

1956

EC56-1115 Color in your Home

Magdalene Pfister

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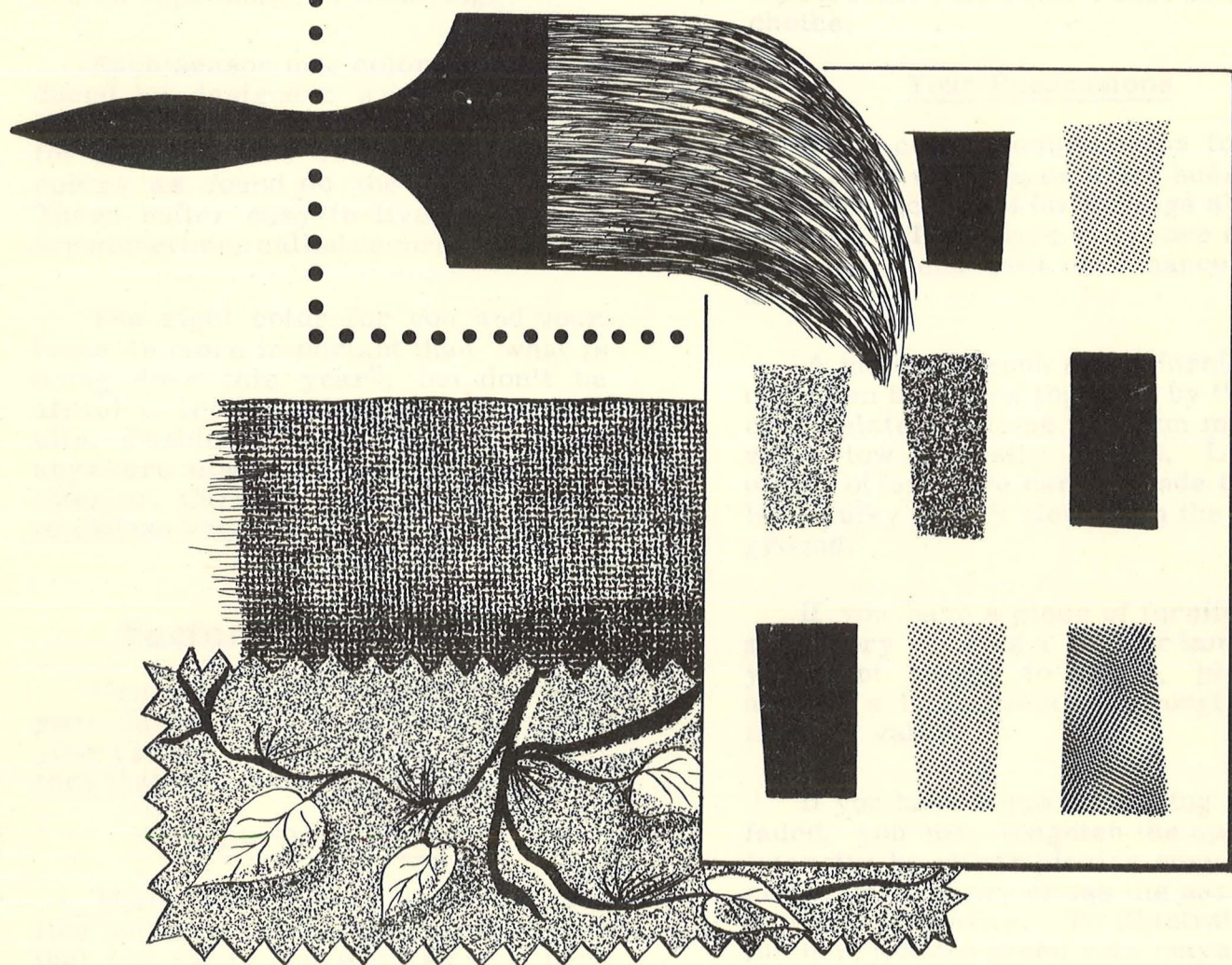
Pfister, Magdalene, "EC56-1115 Color in your Home" (1956). *Historical Materials from University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension*. 3318.
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COLOR *in your home*



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Color For Your Home

Magdalene Pfister

Color is one of the most effective, least expensive tools for creating an attractive home. Wonderful colors can give a feeling of happiness, light and warmth while poor color combinations can be depressing or annoying.

