

# *The Top 7 Designer Secrets for* **Adding Color to Your Space**



Holly Van Hart

# Contents

Introduction

#1 Start with Mood

#2 Follow the 60-30-10 Rule

#3 Pick Your Color Scheme

#4 Follow Nature's Lead for Lights and Darks

#5 Create a Flow of Colors

#6 Add Depth with Original Art

#7 Experiment Around Until You're Thrilled

About the Author – Artist Holly Van Hart

Further Reading and Links



# Introduction

**Choosing colors for your home should be exciting and fun.** Color personalizes our rooms, and delights our eyes.

Whether you hire an interior designer or color consultant or neither, you'll want to know these top 7 designer secrets for adding color to your space.

These secrets will give you the confidence you need to choose the colors you love. Your family and guests will be thrilled.

This guide is authored by an award-winning artist who has a passion for being immersed in color. Every day, I use color principles to design my paintings, and each paint stroke is a little color decision in itself.

Collectors often ask me for color advice when choosing art for their homes. It's easy and fun for me to give this advice, and the results have brought big smiles to many faces.

Even though I am not an interior designer by trade, I find that the color design principles of painting carry over directly to the color design of interior spaces. Also, along with my husband, we have the experience of building 3 new homes and making all the color decisions ourselves. (The front cover of this guide features the living room we designed in our previous home.)

So - from me to you - here are the top 7 designer secrets for adding color to your space. Enjoy!

*Holly VanHart*



# #1 Start with Mood



Did you know the mood of a room is mostly determined by color?

So, before picking any colors, you'll want to determine the mood you're aiming to create.

Is it relaxed, contemplative, enlivened, whimsical, romantic, sensuous, enlivened, inspired, merry . . . ?

Think about the colors you associate with the desired mood. Jot them down. Also, jot down the colors you'd like to surround yourself with. Ask your family for their faves.

Then, consider these color associations. . .

Red – passionate, intimate, sexy, daring, provocative

Orange – sunsets, energizing, friendly, enthusiasm, excitement

Yellow – sunshine, cheerful, welcoming

Green – nature, tranquil, fresh, healing, soothing

Blue – sky, water, confidence, serenity, restfulness

Purple – creativity, eccentricity, mystery, royalty, luxury

Brown - earth, home, stability, espresso, chocolate

Neutrals such as beige, gray, and taupe – dependability, timeless, classic

Black – elegance, night

White – purity, simplicity



## #2 Follow the 60-30-10 Rule

Designers have an easy formula for balancing colors in a room. With this formula, you'll be selecting just 3 colors - called the dominant, secondary, and accent colors.

The **dominant color** will apply to **60%** of the room. The dominant color will often be a neutral and light color such as beige, off-white, light gray, or light yellow. Also, it is typically either the color on the walls or the color of the largest piece of furniture.

**30%** of the room will be the **secondary color**. Designers often choose a brighter and darker color as the secondary color. It is used for furniture pieces, flooring, rugs, and/or smaller accessories. Sometimes one of the walls is painted with the secondary color.

The remaining **10%** is often the most fun to select. This is called the **accent color**. Depending on the mood of your room, the accent color can be muted and tranquil, or bright and bold and happy. The accent color is often featured in the room's artwork, as well as other items such as vases, pillows, rugs, and lamp shades.

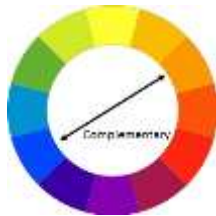


## #3 Pick Your Color Scheme

Designers use a fail-safe color wheel for choosing color schemes. Each room will have a color scheme that is Complementary or Analogous.

### Complementary

Complementary colors are the two colors that sit across from each other on the color wheel – examples include orange and blue, red and green, and purple and yellow. Using a complementary color in a room gives it a special spark.



### Analogous

Analogous colors are next to each other on the color wheel. Examples include blue and green, and yellow and orange. Rooms using this color scheme are typically more restful.



## #4 Follow Nature's Lead for Lights and Darks

Designers use their skills to carefully place the lights and darks in a room – both vertically and horizontally.

