

MANSION



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A ROOM’S BRUSH WITH GREATNESS

At paint retailer Sherwin-Williams, the keeper of the ‘color bible’ aims to form a bond between homeowners and hues with catchy names

‘WALL STREET.’ It’s a place in Lower Manhattan, a movie about greed and a paint color from Sherwin-Williams. Of the 1,500 different colors offered by the Cleveland-based retailer, two-word paint names, such as Wall Street (dark gray) and Stolen Kiss (dark red), are the most popular. These monikers make up roughly 61% of paint colors and 71% of gallon sales, according to Sherwin-Williams, which has more than 3,500 stores nationwide. Next come one-word names, which represent 35% of colors and 26% of sales. Names with three or more words are rarest, making up only 3% of colors and 2% of sales.

The company relies on one person, Jackie Jordan, to come up with the names. Ms. Jordan, director of color marketing, says creative naming helps homeowners develop an attachment to a given hue. The number of words in a name is less important than the meaning it evokes. “It’s an emotional thing. People like to have an association with a particular color,” she says.

To dub a new color, Ms. Jordan, 52, draws inspiration from pretty much everything, including books, song lyrics, foods and places. She then creates a list, sorting her ideas by color family in her “color bible.” “I probably

have over 10,000 names,” she says. Ms. Jordan, who has been with the company for 27 years, and her team figure out what’s lacking in Sherwin-Williams’s existing palette. They then submit basic parameters—for example,

five new blue colors ranging from sky blue to blue-green—to the lab. “Once I see the colors and approve them, I assign a name to each one,” she says. “I go through my list until I find a name that fits that particular color. It’s an

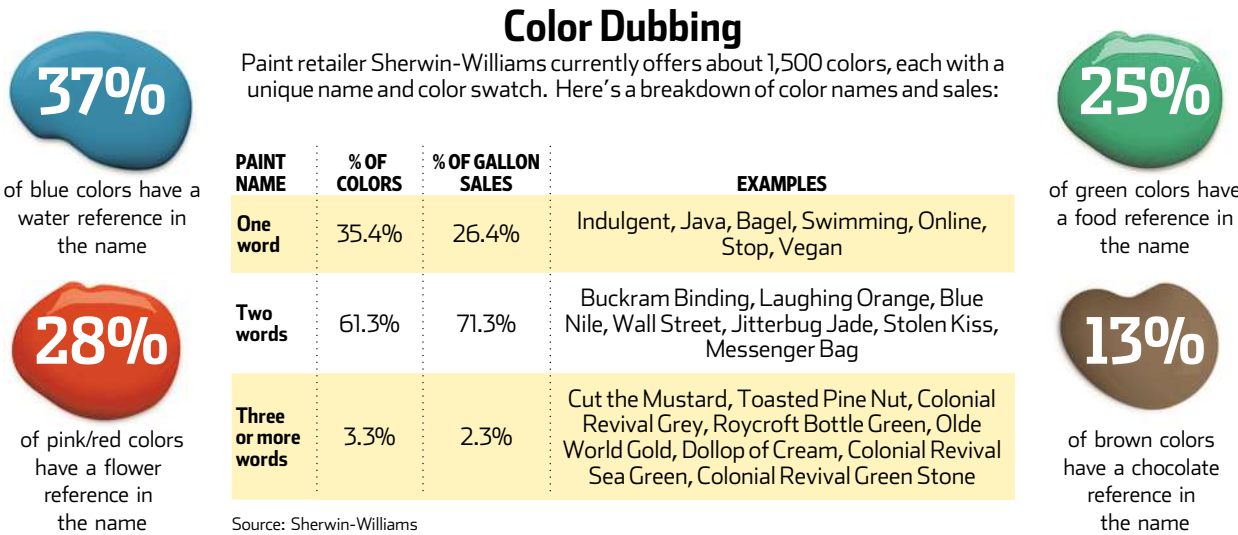
intuitive thing.” The names then go to a fact-checker, who makes sure that the color name hasn’t been used before, and then back to Ms. Jordan for final approval.

Some names are straightforward, like Blue Sky and Cherry Tomato, while others, like Cut the Mustard and Indulgent (lavender), are more obscure. Names can’t be too trendy since most colors have a life span of about 10 to 12 years and names stick with their respective hues forever. On the more practical side, names also have to fit on a paint card. The longest one uses the maximum 28 characters: Colonial Revival Green Stone.

Sandra Salander, a real-estate agent with Town Residential, says she addresses paint colors as soon as she takes on a listing.

“Colors absolutely make a difference,” says Ms. Salander, a former interior designer. “When we have good paint colors, we stand a better chance of selling a home and selling it for a higher price.”

—Sanette Tanaka



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