

A new year of colour

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What better time of year is there to bring a new colour home? Colour guru Eve Ashcraft shares how to choose the right shade for your New Year's resolutions and beyond



Colour me crazy: Expert colour consultant Eve Ashcraft suggests bold colours in small doses, like the back of a bookshelf, for the colour-shy. (Photo by Fritz von der Schulenburg)

One day, Eve Ashcraft saw a shade of bright, shiny yellow on a painted metal pendant lamp and was entranced. That Saturday morning, she bought a can of high-gloss paint in that shade and painted the door frames in her kitchen.

Photo

The concept of spontaneously painting such a bold colour might disquiet some, she says, but after all, it's part of her life. "I make time for [painting] the way others make time for hobbies," colour consultant Ashcraft says.



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Paint swatches from Ashcraft's paint collection are displayed in her studio. (Photo by Eve Ashcraft)

And why not choose painting as a hobby? After decking the halls for the winter holidays, people are thinking about painting their walls, perhaps as a New Year's resolution.

Ashcraft urges them to think about colours in the places they love, and be fearless with their choices, even if it's in a small dose like a door frame.

As a highly sought-after colour and paint expert and author of new book, *The Right Color: Finding the Perfect Palette for Every Room in Your Home*, Ashcraft has been known to constantly paint and repaint her apartment, which she calls her "test lab." At the same time she understands that not everyone is inclined toward eye-popping colours and combinations, and that some people simply want to choose a living room colour that will last for years.

But that's all the more reason to be deliberate when choosing a colour, she says. It's all about being confident in the right shade.

"People just walk into the paint store and pick up a paint chip, and to me, that's like driving blind," Ashcraft says. Her job is to think about colour on a deeper level and understand her clients' tastes even better than they do. Besides consulting for celebrities, choosing the colour of watch faces for Banana Republic and the wall colours of Armani Casa's New York City store, she also advises average Joes on their colour choices.

That's apparent from the ease with which she relates to her reader in *The Right Color*. In easily digestible sections, she writes about the history and science of colour, along with how to turn an inspirational item into a palette and coordinate a room's palette with adjacent areas.

She considers it part of her job description to erase the fear and frustration many people feel when choosing paint colours, without defaulting to ubiquitous white walls.

Her favourite moment is when a client suddenly sees the wide world of options available: "They notice, 'Oh, I can use pink with red or orange,' and think about it in slightly new and different ways."

She says, "I'd like to see white not to be the first, second or third choice, but somewhere down the road." In her view, the right colour can be all the dressing a wall needs.

Ashcraft also challenges her clients to let go of the gender associations of colours. "The words really get in the way sometimes. I once started looking at pink colour names in paint lines, and everything was 'candy kisses' or 'ballerina toe.' It was juvenile and insulting, and it's so limiting in terms of language," she says.

She once had to conspire with a female client to call a pink colour "salmon" in order to convince the client's husband to OK it. Sometimes Ashcraft will refer to colours by their numbers, rather than sully a client's perception with a name.

As people figure out which resolutions they can actually keep this year, Ashcraft gives a last word of advice: "Take a risk on a small scale. Paint just one wall in a bold, exciting colour... it will feel like a challenge but won't be overwhelmingly monumental.

"It's fun, in terms of a resolution. You get massive change for \$40 in one hour, and it's a whole lot easier than losing 40 pounds."

RESOLUTE COLORS

Still struggling to find the right shade? The "paint doctor," Ashcraft, gives ideas on colour palettes based on New Year's resolutions:

To be calm, peaceful and take everything in stride: "Try pale, not bold colours. Colours that are closest together, like really pale blues and celadon greens, creams, whites and pale greys, work wonderfully together. They act like neutrals and can be used with any furnishings. It's beautiful and much more calming than just white."

To be courageous, proactive and take risks: "Go for a warmer palette. If you're in a contemporary environment, try bright yellow or orange. If you have a more historical house, try golden yellow or pumpkin, a little more toned down, so it doesn't look like an aberration. Those colours feel like a temperature in the room. They're stimulating and cheerful."

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