

The
**ENGLISH
HOME**



Celebrating the essence of English style

April 2018 | Issue 158 | £4.30 | UK Edition

DECORATING SPECIAL

The best new fabrics & wallpapers in the latest collections

**SPA BATHROOMS
PERFECT PAINTS
SPRING UPDATES**

**Six design
destinations**
Inspiring work by
legendary names

Space & flow

Creating balance & cohesion from room to room



Painted PERFECTION

Choosing paints is more than just about selecting the right colour. Here, we consider the ingredients, coverage, longevity and other practical factors, as well as aesthetic qualities





Choosing paints from the myriad options available can seem an almost impossible task and it can be difficult to understand what makes one paint different from another. Ultimately paint choices are often dictated by colour preference, but there are a whole host of elements that impact upon how this colour is achieved and how it will look once applied to walls. It can be tricky to understand why 'designer' or trade paints differ to 'own brand' tins on the shelf in DIY stores. Unlike fabrics, where the quality can immediately be felt, paint tends to look pretty much the same from tin to tin, so understanding the ingredients and processes is important in order to understand how and why luxury paints achieve a better finish.

Paint has three essential components: pigment, resin and solvent. Pigment adds the colour and resin acts as a binder to hold the pigment together and make the paint adhere to a surface. Solvent carries the pigment and resin. The solvent can be water in a water-based paint, or white spirit (generally) in an oil-based paint. The solvent evaporates during the drying process leaving the dried, or cured, pigmented resin on the surface. Oli Jones, marketing and project manager at Bailey Paints, a specialist paint supplier, explains, "A paint can be determined in quality not only by the raw materials used, but also the ratio of these three core components. Pigments are expensive so increasing these adds costs. Farrow & Ball, for example, is known for its highly pigmented paint (which gives it that very distinctive look). Resins also vary wildly in quality and a good one will have characteristics such as better colour retention, adhesion,

scrubbability and longevity." Additives are also used and these will impact on drying times, opacity, flow and coverage. More expensive paints tend to have very carefully formulated recipes to perfect these elements.

Jones reveals that Bailey Paints classifies paints under three categories. Firstly, retail – pre-mixed paints most readily available in DIY stores. Jones says that these are designed to be inexpensive, and so the quality may suffer as a result. Secondly, trade paints, generally a trade version of retail paints – Crown or Dulux Trade, for example – and tend to be of a high quality to appeal to professional decorators and builders who want to complete jobs on time to a high standard. They tend to be reliable and require fewer coats and also come in a wealth of colours and are most economical over time. Thirdly and finally, are designer paints. These are "at the top end of the market," says Jones, and are made from high-quality raw ingredients, so offer exceptional performance, too. Jones says these luxury paints have a strong self-image and brand with carefully curated colour palettes – most often with names that 'tell a story' and offer a more exclusive 'style' element for a beautifully decorated home.

COLOUR CHOICES

The specific hue chosen is technically speaking the final aspect of choosing paint, as initially there is perhaps only a vague notion of a type of colour desired. Depending upon taste or style of home, there are certain brands whose colours will instantly appeal. A quick look at colour charts will immediately draw a homeowner, decorator or designer to particular brands. As mentioned, whilst some companies have vast ranges that cover almost

ABOVE The Designers Guild paint chart is painted rather than printed in order to offer accurate samples of its colours.

Perfect Matt Emulsion, £44 for 2.5l, Designers Guild

OPPOSITE Sanderson offers pretty and timeless colours. Painting a large sample is always advisable to ensure the right colour choice is made. Matt Emulsion, from £43 for 2.5l, Sanderson



the entire colour spectrum, there are some with more tightly curated palettes designed to appeal to a specific customer base. Cassandra Ellis offers just 18 carefully chosen colours in her Ellis Paint Collection. The colours in her comforting palette work well together and offer enough choice to suit many homes, and are focused on muted neutrals and cossetting dark hues. Designers Guild offers a wide choice, specialising in brights – we particularly admire their intense blue shades. Zoffany's latest Alchemy of Colour collection has deliciously intense jewel shades for dramatic interiors. We find Sanderson's timeless palette eminently suitable for graceful English homes, and Earthborn has playful colours in its range that are ideal for children's rooms.

