

IN LIVING COLOR



GARDEN PARTY
Playful, joyful, magical

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A "Garden Party" palette used by designer Timothy Corrigan brings playfulness to a room
Photo © Eric Piasecki/OTTO for Timothy Corrigan, courtesy of Harper Design

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Textile and product designer Lori Weitzner
Photo by Nina Nelson Photography

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Ode to Color: The Ten Essential Palettes for Living and Design by Lori Weitzner with Dorothy Mitchell, published by Harper Design
Image courtesy of Harper Design

If every hue has its own emotional and cultural meaning, a thoughtful palette can become a whole world of color to live in

By LISA KLEIN



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"With color one obtains an energy that seems to stem from witchcraft," once said the impressionist artist Henri Matisse. It is no secret that colors send a message, every subtle change in undertone, saturation or depth shifting what is said.

Combining a collection of shades can create entire realms tied to specific moods or experiences – what textile and product designer Lori Weitzner has dubbed "color worlds." And forget witchcraft: purposefully bringing such a palette into your life can give a boost in areas that could use a change of color.

"It's really how these colors will make us feel, specifically in a space," Ms. Weitzner, principal of Lori Weitzner Design Inc. in New York and author of *Ode to Color: The Ten Essential Palettes for Living and Design*, says. "We can understand how to communicate through color, and to use it to work for us and with us."



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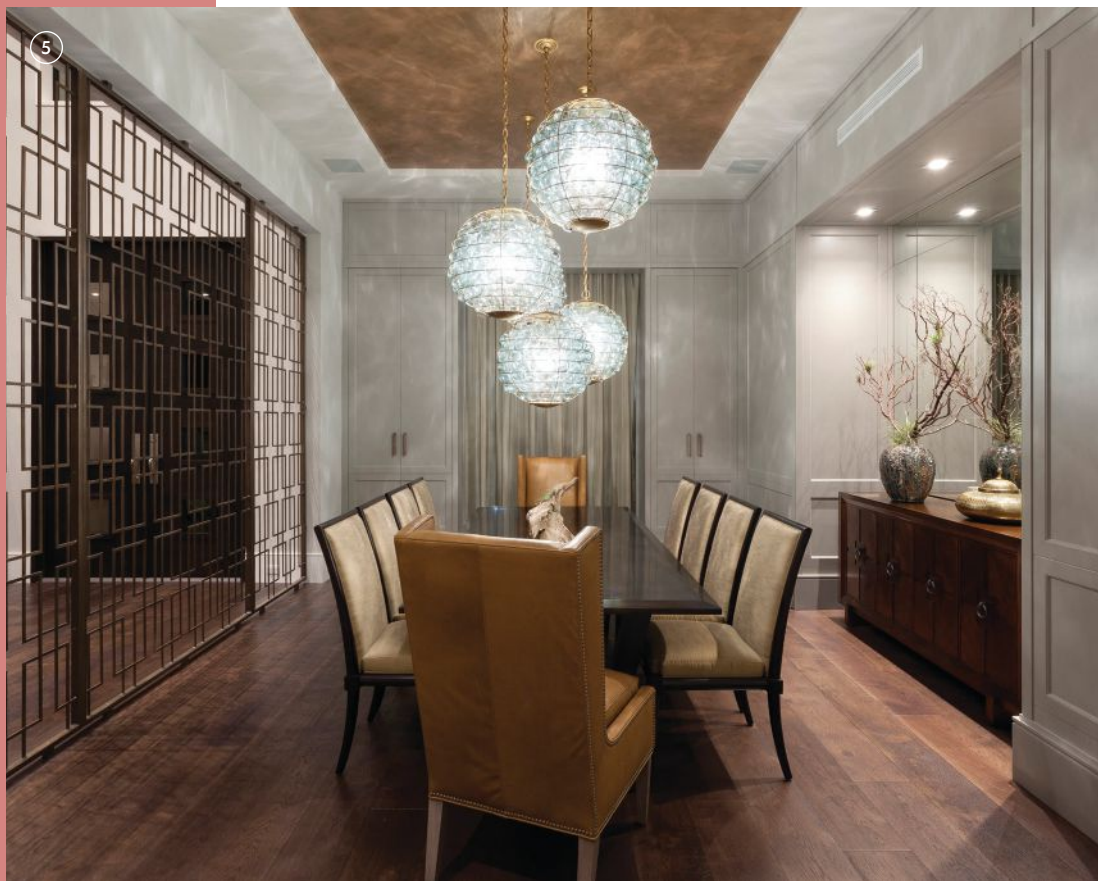
EARTHLY

