

## **What's in a Name? Everything, When You Talk About Color.**

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Shhhh, did you know the 70's are back. It's true. While you thought you were enjoying the advent of moss, sage, and khaki in combination with canyon, moon glow, and horizon, really it is just the renaissance of avocado and gold. Shocking, I know, but it is all in the marketing and hence the semantics. Imagine that you have chosen a delicious chocolate brown for your den walls, certainly sounds more appetizing than dirt, doesn't it? But, really one man's dirt is another's chocolate, it is all in the perception and the naming.

The paint companies have been at it for years; we just don't pay close attention. Benjamin Moore, one of my favorites, did an interesting market test back in the 1950's. One of their top selling colors to that time was called "ivory." Suddenly sales dropped off, go figure; well I know I'm not putting some color reminiscent of dishwashing liquid on my walls. So they got smart and tinkered with the name, not the formula. Renamed "Oriental silk" it is still their number one, best selling, paint color today!

How many of you are disconcerted when a paint color is nameless, with only a number to go on?? I know at least a few, because I have on occasion concocted my own monikers for colors, when pressed by a client, unwilling to commit to just a number. Suddenly 1072 becomes "toast" and 1346 takes on "cinnabar." We all seek the romance of the right words to define and detail our lives, and assuredly our homes are no different.

Many, I am sure, have passed up a color because of its name, not its look. So get creative, maybe cardinal red isn't your preference, but crimson tide is. Or perhaps you feel green at the sound of sea foam but mention silvered willow and new possibilities open. We all have our buttons, and names do make a difference. While mauve still has a bad rap, twilight doesn't (oh and by the way, rumor has it, mauve is making a come back, so look out!) Few people are interested in painting a room orange, but Chinese red or Sunkist sound pretty terrific. Beige is boring, but hint o'gold has promise. Get out your thesaurus and have some fun. Certainly when it comes to kids colors, it is a breeze with cotton candy pink, sky blue, Pacman orange, and so on.

The psychology behind color is not limited to its name, but the name does create an association based on experience. Consider buttercup yellow, it sounds warm, sunny, and cheery. Yellow is an excellent hue to use in interior spaces lacking windows, such as dark foyers and hallways, it mimics or gives the illusion of sunlight. On the other hand, studies have shown that babies will cry more in a yellow room than any other color (this is intense yellow, not butter.)

In discussing red, one may consider the expression "seeing red," this refers to the increase in heart rate associated with the color and the same reaction when angry. Red also is known to stimulate the appetite (the Chinese, Mexicans and Italians all use it well in their restaurants.) Again, studies have shown that individuals tend to lose track of time, eat more, and spend more money (red tag sale) all in the presence of red. Clearly this is more likely to happen with cherry red, holiday red, or cabernet red than if you find you are surrounded by a color termed blood red. Again, it's all in the semantics.

So, rather than become enamored with a color by its name, find out if you can truly live with it. Try it out, by the quart, either directly on the wall, or on a piece of foam board, at least two coats, more if it is a deep tone. Check it in a variety of light. Champagne may go flat, while chardonnay may scream, it isn't the name you need to fall for but the formula, then name it what you like. Once you know the game, you can win!

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