

NAVIGATING A COLOURFUL WORLD

*Colour affects our moods
and buying habits, but colour
trends change yearly*

BY JULIE GEDEON



Deneb Ultra Violet, available at
www.lightcolorise.com



The Pantone 2018 colour of the year: "Ultra Violet"

WE ALL HAVE OUR FAVOURITE COLOURS, but how do they affect our moods? Marie-Chantal Milette has some answers. She knows that colour taps deeply into our brains to inspire us to feel upbeat or sad, calm or jumpy, wakeful or sleepy, and to influence the way we behave.

Milette, the founder/owner of the Montreal-area Kryptonite The Color Agency, is among fewer than 100 colour experts worldwide, according to fellow colour expert Jean-Gabriel Causse, the author of *L'étonnant pouvoir des couleurs*. Milette claimed her rightful place on this stage by predicting a Pantone colour of the year. She confidently announced before anyone else that "Radiant Orchid" – a blend of fuchsia, purple and pink – would be Pantone's colour of 2014.

"I analyzed the colours that were new but not yet trending at events that the media extensively covered in 2013, including the colour that would be called 'Radiant Orchid,' which was featured in Pantone's spring-summer trend report," she says. "The Duchess of Cambridge wore a radiant-orchid dress when she first stepped outside with the newly born Prince George; the Ravens who have a similar shade in their uniforms won the Super Bowl; former President Barack Obama's oldest daughter, Malia, wore a radiant-orchid coat for his inauguration; while his wife, Michelle, had gloves, and singer Kelly Clarkson a scarf. Ford also came out with a radiant-orchid Mustang, and the upswing in the economy called for a crazier colour." **EP**

Milette's fascination with colours began in childhood when her DIY father took her to hardware stores. "Bored, I started examining the paint-chips and their names," she recalls. "When I realized people were paid for naming colours, that's what I wanted to do."

Her father being a financial planner, and her mother an accountant, worried about her artistic bent. "Dad arranged for me to visit the Ogilvy & Mather agency when I was 12 and I quite liked it," she says. "So, I studied design and marketing at CEGEP."

She learned all the basics and became skilled with the latest software but didn't believe she had gained the expertise to stand out. "I asked Philippe Meunier, a founder of the Sid Lee Agency, to list the world's top 10 design schools," she says. "When I visited the Creative Circus in Atlanta, I was blown away by the innovative atmosphere, but also knew the school would challenge me; only 38 per cent of those registering actually graduated, which I did."



The Pantone 2014 colour of the year: "Radiant Orchid"

The vast majority of individuals (92.6 per cent of those surveyed in one study) put the most importance on visual factors when buying products, according to the Seoul International Color Expo secretariat's research.



Ferrari has paid for the exclusive use of its signature red, so the colour's "recipe" was removed from the Pantone catalogue and can't be copied by others. Tiffany & Co. trademarked its robin's-egg blue colour to prevent it from being used by other jewelers for gift packaging.



The Pantone 2017 colour of the year, "Greenery," was used for the Tiffany Damask Chair by Haute House, sold through Neiman Marcus



AJA by Justina Blakeney, available at Hygge and West



Sgrafitto II - Homage to Hiroshige by Michael Lentz, available at saatchiart.com

Her education landed her at a Montreal agency, but her desire to determine the best colours for people and their businesses persisted. "I was 23 when I started Kryptonite," she says. Her colour agency helps businesses – everything from spas to restaurant chains – to choose the best colours for their environments.

She read everything possible about colour but still wanted recognized expertise. So off she went to Bainbridge Island, near Seattle, to learn from Leatrice Eiseman, the executive director of the renowned Pantone Color Institute. Pantone Inc. has established global colour standardization with the coded fabric, plastic and print swatches within its Pantone Matching System. It assures that a company's logo or product appears in the identical tone worldwide.

Milette is now called upon to determine the best colours for brands or spaces.

When it comes to decor, she cautions against designing exclusively with favourite colours. "Look for a balance that reflects your personality but also creates the mood you desire for each space," she explains. "I love yellow, but I'm already hyper, so a bright yellow would push me over the edge."

Her place features neutral tones with pastel accents. Pastels create a relaxing effect but differ, too. Pink fosters calmness, while blue improves focus.