Those looking for heritage colours for period properties often gravitate towards Farrow & Ball, Little Greene, Fired Earth or Edward Bulmer Natural Paint, who all have ranges for achieving a historically sympathetic look. Patrick Baty's Papers and Paints offers a huge range of historical colours and a colour matching service – ideal for those restoring a property authentically or with a very specific colour in mind. Having a sense of who offers the right type of colours is a good starting point when choosing paints, but there are other considerations, too.

ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS

Natural, organic, eco-friendly and plastic-free are all terms that might be applied to some brands, and might be important considerations for a paint-buyer. The phrase 'volatile organic compounds' (VOCs) is often heard when looking at the credentials of a particular paint and refers to the emissions from solvents found in paints (and other household items, including cleaning agents, cosmetics and aerosols) that affect the air we breathe. These can be of concern to those with allergies or conditions such as

asthma, and generally speaking, water-based paints tend to have a very low VOC content. Although some paints may claim to be free from VOCs, it is worth noting that this is almost impossible since all paints will emit a small level since the drying process is a chemical one – transforming a liquid to a solid; but, essentially, water-based paints will be virtually VOC free, as the percentage is usually less than 0.2%. Most oil-based paints will tend to have a slightly higher VOC rating and also have longer drying times. However, water-based paints for finishes with a soft sheen, such as egg-shell, are widely available.

Many paints will contain acrylic or vinyl to act as a highly durable resin. If avoiding plastic is a key concern, seek 'natural' and 'organic' paints from companies such as Lakeland, Earthborn and Edward Bulmer Natural Paint. The latter lists all its natural and sustainably produced ingredients on its website. "This natural paint is 20 times more breathable than plastic paint. It is particularly suitable for use in old buildings and over lime plaster," Edward Bulmer explains. Farrow & Ball's Limewash range is a good choice for historic buildings, too, as is the paint from Francesca's Paints, a lime wash specialist – particularly if looking for something a little more adventurous. Its JJK Gurukulam range, inspired by the colours of India, includes a fantastic red and aqua, amongst others.

PERFECT FINISH

Different paint brands also use very different recipes, which result in different finishes. For example, Mylands has used finely ground marble powder to give an ultra hard-wearing finish for over 130 years. Some brands add chalks to water-based matt emulsions to provide a soft, matt, chalky texture when dry. Other ingredients can offer optimum performance, too. Helen Shaw, marketing ▶

ABOVE LEFT
Different shades of Lead by Paint & Paper Library from its Architectural Colours range have been used in this entrance hall to provide subtle differences between the walls, ceiling, cornice and woodwork.

Walls in Lead, from £46.50 for 2.5l Pure Flat Emulsion, Paint & Paper Library

ABOVE MIDDLE
Farrow & Ball offers deeply pigmented hues that suit period properties. *Walls in Dimity, Joa's White and All White, from £45 for 2.5l Estate Emulsion, all Farrow & Ball*

ABOVE RIGHT
As well as a paint chart, Little Greene also offers Colour Scales for lighter and darker shades of a colour family. *Walls in Aquamarine Pale and Aquamarine Mid, from £42 for 2.5l Absolute Matt Emulsion, Little Greene*

The Ellis Paint
Collection by
Cassandra Ellis offers
a tightly curated
palette of 18 colours,
in whites, lights,
mediums and darks.
From £59 for 2.5l
Pure Flat Emulsion,
Ellis Paint Collection



director of Benjamin Moore UK states, "Our Gennex waterborn colourants have minimal VOCs but actually fortify the paint, so it maintains its original viscosity in all colours, delivering a more durable finish, and maintaining true scrubability."

