

## Rooms with a Hue

Everyone, it seems, is in the mood for color. “I’ve seen such an embracing of color,” says Sonu Mathew, interior designer and associate color marketing manager for Benjamin Moore. “Color is not just being put on the walls, but we’re seeing it in larger points of purchase like automobiles and even sofas. When we see a lot of industries taking on color, that means it will be there for quite some time.” Debbie Zimmer, decorative painting consultant with the Rohm and Haas Paint Quality Institute, agrees that color is a very evident trend. She points to color being used now for washers and dryers, and even air conditioning units, products that in the past were traditionally white or beige

But why is color so important? Color consultant Paula Pavlik is passionate when she says, “It’s what creates atmosphere. Color is light and light is color. From a beautiful autumn day to the color of your child’s hair, it strikes a chord in everyone.” “The color is the space and the space has now become who you are, what you like, how you want to feel, and how you want your guests to feel,” says Michelle Pergeau, interior designer and professor at Oakland Community College. And Mathew believes color helps us communicate physically, emotionally and socially.

### Color yourself happy

Color choice can be a conundrum—it’s such an emotional issue. Do you look to the trends to guide you? Cheryl Nestro, owner of Tutto in Northville and a color expert, says, “Choose the color that makes you feel good.” “I believe that a living space, a personal space, should really be that. And if blue isn’t in vogue, but you love it, go ahead and use it,” says Zimmer. What if you aren’t in touch with your inner color child? “Most people wear their favorite color,” says Zimmer. “So if you don’t know where to begin, take a look inside your closet.” Mathew says to look even further. “If there’s a photograph, a painting you’re particularly drawn to, even food that you love to eat or jewelry you can’t live without, use them for inspiration.” “It’s always good to go through magazines...to get a feeling of what you’re going to respond to,” says Pavlik. And Nestro asks her clients to go to fabric stores and just grab the fabrics that catch their eye. “If you love those fabrics, it’s because you love the color,” she says.

Hmmm...your wardrobe consists mainly of black; living with rich, chocolate brown will have you craving fudge ripple; and those piles of clippings from magazines are leaving you more confused than ever? “Spend money on a professional that understands color, and put faith in them,” Nestro says. Pergeau agrees: “A design professional can help you by objectively evaluating what’s correct for the desired mood and size of the space.” So forgo your massage, and hire a color consultant. At about fifty dollars an hour, it’s far less expensive than hiring a psychologist to draw out your deepest color desires.

Of course, if you are working around furnishings that will stay in the room, take your color cues from them. Swatch the window coverings, the sofa, the rug, and take those color swatches to where you’re going to buy your paint. Run them along the color chip samples, and see what jumps out at you. Talk to the person behind the counter for ideas. Hopefully you’ll fall in love—with a color.

### **Up against a wall?**

Because one color affects another, it's counter-productive to paint several hues next to each other on a wall "Do not take different cans of paint and splash one-by-one-foot color swatches on the wall. What you're going to do is make yourself even more confused," says Nestro. But once you've narrowed down your choice to one color, buy a quart and try it out. "Either paint it in two-foot-square blocks in the room, on several walls, or paint boards and move those boards around the room," says Zimmer. "And really live with that color for several days. That way you'll be able to see it in the daylight, in the evening, with the particular lighting in your house."

And consider how the color in one room affects the color in adjacent rooms. "I usually recommend that a homeowner decide on a general color or scheme for every room of the home, at the same time. It helps them see how it will feel to visually adjust their eye from one color to the next, especially in spaces that openly flow into one another," says Pergeau. "Whether they're really seen from one area of the house or not, I think an overall palette is very important," says Pavlik. "I like the idea of knowing that the colors flow together."

### **You're at the finish line**

There's more to picking paint than just the color. You have to decide what level of sheen you would like. Sheen, or shine, ranges from "dead flat" to "high gloss." (See sidebar "Finishing Touch") Opinions vary on what sheen works best where, but the general rule of thumb is the higher the sheen, the higher the durability...and the more visible any flaws in the surface.

