



*Melanie and John Aves*

ROCKPORT

# Comfort COLORS

PALETTES FOR LIVEABLE ROOMS



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ROCKPORT  
PUBLISHERS

*by Melanie and John Aves*



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First published in the United States of America by:  
Rockport Publishers, Inc.  
33 Commercial Street  
Gloucester, Massachusetts 01930-5089  
Telephone: (978) 282-9590  
Facsimile: (978) 283-2742

Distributed to the book trade and art trade in the United States by:  
North Light Books, an imprint of  
F & W Publications  
1507 Dana Avenue  
Cincinnati, Ohio 45207  
Telephone: (800) 289-0963

Other Distribution by:  
Rockport Publishers, Inc.  
Gloucester, Massachusetts 01930-5089

ISBN 1-56496-464-7

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Designer: Evelyn C. Shapiro  
Design assistance and production: Jeanne L. McCreedy  
Cover Image: Anthony Antine, Antine Associates, Inc.

Printed in Hong Kong.

Design: Al Evans



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# Acknowledgments

COMFORT COLORS has been a pleasure to bring from idea to reality, because of interest, support, and encouragement from many outstanding professional designers from all across the United States. A large group responded to our survey, and their thoughtful answers helped us give a more accurate description of the effects color has on our feelings inside a space. We are confident that these designers, who have direct experience working with color in many situations on a regular basis, are the best authorities available on this subject. The designers who enthusiastically responded to our survey are:

Diane Alpern Kovacs, *Diane Alpern Kovacs Interior Design, Inc.*

Anthony Antine, *Antine Associates, Inc.*

Brett Beldock, *Brett Design, Inc.*

John Berenson, *John Berenson Interior Design*

Patricia Bonis, *Patricia Bonis Interiors, Inc.*

Ronald Bricke, *Ronald Bricke & Associates, Inc.*

Mary Delany, *Mary Delany Interior Design*

Al Dickerson, *Klingman's of Grand Rapids*

Donna Dunn, *Donna Dunn & Associates*

Barbara Eberlein, *Eberlein Design Consultants, Ltd.*

William R. Eubanks, *William R. Eubanks Interior Design, Inc.*

Al Evans, *Al Evans Interiors*

Paula Fogarty, *Kindel Furniture Company*

Gary Gibson, *Gary Gibson Interior Design*

Phyllis G. Goldberg, *PGG Interiors*

Steven M. Hefner, *Designworks Creative Partnership, Ltd.*

Allison A. Holland, *Creative Decorating*

James R. Irving

Stacey Lapuk, *Stacey Lapuk Interior Design, Inc.*

Vince Lattuca, *Visconti + Company*

Lise Lawson, *Lise Lawson Interior Design*

Susie Leader, *Susie Leader Interiors*

Ellen Lemer Korney, *Ellen Lemer Korney Associates*

Lila Levinson, *Accent on Design*

Susan Lovelace, *Lovelace Interiors*

Sandra Nunnerley, *Sandra Nunnerley, Inc.*

Gayle Reynolds, *Gayle Reynolds Design*

Justine Ringlien

Lynn Robinson, *Lynn Robinson Interiors*

Pedro Rodriguez, *Pedro Rodriguez Interiors*

David A. Seglin, *HSP/Ltd., Seglin Associates*

Gail Shields-Miller, *Shields & Company Interiors*

Ho Sang Shin, *Antine Associates, Inc.*

John Staff, *J. Staff Architect*

Pat Stotler, *Pat Stotler Interiors*

Anne Tarasoff, *Anne Tarasoff Interiors*

Stanford R. Thigpen, *Stanford R. Thigpen Interiors, Inc.*

Jean Valente, *Jean Valente, Inc.*

Jill Vantosh, *Vantosh & Associates*

Stephanie Walters, *Parisi Interior Design*

Carole Weeks, *C. Weeks Interiors, Inc.*

Sue Wenk, *Sue Wenk Interior Design*

We also appreciate the fact that we could not show our readers such a comprehensive selection of the finest examples of contemporary interior design without the excellent photography many designers have contributed to our project. Photographing interiors is a highly specialized process, and we are fortunate to have the work of many of the most exceptionally talented photographers in the field represented here.

