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SEPTEMBER 2016
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THE POWER OF PINK

The coolest colour to have in your home right now? It has to be pink. We investigate its journey from style outsider to hue of the moment.

Words AMY BRADFORD

It's curious how the meaning of colours changes over time. In the case of pink, it has undergone more metamorphoses than most, emerging at the start of the 21st century as one of the most semantically charged hues of the age. Few will have failed to notice, or have an opinion on, the 'pinkification' of products for girls and women, or the common association of pink with sugar-coated artificiality.

Pink is starting to be reclaimed as a colour of high fashion (check out Chanel's A/W16 collection, right), but it is in the context of interiors that it is truly breaking free of hackneyed gender stereotypes. Scandinavian design brands have embraced it wholeheartedly, giving us contemporary sticking-plaster and blush shades which, teamed with grey, pale wood and punchier hues like mustard, banish all connotations of Barbie's mansion. Handled this way, pink is a colour that even men might consider for their homes. The Japanese design studio Nendo, renowned for its spare, unfussy designs, has just kitted out a hat shop at Tokyo's Seibu Shibuya department store (far right) in powder pink and chocolate hues. Add to this the fact that Kelly Hoppen, the queen of neutrals, is designing pink products – one of her recent homeware collections is entitled 'La Vie en Rose' – and you can be sure that the shade is leaving its frivolous image behind.

Pink's relationship to gender has long been marked, but not always necessarily in the way that we understand now. In ancient China, blue fabric dyes were more expensive than pink ones, so they were reserved for boys' clothing. The word 'pink' entered the English language in the 17th century, possibly from ▶

From top The new **furniture** collection by John Louis Deniot for Baker features soft pastels, from £1,547 for a side table (bakerfurniture.com). Chanel **catwalk shots** A/W16. The **hat department** in Seibu Shibuya, designed by Nendo. 'Swan' **chair** by Arne Jacobsen, £2,829, Fritz Hansen (fritzhansen.com)



the Dutch flower 'pinken' – a decidedly feminine origin. But in 18th-century Europe, the colour went unisex: it was fashionable for men as well as women to sport rosy fabrics.

Segregation returned in the 19th century, but in a different guise. Pink was now regarded as a diminutive of warlike red, and thus best for boys; girls began to be dressed in powder blue, a paler version of the ultramarine reserved for the Virgin Mary's robes in religious paintings. A fluctuation in the gender assignment of pink and blue continued until the 1940s, by which time marketeers had decided that pink was the shade for girls. The extent to which this strategy succeeded may be gauged by looking at 1950s movie starlet Jayne Mansfield's Hollywood home, also known as the Pink Palace, where everything from the masonry to the shagpile-carpeted bathroom (below right) was Pepto-Bismol pink.

Given the colour's protean identity, it's no wonder that many people are wary of it. Pink-phobes will either be cured or killed by India Mahdavi's design for the Gallery at Sketch in London (bottom right), where swathes of marshmallow velvet are offset with edgier patchwork marble floors, yellow-gold details and earthy David Shrigley cartoons. If this is too much, study the collections of

'IT'S A COLOUR FOR THE PERSON WHO WANTS A MORE PERSONAL HOME. IT CAN BE VERY IN-YOUR-FACE OR DUSTY AND INNOCENT'

Danish brands Fritz Hansen and Muuto, where pink is applied with a delicate touch. The former recently launched Arne Jacobsen's classic 'Swan' chair in a pale-pink nubuck leather (see previous page). 'Pink brings softness and sophistication to an object,' says Christian Andersen, the company's head of design. 'It goes very well with darker colours, adding life to an interior.' Nina Bruun, design manager at Muuto, points to pink's 'joy and positivity. It's a colour for the person who wants a more personal home; it can be very in-your-face or dusty and innocent.' Mood-lifting powers are also cited by Kelly Hoppen in her assessment of light pink: 'It's a settling, naturally soothing colour,' she says. 'It can be paired with white, taupe and black, because it isn't as harsh as blue.' The same can't be said for bright pinks, though, which Hoppen decries as 'garish and unharmonious'.

