

CREATING A Power Palette

Color Marketing Group, the premier international group for color and design professionals, has a slogan: "Color sells, and the *right* color sells better." At no time has this phrase been truer. Color is simply one of the strongest marketing tools of the 21st Century. There is not a product sold whose color does not impact its purchaser's buying decision. Whether it is a small plastic cup, an electronic device, or a home, buyers are looking for a color that gives them not just a satisfying buying experience, but a continued after-sale sense of satisfaction.

The real importance of color to home builders comes with an understanding that in this unbelievably tough market, the pricing of everything from lots to nails has been whittled down to the very margins. This means that at whatever price point your houses occupy, you are selling the same square footage, the same amenities, number and kind of rooms, the same roof, brick, stone, cabinet, etc., as your competitors. So what

do you have to set you apart from them? Really, the only thing you have to sell that is unique is a look and a feel. This is where color plays a vital role. Not only does color give you a sales advantage, it is the cheapest, most cost effective thing you can add to a house. And, you have to paint anyway, so it is almost free!

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The right colors, the right combinations, the right placement are the keys to effectively using color. Color on the exterior of your product not only attracts the attention of buyers, but it pre-sells them. It sets them up for the unique experience you hopefully have created for them inside. The right colors reflect the mood of your home buyer and reflect current trends in color and building.

What are the current trends in color for homes? Surprisingly, they have not changed with the recession. Darker, richer colors are hugely popular, with softer light trims for contrast, as are historically referenced home styles. What drives these trends are today's stressful, over-busy culture and lifestyles. Because we are

all pressed continually by cell and tweet for our attention, we are all looking for some respite from the cacophony. We want to come back to a home which shelters us, nurtures us, and comforts us. We want house forms that have a sense of timeless value and security. We want colors that feel pleasant, comfortable, restful, and natural. This last word is quite important because it reflects the growing concern



Here the ungainly appearance of three garage doors is balanced with color. The attention that the red door creates draws your eye away from the garage doors back to the important part of the house, thus creating balance.

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amongst consumers for the whole green movement. Nature is important to buyers. And what feels natural feels good to us.

Natural colors and textures similar to what we find in nature are pleasing to our senses. They give a house a sense of empathy to both man and nature, which pleases us. Natural materials create buyer satisfaction as well. This is the reason for the proliferation of stone facades and roughly textured brick. Smooth brick says slick, industrial. Tumbled brick says solidity and lasting value. Stone, of

course, comes directly from nature. These are not new trends, but it is surprising how many builders are not aware of them.

At this point in time, it seems clear that even after the revival we will continue to see these same trends remain powerful, because nothing has changed in our buyers' lives to make them ineffective. Granted, there is a new trend to modernist houses among urban dwellers, but it is nowhere close to gathering sufficient momentum to really affect the overall direction of

home building. So words like comfort, nurture, solid, and pleasant sum up the overall ambiance which will sell homes in our immediate future. Below are some guidelines for effective use of color.

Using Color for Maximum Buyer Appeal

1] Avoid the use of white, as it usually has a harsh, glaring effect. Instead, consider cream or a warm off-white. This will more easily blend with all the colors of the other building materials—the masonry, the roof, the landscaping.



2] Use light colored windows on the exterior. Dark windows close up a house and make it feel dark and unwelcoming. Light windows look bigger and give the feeling that the inside of the home is light and airy. If you have white windows, paint the surrounding trim in off-white to soften the glare.

3] Paint overhead surfaces like ceilings and soffits in a light color. Dark colors overhead make the ceiling feel as if it is “coming down on you” and create a gloomy effect, whereas light colors rise up and lift your spirits. They also reflect more light back into the home’s interior.

4] If you use two body colors on the exterior, make sure the darker color is on the bottom. A darker color is recognized as being darker and heavier. If you reverse this, people might not notice it, but they will be subconsciously aware of it, and something will seem “off.”

5] Dark colored roofs will always make a house feel like it is of much better quality. The dark color stops the eye, bringing the focus back down to the main part of the house. A light color lets your eye just travel up to the sky, making the house feel like it floats off the ground. A dark roof has

weight and will ground the house, giving a sense that it is solid and of enduring quality.

6] Paint a house in satin or low sheen semi-gloss finish. The luster gives the color a richer feel and adds a lot of life to the look of the house. Flat paint makes a house look dead and attracts dirt.

7] Use a high-gloss finish for a painted front door. There are now latex high-gloss paints, but alkyd high-gloss paints have much more sheen. That deep, rich sheen just bespeaks quality.

8] If you have wrought iron, rather than painting it black, try painting it a deep, almost black green, navy blue, or mahogany. Deep colored iron feels correct, and has a lot more character and originality without calling attention to itself.

9] If your house has natural wood shingles as a siding element, instead of using a pigmented semi-transparent or solid stain, use a tinted oil finish. Pigmented stains look like cheap paint to start out with, and then tend to do an unfortunate splotching fade after that. The oiled finish looks rich, natural, and organic, adding a real sense of quality to the house in a quiet way. **smi**

top to bottom: The trend is toward not simply deep, rich colors, but colors used to explain the architecture, while adding interest. Notice there are four colors on this home: the main body color, a secondary body color on the gables and garage doors which create an appealing balance, a non-white trim color, and finally, a punch color on the shutters and doors.

Deep, rich colors and historic house forms are coupled to make a “New Urbanist” neighborhood feel not just nostalgic, but comfortably lived in and alive with energy.

Natural materials say “green” and evoke a sense of a home that will be here for years to come.



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