

# A shade with Tiggerific appeal



**JANICE LINDSAY**  
**COLOUR WATCH**

style@globeandmail.com

In my colour design work, I have always found orange a hard sell.

Its virtues are often its vices: too friendly and vibrant to be sophisticated, too loud to be cool.

But as I walked past a Mark Rothko canvas at the Museum of Modern Art in New York not long ago and admired how beautifully the artist played one orange against another, I realized that it is both beautiful and underappreciated.

It is dynamic without being as bright as yellow, warm without being as aggressive as red. It flatters the complexion. And it makes a dull, windowless room glow in a way that white cannot.

My verdict: It's time to rescue orange from its associations to psychedelia, fast-food eateries and bike shops.

Intentionally and not, artists have, for years, been using orange to greater effect and mak-

ing it way more appealing.

Danish-Icelandic artist Olafur Eliasson's *Weather Report* at London's Tate Gallery was an installation of industrial orange lights that recreated nature's most potent force – the sun – as a huge fuzzy-edged orb.

This is the kind of orange lighting that looks hideous in parking lots because it destroys all colour except black and orange. Eliasson, though, made it magic. He installed mirrors on the ceiling of the great Turbine Hall, doubling the size of the orange-infused space. Many of the visitors were prompted to locate their distant reflections by lying on their backs and wiggling their arms and legs, becoming a multitude of microbe-like figures united in an orange cosmos.

And then there were *The Gates*, the installation by Christo and his orange-haired spouse Jean-Claude in New York's Central Park. The 7,500 16-foot-high orange gates sporting billowing silk in a matching colour ran from 59th Street almost to the Metropolitan Museum of Art at 110th. The colour of the installation was described by Christo as saffron, but saffron is more yellow (like the colour of New York taxi cabs) and not the colour of

traffic cones (which was what *The Gates* resembled). Perhaps Christo wanted his orange to be associated with monks' robes rather than what it really looked like: hunters' jackets and safety clothing.

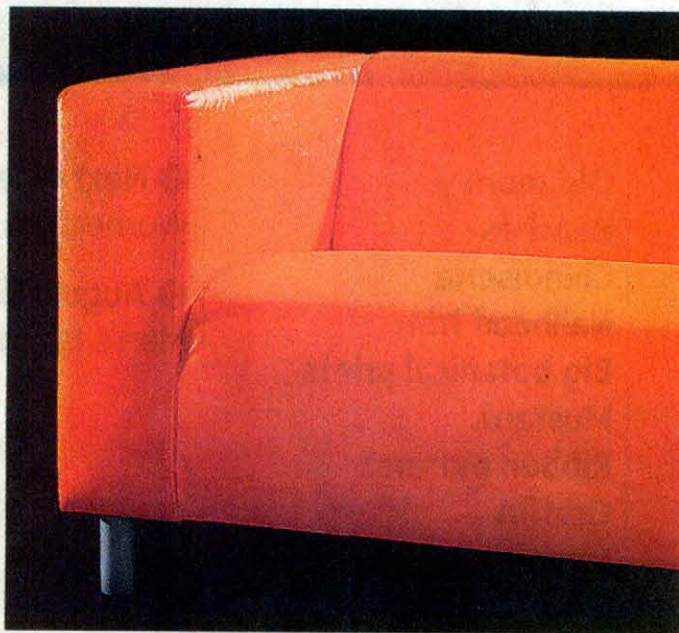
A couple of years ago, a group of Detroit artists who go by their first names – Christian, Jacques, Greg, Mike and Andy – chose Tiggerific, an orange from Home Depot, to make their city a better place.

Object Orange, as they called their project, was devised to draw attention to Detroit's inertia when it came to dealing with 7,000 abandoned and derelict buildings.

Risking fines of up to \$1,000 and 90 days in jail, the artists began stealing out at night and painting over every inch of burned, broken and peeling façades with their attention-grabbing orange.

Although the mayor's office called their actions "unlawful vandalism," several of the ruins were razed and cleared within months of being painted.

The goal of the artists had been to create bold social statements, not attractive art. But when orange, a happy and optimistic hue, is applied to disintegrating surfaces and decaying architectural elements, even the most run-down edifice can



Colour-starved? 'Skinnarp orange' is a fresh new option for Ikea's Klippan sofa, \$399 at Ikea ([www.ikea.ca](http://www.ikea.ca)).

## Our favourite oranges for fall

» Farrow & Ball's Orangery (70), a creamy orange with sunny undertones  
» Benjamin Moore's Buttered Yam (AF-230), a spicy pumpkin orange from the brand's Affinity series

» Para Paints' Dancing Flames (P5068-73), a soft, warm orange for "sultry" effect  
» Danny Sinopoli

take on a haunting beauty. In Detroit, some of the newly orange buildings even cast a golden glow across nearby highways at sunset.

Dutch starchitect Rem Koolhaas has also embraced the colour. At his student centre for the Illinois Institute of Technology in Chicago, orange was used for signage, architectural details and large glazed walls through which colour-starved Modernist buildings designed in the past century by Ludwig Mies van der Rohe can be viewed through a bright new lens.

Wire honeycombs embedded between double panes of orange glass bend the light of car headlights at night and recast sunlight as molten orange spheres by day.

Maybe it's a coincidence that the effect echoes that of *The Weather Report*.

And maybe it's a coincidence that, even though my own wardrobe is about as colourful as one of Mies's buildings, I recently bought a crazy orange jacket to test-drive the colour on my own exterior.

Maybe it's time to recognize the beauty in a happy colour – even if it is a bit loud.

» Janice Lindsay is a Toronto colour and design consultant. 416-961-6281, [pinkcolouranddesign.com](http://pinkcolouranddesign.com)