Passionate, provocative, following dreams



ALCHEMY

Creative, inspiring, enlightening



“It’s not just about the colors, but about what they represent”

— LORI WEITZNER, PRODUCT DESIGNER AND AUTHOR, *ODE TO COLOR*



NIGHT SHADOWS
Serious, introspective, mysterious



SILVERLIGHT
Innovative, experimental, forward-looking

Trigger figure

Starting off as a painter before pivoting to textile design, Ms. Weitzner always had a good sense of color and composition. But years of making new fabrics, wallcoverings, passementerie and other items brought the stories those colors told to the forefront.

Consequently, she now has 36 color drawers in her studio filled with yarns and swatches, six for reds alone, the character and impact of each never lost.

“I realized that color was actually my first language, before English, if that makes any sense,” Ms. Weitzner says. “It’s the first thing I think about all the time.”

While most do not consider color with the clarity that Ms. Weitzner does, every hue that crosses an individual’s vision has a subconscious effect — a memory trigger, a cultural touchstone or an emotional tap.

The ties between color and emotion have been observed throughout history, from the ancient Egyptians and Chinese to Swiss psychiatrist Carl Gustav Jung’s theories in the 1900s to modern psychological studies on the subject. Orange is energetic, yellow optimistic, blue calming and red passionate.

Then there are cultural associations — red is often seen as a warning, purple is synonymous with royalty, green represents nature, black a symbol of mourning.

Each individual also color coordinates his or her own experiences. Much like the way scents are known to bring back memories, different hues can summon the past for each person.

Perhaps red reminds one person of a peaceful childhood trip to the apple orchard, another of a crimson-painted room that was the scene of a spectacular fight.

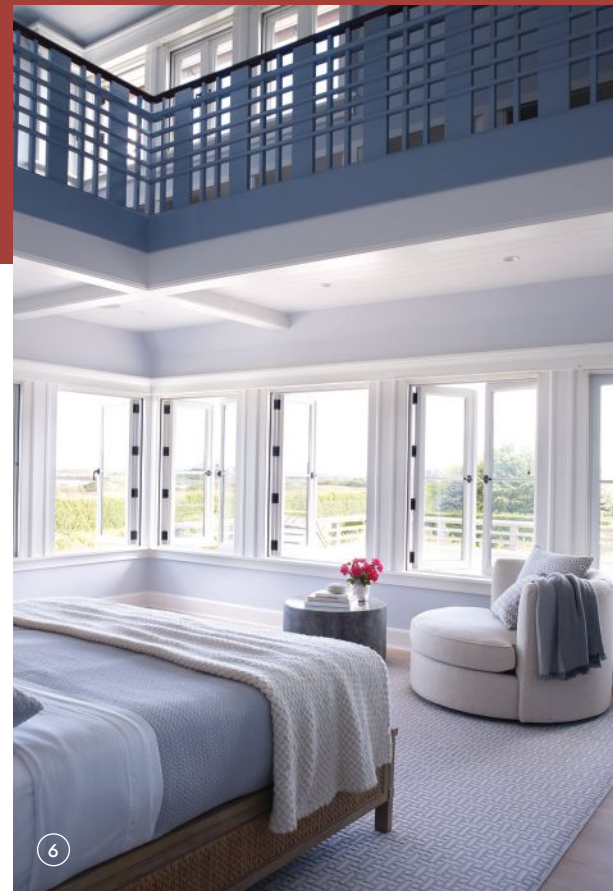
“What I actually think it is, is synesthesia,” Ms. Weitzner posits. “You experience something with all the senses working at the same time.”

Synesthesia is a condition in which senses are combined — someone may taste mint when she sees a certain color, see specific colors with every song she hears or hear a different sound with each food she eats.

Mozart, a famous synesthete, saw colors that corresponded to different keys of music.

In adults, synesthesia is thought to be caused by extra neural connections in the brain. It is believed, and is beginning to be shown by studies, that all infants have synesthesia for the first few months of life, as the brain undergoes a “pruning” of neural pathways until about age two, eventually separating and focusing each of the senses, among other brain functions.

“That crossover is what I think we all want to try and get back to,” Ms. Weitzner says.