Each season new colors are introduced by designers and decorators. You will notice that the colors intended for interiors are usually not the pure colors as found on the color wheel. These softer easy-to-live with colors are sometimes called decorator colors.

The right color for you and your home is more important than "what is being done this year", but don't be afraid to try something new occasionally. Fashion in decorating as well as anywhere else, has a way of dating an interior. Careful planning is necessary to choose and use color successfully.

Factors To Consider

Colors should be related to you and your family, your possessions and your rooms. Let's consider some factors that influence color choice.

Color Preferences

There are some colors that you like better than others. Choose colors that you enjoy and express your personality.

Active vigorous families and young people often like stronger, contrasting or gayer colors while quieter more reserved persons generally prefer softer colors.

A room is the background for the people in it, so select colors that provide a pleasant and flattering background for them. If a person using the room a great deal looks fallow in chartreuse, that color would be a poor choice.

Your Possessions

Most color compositions for the home start with one or more hues pre-selected because of furnishings already on hand. Take care to choose colors that will blend with or enhance these articles.

A miscellaneous set of furnishings can often be pulled together by the use of a related scheme of warm medium value low intensity colors. Large pieces of furniture can be made to look less bulky if they blend with the background.

If you have a piece of furniture or accessory such as a vase or lamp that you want people to notice, place it against a background of strongly contrasting value.

If you have some furnishing that is faded, you may heighten the apparent intensity by either placing some of its complement near, or use the same hue in lower intensity. To illustrate this further, a faded green sofa may appear brighter without reupholstering if pillows of grayed rose are placed on it, or if the sofa is placed in front of a gray green wall or rug.

Light

The appearance of colors change

with both the amount and kind of light. Rooms well lighted do not distort colors. Those dimly lit make colors seem darker and duller. Very bright light raises values and lowers intensities. Thus a bright red loses much of its brightness in a dark room and also in one flooded with sunlight.

Dissatisfaction with color schemes often develops because colors are selected under one kind of light and then viewed at home under another. Incandescent light has a yellow cast while fluorescent has a white cast. Warm colors do not seem as warm under fluorescent light, but cool colors seem more blue and green under fluorescent light. It is well to choose colors under the type of light which they will generally be seen.

Formerly it seemed that all rooms with a south exposure required cool colors while ones on the north warm colors. It is better to think in terms of light - the kind and amount in a room rather than the side of the house. Some rooms on the north have more light than those on the south.

Rooms facing south and west often get more heat and light and may need cool colors to relieve the uncomfortable hot feeling. A room that seems cold may need warming up with color.

Light colors reflect a great deal of light while dark colors absorb light. From the following table it can be seen that changing from a dark green to a light green background will increase the light reflected more than fifty per cent.

<u>Color</u>	<u>Light Reflected</u>
White	85%
Light	
Cream	75%
Gray	75%
Yellow	75%
Green	65%
Blue	55%
Medium	
Yellow	65%
Gray	55%
Green	52%
Blue	35%
Dark	
Gray	30%
Red	13%
Brown	10%
Blue	8%
Green	7%
Wood Finish	
Maple	42%
Satinwood	34%
English Oak	17%
Walnut	16%
Mahogany (dark)	12%

Type of Room

Rooms that are occupied for long periods of time should give a quiet, restful feeling which may be secured by the use of softer muted background colors. Rooms that are not occupied for long periods of time may have larger areas of bright color. This principle is used particularly in commercial interiors such as hotels and restaurants.

The dining room, kitchen, recreation and work areas are used when occupants are active, so bold stimulating colors may be used. Bedrooms may be gay or restful depending on the individual.

Select colors for the living room which the family will not tire of and still be a welcome to those who enter.

Consider the plan for any room in relation to the house as a whole. Rooms that open off an another should be in harmony. The same basic colors maybe used but the quantities of color varied so that the dominant color in one may become the accent in another. Having a unified color plan not only adds unity to the home but makes for interchangeability of furnishings.