Even within a brand there is often a range of different options - including scrubbable paints for hallways and kitchens, and ultra-matt finishes. Additives can also affect the coverage a paint offers - clay paints, such as Earthborn's, have a thicker consistency and cover well in one or two coats. Paints by Fired Earth, Little Greene and Konig Colours all have lovely creamy textures which feel smooth to paint with and cover well.

The premium nature of some paints may require special preparation to ensure optimum results. "Due to the high-quality ingredients and unique formulations of our paint we recommend our 'Farrow & Ball system' to achieve our distinctive depth of colour," Gareth Hayfield, head of research and technical development at Farrow & Ball explains. This includes cleaning surfaces to remove dirt and grease before applying a coat of its Primer & Undercoat, followed by two coats of the chosen colour. Farrow & Ball has specific undercoats designed for the tone of each of its 132 paint colours. It is worth checking with a chosen paint brand whether this process is required - Fenwick & Tilbrook, for example, claims its paint is "self-priming so there is no need for any special primer if painting a virgin surface or a surface previously painted with a water-based paint."

FINAL DECISIONS

To test coverage and pigment saturation of favoured colours and brands we always recommend painting at least an A4-size piece of card to try the colour in different areas. It is also worth painting an area of wall to see how many coats will be required to cover any existing colour.

Drying times can differ considerably and are worth bearing in mind as this can impact on cost, particularly if employing a decorator. Konig Colours claims a super-speedy drying time of touch dry within 20 minutes and recoatable in two hours. Of course, a professional decorator may have their own preferences and be able to guide decisions. London-based decorating firm Paint the Town Green has gone so far as to develop its own range of environmentally friendly, washable paints and with a range of well-created colours. Renowned interior designer Nicky Haslam recently worked with them to create an exclusive palette and was impressed with the colour accuracy, saying, "whatever's on the walls is the colour it says it is in the sample, which is very rare."

Ultimately, the choice of paint will come back to the right colour. High-end paint manufacturers invest in hand-painted colour cards rather than a printed block to give the most accurate depiction of the colours. Some brands also offer ready-painted large tester cards or complete palettes, for a small fee. Testing paints is always beneficial - as we have mentioned, it gives an opportunity to see how well a paint covers, as well as what it is like to paint with; but is also crucial for ensuring the right colour is chosen. What looks beautiful in a friend's house may look dull in the different light and proportions of one's own home. Likewise that 'perfect' shade seen in the pages



of a magazine will likely be very different in real life, because printing inks use a blend of cyan, magenta and yellow, whereas paints are a blend of red, green and blue. Most paint charts are helpfully laid out so if a particular hue is not quite right, often the one next to it might be. Or it may be that another area of the chart needs exploring, for instance, if a yellow-based cream is too cool, going to the warmer red-based tones will work much better. For a cohesive look across walls, ceilings and woodwork, Paint & Paper Library offers its Architectural Colours collection which uses "different strengths of the same pigments to achieve subtle shade differentiations within any interior."

Choosing a paint deserves the same attention as choosing a fabric or wallpaper, as whilst it is a surface that can be easily changed, it is still an investment that makes a huge impact upon the success of a decorative scheme. For those who like to ring the changes frequently, retail paint will perform well and can easily be updated at relatively low cost. For more long-term projects, investing time and money in a trade or designer paint will pay dividends in practical and aesthetic terms. ■

TOP Fenwick & Tilbrook makes paints with great opacity and coverage. It also makes paints to order. *Fenwick & Tilbrook Pure Matt emulsion, £47 for 2.5l*
 ABOVE Edward Bulmer Natural Paint has hand-painted colour blocks which offer a larger swatch and also include a historical paint key for following historical precedent within a period home. *Hand-Painted Colour Block, £15, Edward Bulmer Natural Paint*