Consider The Climate
When Building A Home

Color Is Important Part
Of Today's Home, Office

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Have you ever wondered how dramatic the City of Lafayette would be if it were seen only in black and white? Color is in architecture what salt and pepper are to cooking. It is the essential ingredient which can make or break the architectural dish and mean the difference between an exciting, interesting, comfortable place to live or work and just another building. What is color? No one really knows. We can define it, measure it and produce it, yet we are not sure that all people see colors in exactly the same way. Some people do not see colors at all. And there is considerable evidence that lower animals do not see colors the same way as man. Color can be described by identifying three qualities: hue, tone and intensity. These terms all have very exact meanings, but are frequently misused, so let’s see what they really mean.

Definitions

Hue is the “color of a color”—whether it is red, green, yellow, etc. Hue can be identified by the wavelength of light reflected from, or transmitted through, the color. Tone, or value as it is sometimes called, refers to the relative lightness or lightness of a color. Tone can be measured by the use of a photographic light meter. Intensity is the ratio in which a color contains the pure hue and a neutral gray of the same tone. Perhaps the best analogy is a smaller wall surfaces, as one can be seen in the television commercials which promise “redder red, bluer blues, etc.”

The circular object in today’s illustration is a color wheel. That is the conventional method used to show the relationship of hues. Colors on the same side of the wheel are called complements and colors opposite each other are called complements. Thus, red and orange are supplements, red and green are complements. Complements contrast. Supplements blend.

Rules of Thumb

Over the years, architects and colorists have developed a few rules of thumb which, if used, remove some of the mystery from color selection and use. These are not set in stone and like so many rules, the proof is sometimes in the exception; but they should prove helpful.

First of all, try to restrict the number of colors which can be seen from any given place to three or more. Remember that natural tones of brick and wood are colors too, and should be counted. Do not count white, gray or black.

Of the three (or four) colors chosen, it is well if two are closely related and one is a good, solid contrast. The contrast may be accomplished by hue and or tone and or intensity.

In most applications, strong contrasts are most effective and a neutral gray of the same tone are used sparingly, on furniture or eye as the final judge. Use bits of white. White has the happy facility of making the most unlikely color schemes succeed.

Avoid greens out of doors. The lively green of nature makes man’s greens look sick by comparison. Also, eschew the “eye-ease” green which has been used to death in the past twenty or thirty years for everything from Kitchens to Schools to Office buildings. It really has been overcome.

Colors for Serenity

Cool colors, blue, green and purple, impart a sense of security, coolness and ease. Warm colors, reds, oranges, yellows, tend to encourage activity, warmth and alertness.

Light and cool colors will make rooms appear larger than they are and dark and warm colors will have the opposite effect.

In a house, particularly a smaller house, strive to develop continuity in the use of color from room to room. One of the easiest ways to achieve this is to use the same floor covering throughout the house. Very effective.

Finally, and most important, do not try to select colors in a vacuum. To be judged properly, a color must be seen in company with all the other colors in a room. Take a sample home. Don’t guess. Then, when you can see all of the colors at the same time, let your eye be the final judge.