### **Trending toward color**

So, what are the color trends? "Perhaps the trend is using color where we once used white, or using color in unexpected areas—maybe that's the trend. The choice of color should be a personal decision," says Zimmer. Despite that, Zimmer and the Rohm and Haas Paint Quality Institute do have a point of view. "With the fall coming, we may see a bit more in some of those deep tones, the chocolate browns. I suspect we wouldn't see as much of the tropical feel." Pavlik says, "The really bright colors I believe will give way to shades that are 'grayed down' more. Much as I love color, I find this is much more livable. Grey is a color. So is beige." "In spring, the color that was really hot was blue. But in this area, I've done a lot of browns and mochas and antique golden colors. One of the homes I'm working with now, the fabrics are all in the blue family, like robin's egg blue, with chocolate browns. Beautiful," says Nestro. Zimmer says, "I believe the chocolate browns will continue to grow, heading toward that combination purple-brown of an eggplant color." Zimmer also believes that purple will have a revival in 2006, paired perhaps with any of the blues or greens. And orange will continue to be important. "It's going to become more rust like, more terra cotta like," says Zimmer. "I think we'll see an incorporation of gray into the neutral palette. Think about that color purple. Purplish-gray—now wouldn't that make for an interesting ceiling color?" Only if you love it...

For Mathew, color is empowering: “When you use color and you walk into a room and it’s a color you feel personally very strong about, it gives you a connection to your home. It further improves your quality of life and makes you feel like you really own that space and there’s not another space like it.”

Expressive. Empowering. Emotional. Choose your mood, and put yourself in it, with color.

### **The Language of Color**

From Sonu Mathew, ASID, IIDA, Associate Color Marketing Manager for Benjamin Moore

Hue: another word for color

Tone: amount of gray in a hue

Shade: adding black to a hue (Hot Apple Spice 2005-20 is a shade of Ravishing Red 2008—10)

Tint: adding white to a hue (Powder Pink 2009—70 is a tint of Ravishing Red 2008—10)

Value: the relative lightness or darkness of a hue.

Intensity: brightness or dullness of a hue

### **Painting Without Brushes**

Benjamin Moore offers helpful visualizing tools through their website, [www.benjaminmoore.com](http://www.benjaminmoore.com)

One is a program called Personal Color Viewer 2.0, which allows you to experiment with color digitally. The professional version, on CD, allows you to import your own digital photos so you can apply your color choices and get a feel for how they would work in your home. You can purchase it online or through your Benjamin Moore retailer. The website version is similar, but you can’t import your own photos.

The second tool, called Color Makeover, is a new color consulting program. Using either Personalized Color Concepts (free) or Personalized Color Rendering, (\$34.95), you receive color recommendations developed by Benjamin Moore color experts. In the case of the Personalized Color Rendering, you’re provided with a full color printout of your project (you provide the photo of your space) showing placement of colors on your walls.

### **Finishing Touch**

The sheen is the reflective quality of the paint, and like everything else, it really comes down to your personal preference.

(Dead) Flat: no sheen; hides imperfections the best; designers tend to love the velvety look, but it’s not very durable for high traffic areas

Best used on ceilings, and walls in living rooms, bedrooms; good on older walls or walls with less-than-perfect drywall

Washable Flat: Almost an unnoticeable sheen, more washable than flat through the use of ceramic bead technology

Use wherever you would like to use flat, but need some durability; may look flatter in the darker hues than acrylic flat does; doesn't have the chalkboard feel of flat

Eggshell: Has an angular sheen, so light reflects back; looking straight at it, it appears flat  
Many people use this paint everywhere, except ceilings

Satin: Shinier than Eggshell, though amount of sheen varies among manufacturers  
Can be used effectively on trim; some use it as an alternative to semi gloss

Semi gloss: More sheen than Satin, but less than Gloss  
Useful in areas with high moisture or more direct use of surfaces, such as bathrooms and kitchens; good for trim

Gloss: Very shiny and durable; shows every imperfection  
Used mostly on trim to accent architectural detailing; can be used to achieve special effects; one designer stated: "I think that should be saved for marine craft."

*Trend tip: "We've started to see a lot of this patterning, where you're using the same color but you're using it in different sheen levels to offset stripes or circles, or any kind of graphic pattern," says Sonu Mathew of Benjamin Moore.*

### **Boxing Hydrangea**

Paula Pavlik, color consultant, suggests that for color consistency when using deeper hues, you take a tip from the pros: "Contractors have a term they call 'boxing the paint.' Get an empty paint can from the store, or an empty 5-gallon bucket, and just pour the cans of paint together, especially if you're coming down to half a gallon. Mix the paint so you're not going to start in the middle of a wall with a fresh gallon and have the color be slightly off."

Sources:

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