

The World of Color

According to Suzanne Tick

Suzanne Tick remembers her first color memory fondly. “I was a little kid lying in the sun with my eyes shut seeing colors through my eyelids. No matter where I pointed my head, eyes open or shut, I could always see colors.”

The fascination never waned. Now the Principal of Suzanne Tick Inc. and Creative Director at Luum Textiles, she’s pushed boundaries in the textile industry for decades, experimenting with color in all of its forms, shapes, and hues. Recently she spoke with Studio TK, divulging her worldview about nature as textural inspiration, the emerging global aesthetic, and what’s next for color.



COLOR AS BALANCE

“I always think about how color performs within the structure of a space,” Suzanne says. “I prefer walls and floors to be more of a background color.” Those colors should be ambidextrous, both warm and cool tones, to easily bounce hues off of. “The energy that color brings to a space is really important. And it isn’t just color,” she explains. “It’s the finish, lead structure, and textural quality of the material.”

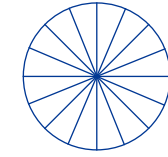
“You can’t impose a personality onto a color palette,” she adds. “When we build one out, we always tap into warm neutrals, cool neutrals and then those chameleon colors in between. That’s the art. The color formula, which is specific to the fabric, is the science.” Effective creativity finds a balance between experimentation and design principles. However, explaining that to clients who don’t understand your craft’s constraints is rarely easy.

“I talk about color formula all of the time to architectural designers. They tend to think you can throw any color in. If they find a fabric they love, then they’ll usually want to change the color. I tell them it won’t work and they ask, ‘How do you know?’ And I say because this is the formula and you need to stick to it. They’ll say, ‘Let’s just try one.’ And then the colorways come in not to their liking and they’re surprised.”

COLOR AS CONNECTION

Like many designers, she’s drawn to how analogous design is to nature. Earth is, after all, inherently stunning. “Follow nature. Nature isn’t one tone of green, it’s multiple tones of green,” she explains. “The ocean at any given time is multiple colors of blue. That’s how we create monochromatic palettes.” When combining similar shades with a deeper hue, you build visual texture.

Her emotional connection to color spurs her creativity, guiding her instincts and sharpening her artistic taste. Lately, she’s been mixing beautiful golds with blush tones. The combination conjures reverence and elegance for her, and although she’s not a drinker, she compares them to the different hues of wine. “The Pinot Grigio all the way to the Chardonnay... They come from natural sources and look so beautiful together.” Similarly, she finds the cascading waves of violet, blue, and pink from twilight bewitching. “If I had to be a color, I’d be the transition between morning and evening light. The time for meditation.”



COLOR AS TREND

“We’re approaching the year 2020 and I like to joke that it will be about perfect vision,” she riffs. “To me that means really seeing a color’s clarity and vibrancy.” But it isn’t all jokes and wordplay. Spotting upcoming color trends is a feat of astronomical market research, both internal and external.

She looks at art museums’ yearly calendars to discover which artists will be featured. She checks out runway shows, the material used for buildings in development, anything that could be a trend. She keeps her finger on the pulse of all these mediums, these artful expressions shared on a global level through social media and the Internet, so she can pick up on the collective aesthetic for the year. For better or worse, “everyone sees the same things now,” she explains.

At Suzanne Tick Inc., she meticulously keeps records of all of their color palettes, doing her best to track and predict future color trends. “We look at ourselves. We look at where we are, where we’ve come from, and then we look at what we don’t have. Then we ask ourselves: how do we push this?” In order to move forward, “We keep expanding the color palettes out. Every new theme actually works from the very original palette.”

For those aspiring designers in the color space, she advises to throw yourself into intentional experimentation, the sort of creativity that takes serious guts. “Make as many mistakes as possible. You can’t be afraid to try or to ask questions.”

As many creative problem solvers know and Suzanne can attest to: “Worthy enquiry is the most important part of living.”