Colour affects each of the sexes uniquely, too. Grey office cubicles work for men but often make women sad, even depressed, according to a University of Texas study. The same research established that men find it difficult to concentrate in orange or purple settings but many women find them inspiring. ☞

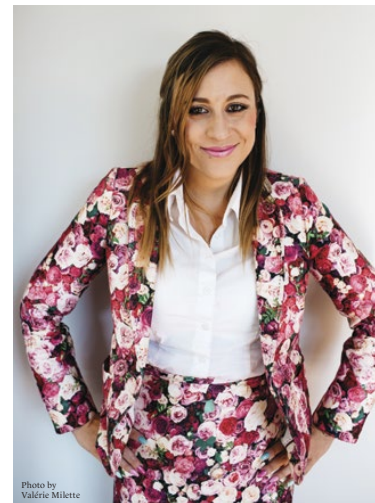


Photo by Valérie Millette



Watercolours - Watercolour Tiles, available at www.newembre.com

While bright tones can energize lethargic individuals, too much of any colour is ill-advised. An intense red in a bedroom may spark a couple's love life, but isn't recommended for anyone with sleep issues. "You need to determine the most pressing issue ... or have two bedrooms," Milette says, laughing. "People who favour red already tend to be passionate and intense. And red causes everyone's heart to beat faster - even people who are colour-blind - because it has the longest electromagnetic wavelength of any colour, and it stimulates the brain to release hormones."

Yellow, orange and red stimulate appetite, so they're good kitchen accents for finicky eaters but might not be the wisest choice for those who already love eating.

"Greenery" (15-0343) was Pantone's colour of 2017 and it lingers as people seek to reconnect with nature. "We're on technology devices so much that we're seeking to bring the outdoors into our homes," Milette says. "Green can lower our blood pressure but it depends on the shade: it has the largest number of shades visible to the human eye so while lime green inspires energetic creativity, a deep emerald or forest green has an earthy, grounding effect."

Ultra Violet (18-3838), Pantone's colour of the year for 2018, may reflect a subconscious desire to connect with our spiritual realm. The intense purple is often associated with a greater - even divine - power with its use in various religious ornamentation, as well as

representing the third-eye or "ajna" chakra, characterized by Eastern religions as one of the human body's seven energy centres. "It makes sense that many of us are seeking to connect with a higher spiritual level during these very technologically dominated and somewhat unstable times," Milette says.

Clues to this year's colour included the unexpected death of singer/guitarist Prince, whose favourite colour was the deep shade of purple, and Hillary Clinton wearing it to encourage a uniting of the Republican red and Democratic blue after her presidential defeat. "We also saw it on fashion runways and there was a Porsche and popular Jeep Wrangler featured in Ultra Violet last year," Milette adds.



Cambridge sofa, available at Restoration Hardware

The colour of the year is meant to tantalize people, encouraging them to enter a showroom. But once inside, most end up choosing grey for their sofa instead of the brighter new selection, according to colour expert Marie-Chantal Milette.



The Prince Estate and Pantone Color Institute unveiled a standardized purple hue last year, inspired by the late singer/songwriter's custom-made Yamaha purple piano. The colour is respectfully identified in the Pantone Matching System by Prince's "Love Symbol #2."

Dearly Beloved We Are Gathered Here Today To Get Through This Thing Called Life by Angie Jones, available at saatchiart.com

She reminds us that every type of colour has influence. For instance, wine experts in a recent study ranked the same wines higher when they were served under red or blue lighting rather than green or yellow, according to research at the Institute of Psychology at Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz, Germany.

A good tip for wine cellars.

"Earthy tones are associated with longevity, which is why darker brown is sought in finer furniture," Milette adds.

The white in many of our kitchens is to give our brains a reprieve from the day's information overload, she says.

Of the 23,000 to 35,000 decisions that adults make daily, according to psychologist Daniel Kahneman, author of the best-selling *Thinking Fast and Slow*, the first is often what to wear, which involves a conscious or unconscious choice of colour, Milette notes.

Children, who make about 3,000 decisions a day, according to Kahneman, prefer brighter and lighter shades, Milette learned at the Pantone Color Institute. "When asked to re-name orange in one study, many youngsters called it 'awesome,'" she says. "A Schauss Pink (think bubble gum) can help to calm a child, and navy blue helps with focus, but a child should be able to pick out the colours for his or her room with a little parental guidance so they reflect the youngster's personality within reason, stimulate creativity and, most importantly, make the child happy." ☛