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FAR LEFT: THE APTLY NAMED RED BAR AT THE SCOTTSDALE MONDRIAN, ARIZONA. **LEFT:** A STAIRCASE IN A STEPHEN VARADY PROJECT LEAPS OUT IN AN OTHERWISE WHITE INTERIOR. **RIGHT:** DESIGNER ANDREW SUVALSKY CHOSE A LIGHT BROWN FOR THE BATHROOM OF THIS NEW YORK APARTMENT. DETAILS, LAST PAGES.

RAINBOW tour

The easiest way to transform an interior is to change the colour scheme, adding vivid reds or yellows, or applying a more restrained hue.



ABOVE: FOR THIS MELBOURNE HOME NEXUS DESIGNS PAINTED THE WALLS IN RESENE PAINTS' BARDOT. **LEFT:** ARTIST JOAQUÍN MOLINA'S SUMMER HOUSE IN ARGENTINA FEATURES BRIGHT BURSTS OF YELLOW. **BELOW, LEFT:** A PANEL OF GOLD IN USING AUSTRALIAN COLOUR, A BOOK BY NEXUS DESIGN'S JANNE FAULKNER AND HARLEY ANSTEE. **BELOW, RIGHT:** PORTER'S PAINTS FRENCH WASH IN MODESTY AND TOBACCO PROVIDES A GENTEEL EFFECT.



FOR INSTANT EVIDENCE of the impact of colour, says Sydney architect Stephen Varady, look no further than Andy Warhol's iconic multiple prints: same image, different colourways. "That provides a good example of what a different effect each colour gives," he says. "I do tests like that myself sometimes."

For Varady, who has twice won a Dulux Colour Award, colour is fun, its impact both versatile and visceral. There is, for instance, the terrace house that the owners had initially wanted to be made all white throughout a contemporary extension. Varady gave them white, all right, except for one wall, which he painted with alternating stripes of green and blue in varying widths. "It's a surprise," he enthuses. "It's in a transition area so you glimpse it early on and then see it more and more as you progress through the house."

Varady doesn't subscribe to traditional tenets of what comprises a warm or cool colour. Blue and green might be considered cool, but that generalisation is limiting, he says, with response to a colour more a factor of its shade and intensity. There's blue and there's midnight blue and duck egg. "It's also more the combination of those colours that give the reaction, rather than each one separately."

In response to another client request for white, Varady suggested inserting an intensely red staircase as a transition zone. "That's quite an amazing experience – the space actually vibrates as you walk through it. It has quite an effect on your senses," he says.

Certainly, response to colour is nothing if not subjective. For one Varady house (see *V/L* January/February 2008, page 97), exterior fibre-cement panels were painted in chequerboard shades of brown. It won the Dulux award at the same time as it polarised the neighbourhood. That's the thing about the power of colour, though – indifference was never going to be an option.

Debbie-Lyn Ryan, a principal with Melbourne architecture and interior design firm McBride Charles Ryan, agrees, particularly when it comes to incorporating colour in the exteriors of their buildings. "I think it's important to get some colour into our facades because the environment is becoming greyer and we're getting higher and denser buildings," she says. "We're cutting down natural vegetation to do this so we have to give something back. I think that's why, around the world, there is a natural move to use more colour and pattern. People need relief from all that grey."

The impact of colour can never be overestimated, says Ryan, another Dulux Colour Award winner, for whom a recent meeting in colourless corporate offices "felt like death".

"What colour can bring is hope and joy," she adds. "Look at churches. They're spiritual places and they always have colour, with stained glass, colourful carpets and marble. They're uplifting." Ryan adores Paris's 13th-century Sainte-Chapelle: its rapturous juxtaposing of textures and patterns in exultant blues, crimson, vermilion and gold is undeniably over the top. "It's still



FAR LEFT: THE SOOTHING HUES OF THE ROSE BAR AT THE DELANO HOTEL IN MIAMI, FLORIDA. **LEFT:** A STAIRCASE IN PURPLE IN A McBRIDE CHARLES RYAN PROJECT IN PRAHRAN, MELBOURNE. **BELOW:** DESIGN FIRM FROM THE DESK OF LOLA CREATED A LAVENDER-TINGED HALLWAY FOR A WEST HOLLYWOOD HOME.



fabulous, though, and what it shows is that anything can work. The main message there is composition."

Ryan's other message is that colour is the easiest means of transforming the mood or look of any room in the house. "It's the cheapest thing you can do to make a major change to the way a space feels. I'm not denying that there's a real skill in composition, but so what? If you get it wrong, you just paint over the top. It's not the hugest problem."

Certainly, there's no lack of help in that area, with a plethora of seductive how-to books all offering handholding guidance. One global exponent of the intoxication of colour is Tricia Guild of London-based Designers Guild, whose books and products are sold in over 60 countries. That's a lot of colour, but for Guild it is a source of joy. It's a plaything. Combine it, she exhorts. Change it, experiment, alter moods, have fun. "If it feels right, do it. The spaces will feel happier for it and so will you."

Closer to home, in 2002 Janne Faulkner and Harley Anstee of Melbourne's Nexus Designs produced *Using Australian Colour* (Hardie Grant, \$45), a book that evolved from an initial inspiration of fistfuls of red soil and samplings of gum leaves, bark, wild flowers and native plants. Gradually constructing a palette, they developed colour schemes that celebrate the bold or subtle, vivid or sun-washed shadings peculiar to the urban or outback Australian landscape.

"It's the cheapest thing you can do to make a major change to the way a space feels. If you get it wrong, you just paint over the top. It's not the hugest problem"

Surely, though, in the steeped-in-colour stakes, it's hard to top Sydney interior designer Ann Gynge, who, as a child just naturally visualised the days of the week as colours. Didn't everyone? Gynge's Paddington cottage (see *VL* November/December 2007, page 123) features, among other sense-tingling elements, a pink and red spotted wall and multi-coloured striped carpet.

Having flouted the polite penchant for beige when she first went to work for designer Marion Hall Best in the 1960s, Gynge has never wavered in her love of the happiness that colour can bring. The difference these days is that she's far from alone. As Gynge told *VL*: "People used to be terrified of colour, but they're a lot braver now."

And what colours! With paint companies constantly devising headily tempting palettes, we're spoilt for choice and challenged to be individual. Subjective? Sure. Even Ryan confesses to a personal dislike of mustard. "Then again," she says, "mustard's very similar to amber and that could be perfectly gorgeous ..."

DEBORAH BARTLETT PITT



ABOVE: ANDREW SUVALSKY'S RHAPSODY IN BLUE FOR AN APARTMENT IN SOHO, NEW YORK. **RIGHT:** THE INNOVATIVE USE OF COLOUR IN McBRIDE CHARLES RYAN'S WYNNSTAY ROAD PROJECT, MELBOURNE. **BELOW:** A BATHROOM IN GREEN IN JOAQUIN MOLINA'S ARGENTINE SUMMER HOUSE.



BELOW, LEFT: A WALL OF COLOUR IN A STEPHEN VARADY HOUSE EXTENSION. **BELOW, RIGHT:** SYDNEY DESIGNER MARION HALL BEST'S APARTMENT, AS PHOTOGRAPHED IN 1973.