Gentle pinks also have the advantage of creating a complexion-enhancing glow, particularly when used on walls or as lighting. Joa Studholme, international colour consultant at Farrow & Ball, self-confessed 'colour geek' and co-author of new book *Farrow & Ball: How to Decorate* (Mitchell Beazley, £30), is a fan of the brand's newly launched 'Peignoir' shade. 'It's the softest pink with a great big dose of grey, which makes it relaxed and romantic,' she says. 'Although it's warm, it's not sugary or infantile, and its almost dusty quality proves that pink is not just for girls.' She recommends the shade for candle-lit dining rooms as well as boudoirs.

Hoppen and Studholme get to the heart of pink's appeal, though, when they link it to a sense of calm and safety. 'We love our homes more and more, using them as a place for escapism, a space in which to live and breathe,' says Studholme. 'This return to pink shades is almost instinctive – they're life-giving, exactly the opposite of our hard-edged, flat-screened existence.' Put like that, who could resist the power of pink?

Interiors, from top Room set by Muuto including 'Five' pouf (£807) and 'Oslo' sofa (£2,695), both by Anderssen & Voll, Nest (nest.co.uk). The shagpile-carpeted bathroom in Jayne Mansfield's Pink Palace home. India Mahdavi's Gallery restaurant at Sketch London. Walls painted in 'Setting Plaster' by Farrow & Ball (£39.50 for 2.5 litres; farrow-ball.com)



Pink marble and brass mix in the 'Band Rosa' table by Bethan Gray, £2,460, Harrods (harrods.com)



Rounded edges and brass details make this 'Stay' dining chair by Nika Zupanc for Sé irresistible, £1,030 (se-collections.com)

Our favourite pink paint shades (from top): 'The Petal that Falls from the Vase to the Face', £34.38, Francesca's Paint (francescaspaint.com). 'Dorchester Pink', £38 for 2.5 litres, Little Greene (littlegreene.com). 'French Rose', £40 for 2.5 litre, Sanderson (sanderson-uk.com)



The 'Diaz Credenza' sideboard, part of Kelly Hoppen's 'Retrospective' collection, £2,179, and geometric vases, from £35 each (kellyhoppen.com)



Crushed linen 'Tea Rose' duvet cover, from £215, Volga Linen (volgalinen.co.uk)



HISTORY OF A COLOUR PINK

1300s-1500s

Pink is used to depict rosy flesh in Renaissance paintings; the Christ child is also often shown dressed in pink. Italian Mannerist painter Jacopo Pontormo paints pink robes on both men and women.



1600s

The first use in English of the word pink to describe a colour. It is possibly influenced by the colour of dianthus flowers, known as 'pinken' in Dutch.



1780

French queen Marie Antoinette dyes her blonde hair a rosy shade using a mixture of rhubarb, sandalwood and spices.



1937

Fashion designer Schiaparelli gives us an early example of mass-marketed pink products when she launches her perfume 'Shocking', served up in packaging designed by Italian-French Surrealist artist Leonor Fini.



1992

Still regarded as a typically feminine hue, pink – in shades from shocking to blush – becomes the official ribbon colour for national Breast Cancer Awareness campaigns.

2015

Autumn/winter fashion collections by the likes of Alexander McQueen (right) are awash with pastel pink, and Fritz Hansen launches a 'dusty rose' version of Arne Jacobsen's 'Swan' chair (shown on previous page).



2016

The launch of Dyson's 'supersonic' hairdryer causes slight controversy when it appears it's only available in fuchsia pink (there is also a white/silver version). **ES**

PICTURES: RETRA BINGEL; GETTY IMAGES; TUDOR; ALAMY; MICHAEL SINCLAIR; MIKOSU TONDO