

Create your own Color Story by Laura Buzard

Every crafter knows the feeling: You go into your favorite craft store and find yourself intoxicated by color. You see all of the beads, or yarn, or fabric and sense all of the potential projects to be made. This moment can be exciting, but can be overwhelming too.

Where do you start? How do you focus and choose the materials that you need? Many times, we stick with what we know and fall into a trap: the color rut. Sure, it's great to have a favorite hue. But if you always find yourself choosing the same palette, it's time to be bold and to challenge your use of color. You'll discover a world of new ideas and your design sensibility will grow.

Here is a simple method for breaking out of the color doldrums and finding inspiration in the world around you.



Step One: Choose an inspiration object

Take a spin around the produce section with new eyes on the crimson cherries, or golden apples. Visit your favorite thrift store and look at the 1960s teacups or dishtowels.

Wherever you go for inspiration, you have one objective: find an item that you will use to inspire your color story. Maybe you want to knit a cozy scarf for your sister Sarah, who loves purple, while you favor yellow. Look around for



something purple to inspire you; how about a bunch of grapes or a vintage brooch?

I took my pug for a walk and found my inspiration down the block. I chose an aging October hydrangea. I love these flowers when they start to soften and turn from brassy blues to complex, dusty tones.

Step Two: Extract a Color Palette

My favorite trick for pulling colors from an object can be found in the home improvement store. I love to visit the paint section. Who can resist those free color swatches in every shade you can imagine.

Bring your inspiration object (or a photo of it) with you to the shop. Pay no attention to the folks who might wonder why you have grandma's candy dish in a hardware store. They don't need to know that you are designing a new quilt for your mom based on the vintage pink china.

Look carefully at your object. As I examine my hydrangea I see obvious shades of raspberry and green. But if I look closely, I see purple in the shadows and ecru in the tips of the chartreuse petals. I notice four shades of pink, and three of green.

As you pull your paint chips, soak up every tone and shade of your object. When you finish, you will have a little pocket size deck of color to carry with you to the craft store. Long after you've put your inspiration object back into its cupboard, or your flower has wilted, you have a color palette that you can use for one or many projects.



Step Three: Select your materials

Equipped with your color story deck, you are now ready to shop for your materials. You can use your palette in any medium. Making some pillows? Go check out fabric. Decorating for a dinner party? Create table linens and place settings with your colors. The idea is that you've looked deeply at these colors, and you now have more understanding of how they work together.

Play with emphasis. Try choosing one hue as your focal color, and two as accents. Or add a neutral such as black, brown, or tan to the color story to see how the colors reorganize. Try using the neutral as an accent color. Now try it as the focal tone, with the color story deck as the accent colors.

Above are beads that I bought based on my hydrangea color story. I gravitated toward various textures - shiny, matte, pearl, and a mixture of opacities to recreate the mood of the flower.

Step Four: Make your project

Now that you've designed your color story, and assembled your materials, it's time to go to work!

ADDITIONAL TIPS

Are you a painter? Instead of using manufactured paint chips, try mixing your own colors while studying your inspiration object.

Giving your project as a present? Print a photo of your object. Make a greeting card with it so that your giftee can share in your creative process.

Want to challenge yourself? Choose your least favorite color as your theme and build a color story using an object in the color you dislike.

Art lover? Chose a famous painting and build a color story from it. Wouldn't a Van Gogh inspired scarf, or Jackson Pollack influenced necklace be fantastic?

Did you go to Hawaii with a friend? Commemorate a special trip by choosing a snapshot as color inspiration. Then make a gift using the color palette.

Too many ideas? Create an inspiration journal to preserve and explore your color stories.

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