

# Interior Architecture

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## My Understanding Of Color



Color is a wonderful phenomenon, and its presence often adds great qualities to our lives.

I sometimes like color(s) and I sometimes dislike color(s). I prefer some colors to others. I have a favorite color. Certain color(s) may 'mean' something to me. These are all attributes of 'me' more than of the color itself.

There are many boldly stated claims about color in the worlds of popular psychology and home decorating, to name only two.

Such claims should be taken with skepticism I believe because when explored more deeply it seems clear that these claims either do not prove to be true in any sense, or they are vastly overstating the impact of what are very small effects that cannot possibly be given causal credit for large outcomes.

My view of color is very much aligned with the views presented by Dr. Kenneth Fehrman, and Cherie Fehrman, in their book "Color: The Secret Influence" 2nd Edition, 2004, Prentice Hall.

- Some of the points made in this book that I find important are: (these are mostly direct quotations from the book)
- Everyone carries a bias toward color that began with birth, in the environments that surrounded them as they grew up.
- The way certain colors become preferred , or disliked, may be traced to happy, or unhappy, childhood associations, or to reactions in favor of or against the traditional symbolic meanings attached to them.
- Almost the only thing universally agreed upon is that red, orange, and yellow are equated with fire, while blue, green, and violet are associated with cool oceans, deep forests, and shadows. Beyond these two basic divisions there is little agreement about the physiological or psychological effects of color.
- Cultural associations with color can be strong, but they vary from culture to culture, and across time.
- Children do not necessarily like bright, primary, colors. When given broad choices, children will pick a broad array of colors.
- We pick up color signals from our families, from school, from television, from print media, and from our friends.
- Psychological measurements are often highly subjective and open to individual interpretation, and the interactions taking place with regard to color/light are so intricate and intertwined that it is difficult to separate them even in a laboratory.

In a study conducted by Dr. Fehrman it was found that pigment colors of equal saturation and brightness resulted in comparable arousal and task performance scores; the results did not support the belief that red is more arousing than blue.

*An acceptable color is defined by the object with which it is associated, and this relation is probably the product of cultural norms and expectations or subjective color bias.*

We expect living rooms to be white, while bathrooms are to be blue, for example.

With regard to excitement, or arousal, *the intensity of the color* appears to be of greater significance than the color itself.

Colors have been stereotyped by the public when it comes to emotions. In spite of physical evidence to the contrary, most people continue to equate red tones with excitement and activity and blue tones with passivity and tranquility in color - mood association research. *This is learned behavior.*

In understanding color it is important to differentiate between culturally learned color associations and true biological responses.

Research on the emotional aspects of color has for the most part resulted in a gross oversimplification of a very involved process.

Colors do not contain any inherent emotional triggers. Rather, it is more likely that our changing moods and emotions caused by our own physiological and psychological makeup at the moment interact with color to create preferences and associations that we then link to the color-emotion response itself.

At constant distance, bright colors appear nearer than dark ones.

Perception of spaciousness is not attributed to specific colors, but rather to the brightness or darkness of a color.

Spatial impressions are highly influenced by contrast effects, particularly brightness differences between objects and backgrounds.

Through the process of living we expect to see certain things, and those are the things we see.

Part of our visual process is that of learned response. We expect a lemon to be yellow, and so we are likely to see it remain yellow, even if lighting conditions change. Extrapolations cannot be reliably made from color taken out of context in laboratory experiments because of the way humans process color information.

Color preference in real settings is partially determined by the social function of the interior space.

Visible light is apparently able to penetrate all mammalian tissues to a considerable depth. It has even been detected with the brain of a living sheep. This means that each of the various effects of light on mammalian tissues has either a direct or an indirect effect -- but it has an effect -- even though we may not be aware of it.

Different wave lengths of light seem to affect some physical, metabolic, process within a living body. We do not yet know precisely how or why this happens.