We especially acknowledge our daughter, Alison Aves, for her meticulous work in setting up our files and managing the beginning of our project. We also acknowledge Bethany Lacina for her assistance in tabulating our research. And finally, Jennifer Ruiter and Jeanine Caunt provided invaluable assistance in the completion of this project. ■



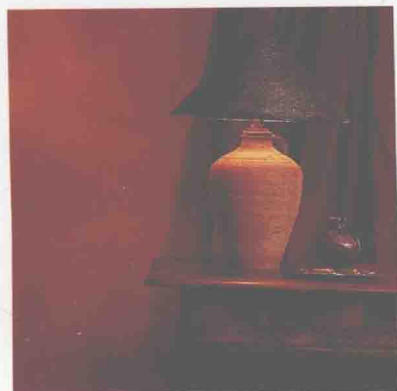


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Design: (above) Gayle Reynolds, (opposite page, top to bottom) John Berenson, Gary Gibson, Mary Delaney

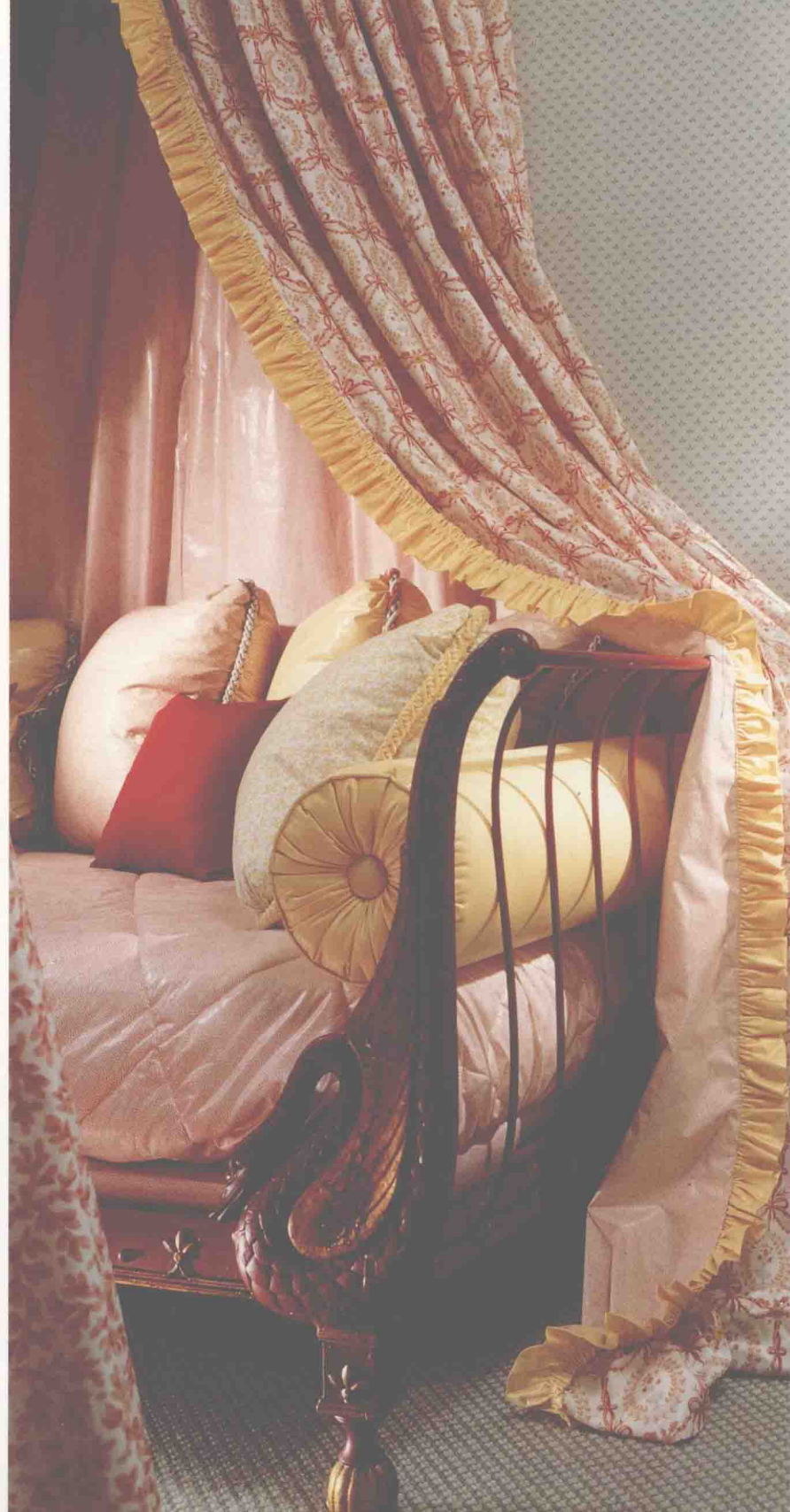


## *Preface*

WE HAVE TALKED WITH MANY DESIGNERS and other readers since our first book on color in interior design was published in 1994. The questions that most often kept discussions lively were about the effects of color on mood. Recent interest in the West about the Eastern tradition of Feng Shui reflects our curiosity about the effects of the outer world on our inner spiritual worlds. We decided to ask professional designers to share their insights about color and comfort based on years of experience working with clients from all over the country, clients with different backgrounds, style preferences, and budgets.

