

# THOMAS ALLEN | PAINT BY NUMBER 5

Nearly sixty years ago, consumers (or housewives to be more specific) selected wall coverings to match their drapes, rugs and furniture. Retailers developed visual color systems (e.g. Sears Roebuck and Company's Color Harmony Selector) to make choosing a paint color fun, easy and fool-proof. Color names, like Sunshine Yellow, Smoke Gray and Red Coral, were straightforward and uncomplicated. After all, it was just paint.

*"Color is your choice, but be sure it compliments the furnishings you already have. Select a tone from your drapery fabric, or a light blending of your floor covering. It's easy to find just the tone you want, selected from one of the paint manufacturers' color systems."* —**Better Homes and Gardens Decorating Book ©1956**

*"It starts at Sears Color Bank where you select the perfect color scheme to go with your present rug or draperies."*

—**Sears Roebuck and Company Master Mixed Interior Finishes brochure ©1957**

Today, home improvement stores devote major real estate to paint with brightly illuminated displays packed with thousands of pigmented samples saturated with potential. Why? Because something truly remarkable has happened to color (the science of human perception measured by hue, chroma and value): it's come to life! With names like Heartbeat, Inhale, Exhale and Sigh, housepaint has been humanized and it wants to make our lives better. So-much-so that paint manufacturers have appointed color 'ambassadors' to keep us from making dull color choices.

*"Using a hushed palette kissed with misted mauves and atmospheric hues is a simple way to create a subtle touch of bohemia that hits the sweet spot between effortless and artistic."*

—**Dutch Boy DAYDREAM color brochure ©2015**

*"The color (blue) is enthusiastically-positive and, like the horizon, represents possibility. It's charismatic and will be noticed wherever you put it."*

—**PPG Architectural Coatings 2015 Color Trends**

*"Pantone's Color of the Year is All About Gender Fluidity."*

—**Fortune Magazine's headline announcing Pantone's Color of the Year for 2016**

Did this absurd marketing tactic, aimed at coloring my emotions, influence my sample choices (stockpiled and catalogued over the past two years)? Absolutely not. In fact, color had nothing to do with it. The arbitrary names printed on each lacquered card are what did it for me. Words like Shipwreck, Magical and Leaping Lizard recall a childhood spent sitting in front of the television while Clear Blue Sky, Blowfish and Sea Urchin picture a not-so-colorful reality—deftly rendered with a flick of a scalpel blade.

At the opposite end of the spectrum are the window posters. They are all about color. Real color. Color so brutally honest that it had to be sampled directly from photographs of the actual thing it represents. These colors have no life because they are life. Life that is beautiful, ugly and colorful every step of the way.

