated with seasons, such as red and green during the Christmas season, and orange and black at Halloween.

Here are some tips on using colors in home decorating as well as what they mean:

### White

White reflects light and is considered a summer color. It is popular in decorating because it is light and offers a neutral palette. But white shows dirt and is more difficult to keep clean than other colors. White aids mental clarity, encourages clearing out clutter, and enables fresh beginnings. Other neutral tones such as ivory, cream and off-white also can be warm and turn rooms into havens.

### Blue

Blue is one of the most popular colors as it is peaceful and tranquil, the color of the sky and the ocean. Because of its calming reaction it is often used in bedrooms and is particularly good for teenager's rooms to help them study. Not all blues are serene, they can also be cold and depressing, but people tend to be more productive in blue rooms. Be careful when combining pale blue with white as a room can look like a baby nursery. Use rich neutrals like chocolate brown.

### Green

Green symbolizes nature and is one of the most popular decorating colors. Green is the color of peace and ecology. It is calming and refreshing. Hospitals use green because it relaxes patients. People waiting to go on TV sit in "green rooms" to relax. Green also alleviates depression, nervousness and anxiety.

### Yellow

People lose their tempers more in yellow rooms and babies cry more. It is the most difficult color for the eye to take in, but it enhances concentration and speeds metabolism.

It also encourages conversation. In using bright yellow, it is important to pair it with a quieter hue as not to overwhelm.

### Purple

Purple equals luxury and wealth, but since it is rare in nature it appears artificial. Purple is uplifting, calms the mind and nerves, encourages creativity and offers a sense of spirituality.

### Brown

The color of earth—it says stability, reliability and offers a feeling of wholesomeness and orderliness.

### Gray

It is timeless, practical and solid. Gray mixes well with any color, but people rarely mention it as their favorite color and it is associated with loss and depression.

### Black

Can be an authoritative and powerful color that evokes strong emotions but can be overwhelming. \*

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