Size and Shape of Room

Is the room large or small, square or narrow? There are ways color can create illusions and change the apparent size or shape. Some suggestions for problem rooms follow:

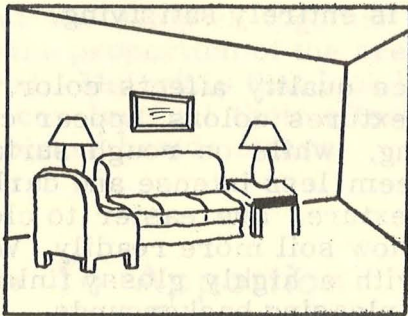


Figure 1

Small rooms look larger when cool colors, light values and closely related color values are selected (Fig. 1). The background -- floor, rugs, walls, curtains, draperies and woodwork of the same color or variations of it make a room appear spacious. Less pattern and more use of solid also help to make a room look larger. If it is necessary to use a wall paper, choose a design

small in scale or with perspective or depth; then have the color of the background and woodwork match. The use of a large mirror will give an illusion of space.

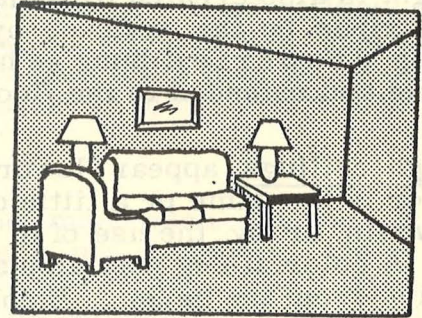


Figure 2

Large rooms will appear smaller when warm dark hues, or contrasting color or values are selected. It is in large rooms that figures or pattern can be used effectively. (Fig. 2)

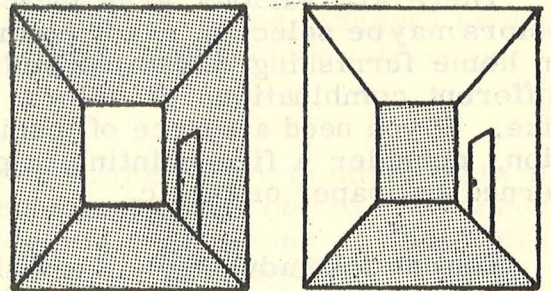


Figure 3

Long, narrow rooms will seem less poorly proportioned when one or both end walls are warmer, darker or brighter than the side walls. (Fig. 3) Another way to contrast the short walls to the long ones is to use patterned paper or bookcases filled with colorful books. If windows are on the narrower wall, colorful draperies extending over part of the wall may be used.

Square rooms will appear longer when one wall or two adjoining walls are treated differently than the others.

Low ceilings will seem higher if it is lighter than the wall color. A feeling of height is also created by using vertical stripes on the wall or by contrasting draperies hung as high as possible and extended to the floor.

High ceilings appear lower when its color is the same or a little darker than walls or by the use of a warm color. A colorful rug may also attract attention from the height. Emphasize horizontal lines with chair rails and contrasting dados or horizontal stripes.

Walls cut up by doors, windows or radiators and pipes appear less broken if these are painted the same as the wall. Have background of drapery fabric the same color and value as wall.

Sources For Color Plans

There are various ways in which colors may be selected. Study pictures in home furnishing magazines and try different combinations of colors you like. If you need a source of inspiration, consider a fine painting, a patterned wallpaper or fabric.

You can take advantage of a skilled designers's knowledge of color by using a patterned wallpaper or fabric that you are planning to use in the room. You will have several colors to start your plan. It is easier to blend plain colors to a pattern than to try to find a pattern that will look well with the plain colors you have used.

Remember that the bright colors used in patterns generally appear in small quantities and must be grayed and softened if they are to be used as a background color.

Nature can suggest colors. When using nature to plan color combinations, it's a good idea to look at the colors in their actual setting. You will notice that intense colors of flowers and leaves are actually small accents to larger background areas of muted greens, blues, grays and tans.

A great deal can be learned about color composition and distribution from a fine painting.