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WATERSIDE
Grounding, steady, dependable

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Designer Kate Hume’s use of an “Earthy” palette adds a warm, dreamy quality to the room
Photo © Frans van der Heijden/Kate Hume, courtesy of Harper Design

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A dining room in the “Alchemy” palette by Marc-Michaels Interior Design inspires creativity
Photo © Photography by Edward Butera/IBI Designs Inc., courtesy of Marc-Michaels Interior Design/Harper Design

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A bedroom in the “Waterside” palette, designed by Ike Kligerman Barkley, gives grounding vibes
Photo © William Waldron for Ike Kligerman Barkley, courtesy of Harper Design

Palatable options

Ms. Weitzner, although working intuitively rather than scientifically, took these concepts of color psychology one step further and created entire worlds of color — each an experience in a palette.

"The way I see color is never just singular, it's multidimensional," Ms. Weitzner explains. "So, I created the color worlds as multidimensional. It's not just about the colors, but about what they represent."

The idea was a bit of a happy accident that allowed Ms. Weitzner to follow her innate sense of color wherever it took her.

When she was working on writing a book, she naturally thought it would be about her bread and butter, textiles. But her editor advised her to take some time to think about what she really wanted to say.

"So, for a month, I was just throwing things in boxes — little quotes and yarn balls and pictures from magazines and whatever," she says. "And by the end of the month, they were organized by color worlds."

"I thought, this is like more of a personal ode to color," Ms. Weitzner recalls discovering once she started writing essays about each palette.

While there are endless yet-to-be-discovered worlds of color, 10 made it into the resulting book along with anecdotes weaving the story of each one.

The "Garden Party" chapter includes essays about Ladurée macarons and Fred Astaire to accompany the palette of springtime pastels.

"Night Shadows," a palette of ebony, fog and merlot, discusses the fictional Gotham, Greek goddess of the night, Nyx, and Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*.

"At Ease," accessible neutrals, touches on caramel corn and Ms. Weitzner's childhood dog, Ginger, while "Out Loud," bright shades such as fuchsia, orange and Kelly green, considers a box of crayons, Disney's first forays into Technicolor, red lipstick and the work of fashion designer Emilio Pucci.

"I wanted to give you a full, 3-D picture of what these worlds mean in culture and life and history and to me personally, and how there's a connect-the-dots between them all," Ms. Weitzner says. "It's very much a synesthetic book."

Hues to you

Ms. Weitzner stresses that the purpose of *Ode to Color* was to help her readers to understand how to harness the power of these palettes in their lives.

When added to a space, each color world imparts its own energy there and can be used to change the atmosphere to suit one's needs.

To that end, Ms. Weitzner worked with a psychologist for more than six months to develop a test that matches each person with a color world or two. The results may not be a favorite palette, but the one whose vibes are needed — and that can change, given the use of a space or the time in one's life.

"The idea behind it is that people will start to think about color as a tool, that colors can do things for us," she says. "Consider what it might mean, whatever that result is."

The most popular result of the test is "Alchemy," warm metals such as gold and bronze that inspire creativity — unsurprising given that Ms. Weitzner's largest audience comprises those in artistic fields who may need a spark.

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, that shifted to "Waterside," a range of blue shades that exude stability and dependability, certainly absent feelings during that time.

"I always get 'Fragrant Woods' and it's because I'm totally nature-deprived,"

Ms. Weitzner says of her test result, a palette of mossy greens and deep browns which transport one into the forest. "I live in this lovely loft, but it's concrete," she says. "I'm never surprised."

Whatever the recommended color world, adding more of it into your surroundings can stir up the sensations it rouses. While you can go all out and decorate an entire room with a color world, Ms. Weitzner says even adding just a touch can go a long way.

Glassy light fixtures or reflective mirrors add a bit of "Silverlight," a palette of cool metals such as silver and pewter.

A new set of crisp white sheets will bring in some "Whisper," the serene shades of white.

For "Earthy," terra cotta, rust and ochre, Ms. Weitzner says simply lighting a candle during the day for the warmth of the flame works.

MS. WEITZNER ENCOURAGES connecting with her color worlds and then looking beyond them to find worlds of one's own.

By entering the infinite possibilities of color, a person can gain back a little bit of that synesthesia he or she was born with to really experience all that hues can do.

"Just start to think about color in a different way, in how it can serve you," Ms. Weitzner advises. "We've come so far away from utilizing and engaging our senses in the way we are supposed to." ♪



FRAGRANT WOODS
Nurturing, connecting, rooting in nature



AT EASE
Comfortable, casual, relaxing



WHISPER
Quiet, intuitive, finding inner peace



OUT LOUD
Bold, energetic, confident

All color world palette photos by Scott Jones, courtesy of Lori Weitzner/Harper Design