
WHERE TO USE BLUE (Part 2)

Contributed by Kittikhom
Saturday, 16 February 2008

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THE BLUE SPECTRUM

The range of different blues is enormous, and using too large a selection can end in disaster. There is a vast difference in both tone and atmosphere between a greenish blue, like turquoise, and one which veers towards mauve. The wisest and safest course is to experiment with different degrees of one shade, using it deeper or lighter as required or adding one of the grey-tinged neutrals as a highlighter. These are the palest blues, barely a color at all.

The true pale blues are as icy as a glacier, graduating towards the softer pastel baby blue - a pretty nursery choice and easier to go on living with than sugar pink, whatever the sex of the child. The brighter blues, such as sky blue, cornflower, or electric blue and the other startling midshades create a much more positive impression, and can be surprisingly uplifting, even sunny in their effect. If you are feeling bold, use them as blocks of solid color on the walls, or alternatively restrict them to furniture and furnishings or the occasional accessorized touch in a more muted blue scheme.

These blues, darkened down a shade further, will become deep, dramatic Prussian blue, lovely bright royal blue - the closest you'll get to a rich, cozy effect, especially if used on a heavy textured fabric or for plain carpets - and beautiful lapis. This last, which takes its name from the stone, lapis lazuli, a strong blue with flecks of gold, shows to particular advantage on a hard surface such as painted wood.

A green influence on blue can either darken and deepen it, to become an oily petrol blue, or be as subtle as delicate duck-egg blue. Turquoise is the trickiest of all the blue-greens. It is really a color in a class of its own, and rarely blends well with other blues unless the very lightest or darkest shades are chosen. It is best handled as a special case - as an accent color in other schemes, perhaps, or reserved for creating exotic combinations with an equally strong hot pink, purples, even reds and golds.

Completely different in its somber, old-fashioned stolidness is the darkest and strongest blue of all, good old navy. When combined with white it is a classic for smartness, probably because it reminds us of military uniforms. This combination can make rather a severe contrast for a comfortable interior such as a sitting room or bedroom, but it can be relieved and softened by warmer shades. Navy is a good choice for more masculine schemes, and also combines well with fawn and beige in striped and paisley patterns. The tiniest touch of bright red or maroon in a thin stripe or other detail emphasizes its sophistication and adds just the right amount of zing and warmth.-