Keep in mind that pictures and fabrics are not three dimensional as a room. With different scale, texture and light the colors must be adapted rather than copied.

Consider Pattern And Texture

Color is not the only factor to be considered when working with fabrics, wallpaper and paint. Texture and pattern must also be considered before the room is entirely satisfying.

Surface quality affects color. On smooth textures colors appear clear and strong, while on rough surfaces colors seem less intense and darker. Smooth textures are easier to clean, but they show soil more readily. Walls painted with a highly glossy finish do not make pleasing backgrounds.

Textures have a psychological effect. Rougher textures may suggest informality, a feeling of warmth, strength or masculinity, while smooth surfaces give a feeling of formality, elegance or daintiness. Choose textures that seem to go together and create the desired impression.

A pleasant mixture of plain and decorated surfaces creates an interesting room, but it is much easier to

live with solid colors than too much pattern. The way fabrics are woven and the grain of wood help to contribute pattern.

Too much pattern produces a feeling of confusion and restlessness. When selecting a rug, wall paper or fabric with design, keep in mind the size of your room. The trend is toward decorating with color and texture rather than pattern.

Deciding On Your Colors

When you are reasonably certain that you know what you want, collect large samples - a full length drapery material, a piece of upholstery large enough to cover a good portion of a chair or davenport, a roll of wallpaper most of which can be borrowed. It may be well worth the trouble and expense of painting a piece of wall board the color you think that you would like for your walls, then study it by daylight and night.

Put the samples together in about the same proportion of the areas to be covered. Materials that look beautiful alone can lose all their effectiveness when placed beside others.

How To Apportion And Distribute Color

The walls, ceiling, woodwork and floor make up the background area of the room. When these areas are in softened or grayed colors, the furnishings look well against them. These colors need not be dulled so they are flat and lifeless but merely softened.

Generally colors in a room are arranged in ascending values with the floor darkest, walls lighter and ceiling lightest of all. This distribution resembles nature's pattern of color and gives a satisfying up-and-down equilibrium. There are times, however, when the plan may be varied. A floor of medium to light color reflects more light and shows less soil than a dark one. Darker walls may be needed for a cozy effect or to unify dark furniture.

Sometimes when several colors have been put together, the results seem uninteresting. The reason may be that the same amount of each color has been used. It is better to have the amount vary with one color dominant, a second color in less amount and a third color which is used in small amount for accents.

It takes a lesser amount of warm color to balance a larger amount of cool color. A little dark will offset a large area of light. A small bit of brilliant color will balance a muted tone. For this reason bright colors will find their place in the accessories. These objects can be moved around, changed or put away if the color becomes tiresome.

Repeat the colors in other parts of the room. Arrange colors around adjoining walls or rooms so that there will not be an abrupt change in color.

Let your home sparkle with color. You probably can't make all the changes you'd like now, or even this year. Consider a long range color plan as you make changes. Color will make your home distinctive. It should be distinctively yours.

CHECK YOUR COLOR PLAN

- | | Yes | No |
|---|-------|-------|
| 1. Does the scheme give a single impression - that of warmth or coolness with an accent of the other? | _____ | _____ |
| 2. Is the scheme a definite type such as analogous, complementary or triad? | _____ | _____ |
| 3. Are large areas in quieter effect and the bright colors confined to smaller areas? | _____ | _____ |
| 4. Does one color dominate with one or more additional colors in smaller areas? | _____ | _____ |
| 5. Are colors repeated in various parts of the room although changed somewhat? | _____ | _____ |
| 6. Do colors seem to belong together and enhance each other? | _____ | _____ |
| 7. Is there variation of dark and light, dull and bright? | _____ | _____ |
| 8. Have some neutrals been used? | _____ | _____ |
| 9. Does the eye find enough space to rest and enough pattern and texture for interest? | _____ | _____ |
| 10. Would you wear the combination of colors, texture and pattern in an ensemble? | _____ | _____ |
| 11. Have you used color to emphasize good features and disguise the poor features of your rooms? | _____ | _____ |
| 12. Do you and your family like the color plan? | _____ | _____ |

If you can answer "yes" to these questions you should have a home with colors that give pleasure to you, your family and friends.