

THE GOOD LIFE

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STYLE PROFILE

DON'T HUE LOOK SHARP

DELAWARE'S
COLOR GURU
CREATES BESPOKE
PALETTES TO HELP
CLIENTS REFINE
THEIR SARTORIAL
STYLE.

BY ASHLEY BREEDING

Jeannie Stith-Mawhinney, better known as the Color Guru, helps clients—among them actors and designers—“unleash their beauty and simplify their wardrobe” by showing which colors they wear best.



LINSEY MIX PHOTOGRAPHY (LOCATION: LONGWOOD GARDENS)

“Color is a power which directly influences the soul.”

—Wassily Kandinsky, painter

Ever notice how you look radiant in certain colors, while others can make you appear sallow or ashen even when you're in perfect health? It likely has to do with your skin's undertone—warm, cool or neutral—and the shades that best complement them.

Before she became expert at color-matching, Jeannie Stith-Mawhinney struggled to fashion a proper wardrobe.

“My closet was about the only thing I couldn't master,” says the Arden voiceover artist and home-organizational whiz. “When shopping, I would buy whatever I liked in the moment but might not like it a few weeks later. I had so many clothes but didn't feel good in any of them.”

Her aunt knew the solution: “You should get your colors done,” she advised, nodding to a retired color specialist outside of Mawhinney's then-hometown of Philadelphia. “I said, ‘What's *that*?’” Mawhinney recalls. “Well, it was a game-changer.”

Mawhinney soon pared down to essential pieces that worked for her and rid her space—closet and mind—of what didn't. She referred her sartorially challenged friends to the same woman, who was happy to help but wasn't interested in doing it for a living. “There was no one else offering this service,” Mawhinney recalls, “but there was this huge demand for it.”

After 20 years in television and radio, Mawhinney entertained the idea of playing a new role. As the Color Guru, she now helps clients “unleash their beauty and simplify their wardrobe”—and “people wanted it immediately.”

Color, she theorizes, is a tool for communication and well-being. “I really believe in the power of color to change the way feel, the way we look, our mood,” she says.

So how does color-matching work? Initially, Mawhinney hosted color parties at clients' homes, but COVID-19 shifted her business into a Zoom setting—one of those proverbial blessings in disguise that granted more time with family (her husband's job as an urban planner in Newark is what brought

the couple and their young kids to Delaware) while her services grew to 23 countries via word of mouth and social media. Her clientele includes actors, designers and textile artists, and a lot of “regular folks who want to know how to look their best.”

Choose from one of two packages—the Premium, a comprehensive color consultation, or the Instant, which analyzes portraits for faster results—both for purchase through her website. Before your scheduled Zoom, you'll complete a questionnaire—what is your natural hair color, do you sunburn easily—and upload photos that clearly capture your skin, hair and eye color for Mawhinney to embed in your personalized Color Radiance Report.

STYLE TIP

“THE WORST THING YOU COULD WEAR IS A BLACK TURTLENECK,” THE COLOR GURU TELLS ME (A TWILIGHT AUTUMN). ELIZABETH HOLMES MIGHT HAVE ALL BUT RUINED THIS FAVORITE LOOK FOR ME ALREADY, BUT THAT HASN'T STOPPED THE STACK OF BLACK CASHMERE CREWNECKS, DEEP VS AND BOATNECKS FROM GROWING IN MY ARMOIRE. SO, WHAT TO DO WHEN YOU'VE ALREADY INVESTED IN A COLOR THAT ISN'T YOUR BEST? “IF YOU LOVE IT, PUT A SCARF OVER IT THAT CONTAINS YOUR COLORS—AND VOILA!”

When you meet, Mawhinney clicks you through this report, which begins by exploring color theory and a metallics test.

“We all have warm or cool coloring in our skin, hair and eyes,” she explains. “Knowing where you can sit on this spectrum helps us figure out what shades you wear best.”

She observes whether warm metals (gold, rose gold, copper) or cool metals (silver, platinum, white gold) enhance the color in your face. (“See how the warm metals make you glow, while the others drain the colors from your face?” she might say.) You'll immediately notice the contrast yourself when you see your portrait at the center of two opposite color wheels.

Some skin tones are a mix of warm and cold (olive skin with a hint of pink, for example). If you've ever tried the popular vein test and found that yours appeared both blue and green, this is you.

Next, Mawhinney moves to a hue wheel with oranges (yellow undertones) and pinks (blue undertones) to observe which flatters your skin color. The third step analyzes depth of color—think ballet slipper pink versus rich raisin—and the fourth tests clarity. Does a vivid lapis or cerulean blue make you sparkle, or is it a muted peacock or sapphire? (Clear colors are purest; muted shades are a mix of colors.)

“People tend to look better in one or the other,” Mawhinney points out. “This test is an important factor in choosing clothes, because if you're a muted person, clear colors tend to overpower and wear you.”

Through Mawhinney's color wheels, she determines your season—Winters are cool, deep and clear; Springs are warm, light and clear; Summers are cool, light and muted; and Autumns are warm, deep and muted. (Turn the page for sample shades for each season.) There are also variations within each season; a True Winter might rock a cherry red, while a Sultry Winter will look best in claret or raspberry.

The Color Guru has also created custom palettes with Wilmington makeup artist Leisa Kanienberg (iMakeup Artistry) to deliver complementary colors for eyes, cheeks and lips, whether you're going for a natural or sultry vibe. Hair need a lift? She'll also reveal your best shades, which again comes down to warm and cool tones. (Warm skin tones tend to look best with warm highlights, like caramel or honey blonde; cool tones wear ash brown or blonde well.)

Not sure whether you're more of a J.Lo or Jessica Alba Autumn? Mawhinney concludes your consultation with a Celebrity Color Match, complete with red-carpet and street-style looks. (“See how this plum gown makes her glow? Black isn't your color, so try swapping your LBD for a Little Wine Dress.”)

A few days later, look for custom cards in the mail—about 35 clothing shades that include your powerful, energizing and playful colors, plus a makeup palette. “Bring these with you to make shopping a cinch,” Mawhinney says. “And when buying prints, remember this rule of thumb: 75 percent or more consist of ‘your’ colors.”

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