### Vertical design

The designer secret for vertical design of lights and darks is to take nature's lead. Darker values of color are used for the floor (ground), medium values of color for the walls (mountains), and lighter values of color for the ceiling (sky).

### Horizontal design

Designers also give consideration to the placement of lights and darks across a room (horizontally). One side of the room shouldn't be dominated by darks, while the other is dominated by lights. Balance is key.



## #5 Create a Flow of Colors

You'll want adjoining rooms to 'flow' into each other.

The designer secret here is easy – simply choose a color you're using in one room and restate it in a different way in an adjoining space.

For example, if a kitchen uses dark woods, use the same dark color for the pillows and accessories in the adjoining family room. And the same in reverse . . . if your family room has a red rug, then place red accents in your kitchen.





## #6 Add Depth with Original Art

Some homeowners love a piece of art so much that they design a room for that exact artwork. In most cases, though, a room will be designed first and the artwork chosen later.

Designers will often enhance the luxury feeling of your space with original art. Artwork adds depth to your room, and typically features your accent color. You'll find that the right piece of original art has an almost magical power to 'complete' a room.

Your interior designer or art consultant may suggest artwork for your space. Or, you can shop for art on your own, or commission a custom piece of art designed just for you.



The living room in our former home (above) featured one of my abstract nature paintings over the fireplace.

## #7 Experiment Around Until You're Thrilled

Getting your room exactly right usually takes a lot of experimenting around, even when done by experienced designers. Decisions on room color and bigger pieces of furniture are typically made first. The time to experiment here is when you're looking at color samples and fabric swatches; look at many combinations, and the right one will reveal itself.

Other choices - such lamps, pillows, vases - can be made more flexibly, especially if you're re-using some of your long-treasured pieces. Even if you think a particular piece won't work in a particular room, keep an open mind and try it. You'll often be surprised.

Experimenting will lead to fresh color combinations that reflect your unique vision for your space. You'll get a room you love, and that delights your family and guests.

Enjoy!



# About the Author – Artist Holly Van Hart

Holly Van Hart is an internationally exhibited artist known for her abstracted nature paintings.

Her work has won many awards, including Grand Prize at the California Statewide Painting Competition and Best of Houzz.

Holly has had solo exhibitions at the Triton Museum of Art, University of California San Francisco, and Stanford University. Her work has been collected internationally, and she has participated in gallery exhibitions across the United States.

Her paintings have been featured in the Huffington Post, Professional Artist Magazine, San Jose Mercury News, Examiner.com, Saratoga News, Santa Clara Weekly, Los Angeles Live Radio, and Silicon Valley 'Talk Art' TV.

Holly welcomes your calls and emails at (650) 646 5590 and [holly@hollyvanhart.com](mailto:holly@hollyvanhart.com)

Links –  
[Paintings](#)  
[Commissions](#)  
[Gift certificates](#)  
[About the artist](#)  
[Collector testimonials](#)



**Artist Holly Van Hart**  
*As featured in*

PROFESSIONAL  
**artist**

Best of  
**houzz**

**Silicon Valley**  
Talk Art TV



THE  
HUFFINGTON  
POST



Abstracted Nature Paintings by Holly Van Hart

# Further Reading and Links

[The Color Scheme Bible](#): Inspirational Palettes for Designing Home Interiors  
Book by Anna Starmer

[Interior Design Color Wheel Helps You Harmonize Your Interior Design Projects](#)  
This handy color wheel is tremendously useful for color planning

[Pratt and Lambert Paints – Color Visualizer](#) <http://www.prattandlambert.com/>

[HOUZZ](#) <http://www.houzz.com/>

And some articles from HOUZZ -

[Abstract Art for Every Style Interior](#)  
Contemporary art that looks great in modern settings, and lights up traditional interiors as well

[10 Interior Design Strategies for Art Lovers](#)  
Boost the impact of art with decor

[The Power of Art in Interior Design](#)  
Examples of the power art has to transform a space, and how it fits into your home

Note: This resource list is provided for your reference and convenience. There are no commercial ties to any of the referenced authors or organizations.

This book is copyright Holly Van Hart. All rights reserved.

Photos are mine, or acquired from Dreamstime and Pixabay.