



hues for you

INCREASE YOUR COLOR QUOTIENT

Bashful about adding colors to your rooms? Follow these tips from one of the country's most color-courageous decorators.

Clients who seek New York City interior designer Jamie Drake to decorate their homes have to be OK with color. "No one comes to me for beige," he says. If they did, he would soon convert them. Known for bold and luscious color schemes, this palette master shares his philosophy—and answers common questions about getting comfortable in rooms with color.

YOU ARE FEARLESS ABOUT COLOR. HOW DID YOU GET SO BRAVE?

My mother was a painter and my father's business was printing, so those glossy, viscous printer inks clearly influenced my love of color. My delight in the marvelously mushy, shiny inks at my father's factory has never waned. No "misty water-colored memories" from my childhood. Only full-throttle saturated hues.

WHY IS COLOR IMPORTANT IN OUR HOMES?

When I design, I naturally go to color first. Color isn't an element in design; it's fundamental to it. It's one of the building blocks

that shape a room. Take it away and what are you left with? Those minimalist years from 1991 to 1997! Color establishes mood and tone, be it regal, whimsical, sophisticated, or serene. It's an immediate conduit to emotions.

WHAT DOES INTENSE COLOR DO FOR A SPACE?

It depends on how it is used, really. You can wrap an entire room—walls, ceilings, and curtains—in one shade and, because all the elements are at a similar level of intensity, the color sort of fades away. Conversely, I've done many rooms that are basically neutral, but with strategically placed jolts of color. People often leave that room with the impression that more color was present than actually was used.

WHAT DOES IT DO TO PEOPLE IN A SPACE?

First, it has an emotional impact on them—it tickles, soothes, empowers. I think at the end of the day, strong, identifiable color makes people feel they're someplace special. I never embraced those color studies that draw conclusions between

Writer: **Jeanne Blackburn** Photographer: **Bruce Buck**

behavior and color, although maybe that's why I always feel peckish in my red library. Color should also make the eye move through the room. Then the secondary color adds a pleasurable little jolt.

WHEN PEOPLE ARE READY TO EMBRACE COLOR, WHERE SHOULD THEY START?

People usually get a little shy when talking about colors they like, but not about colors they don't like. So we rule out what doesn't feel good. Also, I like to have some point of departure when thinking about color for a project—something the client loves. Maybe it's a rug or piece of art, even colors they love to wear. Then we take it from there.

PAIN IS EASY TO CHANGE, BUT HOW DO YOU CHOOSE A HUE THAT CAN BE LIVED WITH LONG TERM?

Any color that makes you happy is a good start. Another tip might be to keep the color going. A color can be shocking when the paint first goes up on the wall. Keep pulling the [color] through the furnishings, fabrics, curtains, and accessories. It will actually help tone things down. How many times have we been in a room where the owner started boldly with a color on the wall, but left the same fabrics and furnishings? A fully finished, polished room carries its color with pride. And that, in the long term, is the easiest to live with.

HOW DO YOU SELECT NO-FAIL COLOR SCHEMES?

I honestly believe nature is the best place to look for inspiration in color. The possibilities are seemingly limitless, and they're already out there in the world. It's sort of basic color theory in a way. If you look closely at a burgundy dahlia, you notice it's not just burgundy. It is several different shades from deep blood reds to purple. If you break that down, the same color scheme can work beautifully in a room. Start with something beautiful, and your end product can be. Cultivate a painter's eye, and all your color questions will be answered.

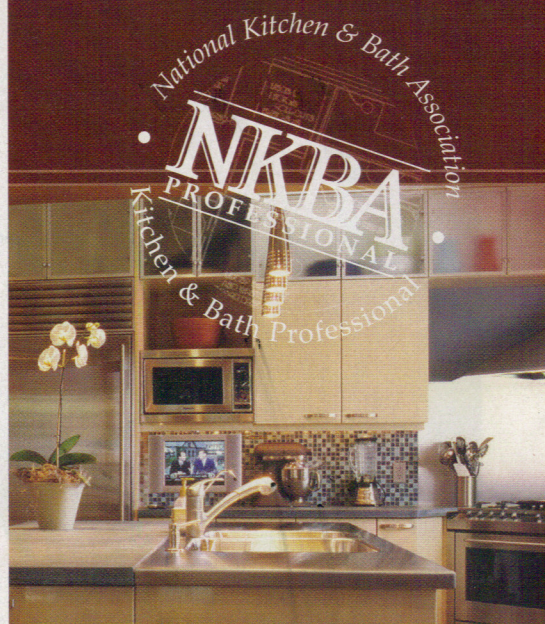
HOW DO YOU EVOLVE OR UPDATE A COLOR SCHEME? OR DON'T YOU?

I often say, "A room is done right once." Get it right the first time, and it will age gracefully. That said, rooms evolve as our lives do. You travel, you find new things, new people come into your life, and alteration may be necessary. Start with quality goods and a strong point of view, and let the patina of your life enrich your house. It never ceases to amaze me how much a room can hold, be it color or quantity of furnishings. Some of the exotica of your travels at first may seem clashing. But in time, this sophisticated alchemy always trumps any matchy-matchy intentions.

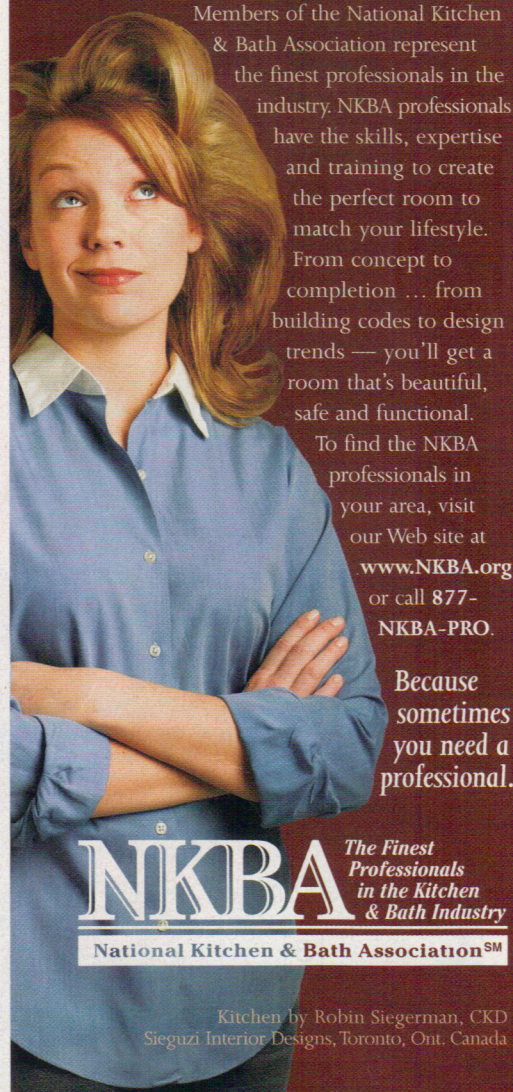
Learn more about Jamie Drake's color philosophy in his book, *Jamie Drake's New American Glamour*; Bulfinch Press; 2005; \$45.

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MOOD AND
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IT REGAL,
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by a professional.



Her hair-do was not.



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