

# VILLAGE VIEW

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An important part of our experience and environment, from the moment we open our eyes at birth, are colors. Awareness of color serves us, beguiles us, and affects us in myriad ways all our lives, yet colors are motionless, odorless, textureless, soundless, and flavorless. How is it that something so inert has so strong an influence upon us all?

Infants learn to recognize people and their surroundings through repeated experiences with colors in addition to forms and feeling. As the baby becomes a child, color plays an ever-growing part in emotion and response. Among the first lessons learned are identification of colors. Toys, clothing, furniture, food, and all the great outdoors are brilliant with color; as soon as they begin to talk, we encourage youngsters to learn the names of colors.

"What color are your shoes?" we ask. "Red," comes the quick response. "Daddy's car?" "Blue." "And Mommy's dress?" "Yellow." And so the questions and answers come. Kindergarteners learn to name them all, play color games, solve simple puzzles by matching colors. And then, in the first grade, along comes an art teacher who explains there are but three colors: red, yellow, and blue. All the rest, she says, are combinations of those three. They are called primary colors.

To this child, the child I was long ago, that was hearsay. "Prove it," I challenged, thinking of the orange I'd eaten at breakfast, the green fields I'd passed walking to school, and the lavender ribbon that trimmed a blouse. That was done with water colors. Mixing red and yellow resulted in orange; yellow and blue together did give green; blue and red yielded purple. Muddling the three primary colors made brown of sorts. That was my first color disillusion, for I had, until then, believed there were innumerable colors. Here someone was showing me my eyes had deceived me and colors weren't all what they had seemed.

Thus robbed of an accomplishment in color recognition in which I'd taken pride, I spent the balance of my school years

of art classes resisting both the knowledge and the proof. For me, green (and there are so many shades!) remained green. And no sweet-smelling lilac blossom ever translated to my brain the message, "I'm really blue and red." No tiger lily trumpeted to my consciousness its basic red and yellow. No. I resented the simplification. Intellectually, I accepted the facts; emotionally, I rejected them and felt richer for my private rebellion.

It wasn't a theory to be argued. From the age of six I knew I could be proved wrong. Rather than suffer that ignominy, the facts were ignored; I held blissfully to my silent convictions that every color, every shade, every subtle tint possessed a special loveliness all its own.

White, I learned, was no color at all. Black, an absence of light. What, then, was the color of snow? White, yes, but how it sparkled like a rainbow when the rays of the sun struck the gentle curve of a snow-laden bough. And how could one call white the delicate blush of shadow on a snow-shrouded hill? What might be blacker than silken black velvet? Only a fold in the fabric is deeper and darker than black itself. In shadow, then, black looks more black still. That made sense.

And time goes by; years pass, environments change, eyesight weakens and hearing fades. Still there is color. Grasses grow green after a rain; new leaves in spring, and old ones in autumn, glow red, orange, yellow. Weed blossoms cover a fallow field with a pinkish-rose that rivals the plumage of flamingos. Inside a seashell flare corals, violets, golden streaks, colors of such depth and intensity they seem three dimensional.

Being surrounded by color, as we all are, affects how we feel; our moods reflect our environment. Seldom are we subjected to the unpleasant experience of spending extended time in a scarlet room; should that happen, we'd feel overstimulated. A predominance of blues has a depressing effect. Reactions to some colors are reflected in our language with references to "seeing red" and "feeling blue."

Shades of yellow uplift and cheer; these are the colors of spring and sunshine. Forsythia's golden sprays chase winter gloom; jonquils and daffodils symbolize nature's renaissance. Can you imagine spring without the glow of golden blossoms?

Browns and greens calm and steady us. Just as we find them underfoot outside, we incorporate these happily within our homes. In the carpet industry, floor coverings predominately in earthy shades, are best sellers. People respond contentedly to these colors as background and build interior color schemes around them, using vibrant hues for highlight and accent.

Colors affect us to a far greater extent than most of us

are usually aware. Constantly, during our waking hours, our senses are bombarded with its impact. Certain colors are distasteful to some individuals. The purple of red cabbage is despised by some people who eagerly consume the green variety. A man who won't eat red cabbage may find unattractive a woman wearing purplish lipstick, and he may not know why he is repelled.

Color environment inside our homes is a matter of preference; much depends on what we want to achieve. To make our surroundings warm and cozy, we use woods and earth tones for background, shades of rust and gold for punch. To lend formality we let cool grays and silvers bespeak sophistication.

Sparkling crystal, glistening silver, unrelieved black and white, starkly simple, set a stage against which flamboyant personalities can hold the spotlight and best display their strengths.

Brass and pewter, on the other hand, supply more mellow, more friendly glows. Brick seems softer than stone; dark woods, such as mahogany and walnut, absorb light, while at the same time, their polished surfaces gleam with highlights and communicate a certain elegance. Those who prefer to blend rather than contrast with their surroundings may be more comfortable in rooms where color dominates.

Color in clothing is more important than styling. The flashing brunette looks striking in red; her blonde sister knows blue is most flattering. The redheaded woman who takes best advantage of her complexion is stunning in emerald green. With advancing years, skin tones change, and pastels are most becoming.

Being conscious of the colors around us can enhance our appreciation of life. All too often we grow inured to their beauties because they are ever-present, because we're busily occupied with routine activities, because the stresses of living absorb our entire attention. Think how the world would appear to us, however, should our eyes and brains fail to function as they do to give us color perception. Were the world seen only in black and white with shades of gray, would our lives be as rich and full?