In this book we will show how these designers use the power of color to elicit a particular emotional response or mood in a room, how they manage color to create comfortable places to eat, rest, work, and play. We will share some of the research on the effects of specific colors on our psyches, and we will show effective color combinations created by experts in a variety of rooms which serve different human needs. The decorating styles featured are diverse, but all are inspired. We will show what colors designers prefer for different spaces in the home so that the reader may gain confidence to experiment with original color combinations to suit personal needs and preferences. ■









## CHAPTER ONE

# *Color and Our Sense of Well-Being*

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Color has a profound effect on the way we feel in a space. Each person has a different response to color based on his or her life experience and genetic predisposition. It follows that generalized interior design guidelines about what colors to use where are often inappropriate and unnatural.

Color is significant and mysterious. It has impact on human beings symbolically, historically, and psychologically. The human emotional response to color may be explained in terms of both instinct and conditioning. For ancient peoples the sun was the ultimate source of light and color. In modern times, the effects of light upon humans and the electromagnetic energy light produces fascinate us and continue to be studied. We have learned more about the physical properties of color, and yet our explanations of its psychological properties are at best incomplete.

Light, and therefore color, are also essential to a healthy physical existence. The rhythm of light has a powerful effect on the human body; the absence of light can even produce

a state of seeming hibernation. Newborn babies need exposure to light to maintain good health and normal growth patterns, but prolonged exposure can cause health problems as well. The most confounding aspect of research in this area is that because the effects of light and color are transient, they are difficult or impossible to measure. Each individual's response is certain to change with age, environment, and even physiology.

Research has shown that in Western cultures adults, regardless of gender, prefer cooler tones of color: the most popular color preference is blue and the second is green. Small children, by contrast, prefer red followed by yellow or white. Around the age of eight, children begin to shift to the adult preferences for blue and green. In Japan, however, studies have shown that adults prefer the color red, followed by white, black, and yellow. In what context should we consider these preferences? Are we talking about fashion, interior design, color in nature, color in art? How does culture affect color preferences? Throughout history scientists and ethnologists have tried to pinpoint the essence of experiencing color. However, each small piece of information uncovered seems to lead to further questions.

A simple factor which has much to do with our confusion about color is the limits of language. Using words to describe a visual experience is inevitably difficult. If we are not trained in art and design, many of us have limited color vocabularies. We say we do not like yellow, and then walk into a room, notice the wall color, and

exclaim, "This is beautiful . . . what color is this?" Of course, the answer is yellow. Yellow, it turns out, is a whole file of colors, and while many tones may seem unattractive, others look remarkably appealing. Too often color names are associated only with pure, intense hues; we need to develop a broader spectrum in our minds. Who has not spent time with mail-order catalogs trying to figure out which swatch of a T-shirt color is aubergine or cinnabar? The writers of catalog copy are to be credited with trying to build up our color vocabulary through word associations. However, it is clear that when we choose colors for our home, we are making decisions which will affect our comfort level for a longer period of time than our choice of a T-shirt, and the process can become a daunting task.

In considering color schemes for living spaces it is necessary to consider the purpose of the room, the geographical location, and the light sources. But perhaps most importantly, interior design decisions should hinge upon the preferences of those who will use the space. Comfort is key; individuality is important too. We all know what kind of environments make us feel content: those inner cues are excellent guides in making design decisions. Interior designers are most interested in how the color of a custom-made environment affects an individual's sense of well-being. The purpose of good design is ultimately to make people comfortable in their surroundings, whether at work or at leisure. ■









Left: This close-up illustrates the precise detail that builds the aura of a space. Lampshades, accessories, and art objects are all like the strokes of an artist's paintbrush in coloring the comfort of a room. Design: Sandra Nunnerley

Opposite: Texture, light, and shadow add subtle variation to even the simplest neutral color schemes, which call attention to the intrinsic beauty of natural materials. The white-on-white dining area will relax and comfort its fortunate guests, training their eyes to more sensitive subject matter. Design: Pat Stotler

## WHAT DESIGNERS SAY ABOUT THEIR EXPERIENCES WITH COLOR:

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*Professional interior designers are aware that color has a powerful effect on the mood of a room, and approach the problem of color selection in interesting ways. Lila Levinson of Accent on Design says, "I like to unite the interior and exterior spaces, and by using nature colors and texture I'm able to blur the boundaries between the two and visually enlarge the space by unifying it with the outdoors."*

