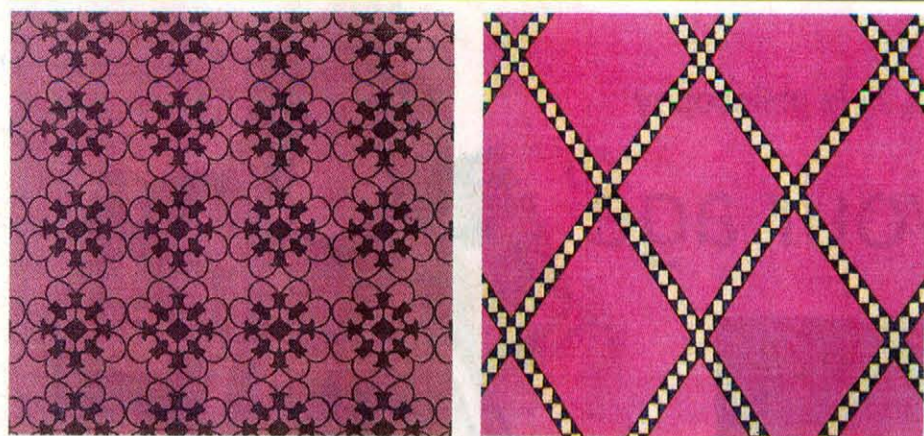


COVER STORY



Take a walk on the mild side with a mellow mauve rug underfoot. From left: Textile designer Madeline Weinrib's Muna cotton carpet in lavender, from \$1,000 (U.S.), Rocco cotton carpet in pink, from \$775 (U.S.) through madelineweinrib.com.

Purple's moodier cousin may be elusive and unpredictable, but it's also refreshing, relaxing and light as air. And now that designers are re-embracing the hue, the dusky shade is coming out of the shadows

All the right mauves



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At last week's Color Marketing Group conference in Montreal, trend forecasters predicted a movement in the coming year toward colour palettes full of softer, fresher, light-on-their-toes hues.

Although mauve would seem like a shoo-in for such a palette, the consensus at one of the round-table discussions was that it is always such a struggle for the colour to gain popular acceptance in its palest forms and as a complex neutral.

But mauves, lilacs and lavenders of every kind seem to be popping out like spring flowers right now.

Like those with a passion for purple, anyone mad about mauve usually needs lots of it in their home and wardrobe to satiate his or her craving.

Yet designers tend to avoid it like the plague because it is one of the most difficult colours to get right.

Mauve was "invented" in 1856 by British chemist William Perkin, who named the colour after a flower - mallow - that he thought sounded prettier in French. The hue made its fashion debut in the 1860s and became so popular that the years that followed came to be known as the Mauve Decade.

By the 1870s, artist Claude Monet was embracing new synthetic paint colours because they were bright, ready-made and affordable, but not mauve.

He believed that it was the colour of ether or atmosphere and that no synthetic colour could achieve such subtlety.

He ultimately mixed up his own mauves to create his famous tonal *enveloppe*, the veil of soft colour that unified the other colours in many of his paintings.

These days, designers are similarly cautious about using mauve because it's an ambivalent and unsettling colour.

It can't decide if it's warm or cool, happy or sad.

The colour's ethereal qualities can either seem refreshing and relaxing or old-fashioned and depressing.

A simple shift in nuance can make the difference.

What also makes mauve tricky is its elusiveness - it plays at the edge of visibility. In the colour spectrum, the hue is an aura radiating out from blue toward the unseen. Sunlight is infused with yellow, so mauve - its complement - is the inconspicuous colour that fills shadows. Mauve marks the day with stunningly beautiful but brief appearances in the twilight moments of sunrise



and sunset. In nature, mauves infuse the barren landscapes of spring and fall but only when you tune your eye into them. Spring's earliest blooms reveal mauve's bolder self - the punchy accent colour that signals new beginnings.

Mauve in home decor works the same way. Used on a small scale as an accent tone, mauve is like fresh air and the smell of lavender - a cleansing energizer. It can lift an earthy palette up and looks exotic with reds and magentas. It also makes a good yin to the yang of masculine colours such as grey, charcoal or brown.

I wanted to use a hint of mauve once for the exterior trim of some clients' colourful homes in the Bahamas. When I put samples of soft, grey-whites tinged with mauve up on a board for observing, however, the mauve got stronger every day. I then put up ones with less and less tint and only eventually found one that was subtle enough (Benjamin Moore's Portland Gray 2109-

60) and another that looked mauve only in some light and not in others (BM's A la Mode 2109-70).

On another occasion, I used mauve (Pittsburgh Paint's Silver Chalice 443-3) for the ceiling of my daughter's turquoise bedroom because it is more atmospheric and interesting than white and can be funky in some lighting conditions and barely there in others.

Another designer, Toronto's Holly Dymont, finds mauve sombre and serious but sophisticated when used with grey. Her preference is its bluer, bolder, happier side: lilac. Palette-wise, Dymont recommends doing a country kitchen in mauve with shiny white trim and spring-green accents.

Kate Zeidler of Toronto-based Kate Zeidler Interior Design, meanwhile, proposes mauve as a fresh alternative to pink in a girl's bedroom. Her strategy is to start with fabrics like those of British designer Trisha Guild, who offers clean and punchy mauves. The walls

can then be painted a soft and atmospheric tone such as Benjamin Moore's Winter Gray 2117-60.

If one of Melody Duron's clients wants mauve, the co-principal of Toronto's ColeDuron Interior Design suggests both complex old mauves (such as BM's Porcelain 2113-60 or Farrow and Ball's Calamine) or fresher lilacs (Pratt & Lambert's Winsome Lilac 1127, Lilac Phlox 1133 or Dove 1138), but never in dining rooms or kitchens. (Mauve is an appetite suppressant.)

Finally, Theresa Casey of Toronto-based Casey Design Group took the plunge by combining periwinkle (Farrow and Ball's Pitch Blue) with lavender (BM's Blue Orchid 2069-50) to transform an ordinary living and dining room.

Her mad-for-mauve client was thrilled with the dramatic results - and with the fact that everyone finally seems to be catching up with her by seeing the beauty in this magical, mysterious colour.



The range of mauve products is as varied as the colour. From top: Duke of Alba occasional chair with lacquered lavender beechwood frame, \$3,095 at William Switzer & Associates (williamswitzercollection.com). Fresh Currant scented candle by Kobo, \$36 at EyeSpy (eyespygifts.com). Large Cherub lamp in amethyst, \$415 (U.S.) through ochrestore.com. Fauna Pico organic-cotton elephant pillow, \$31.95 at EyeSpy.

Centre of page: Benjamin Moore's new Aura paint collection includes a soft mauve shade (shown on wall) called Inspired (AF-595). \$65 per gallon at paint store across Canada (benjaminmoore.ca).

