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I Cannot Remain Neutral

Amanda Thomsen

I stopped watching all those home decorating TV shows when the current “neutral palette” trend began about 10 years ago. I saw too many homeowners on these shows with worries of “lowered resale value” or they had overly optimistic thoughts that neutrals could NEVER look dated further down the line. Some were just scared to make a statement of any kind. First off, decorating with resale value in mind suggests your home should be decorated with a strategy and that strategy isn’t simply “have a home you love to live in.” You’re picking out love seats, but you’ve already got one foot out the door, years down the line. Where’s the love in that?

Some of these shows focus solely on flipping houses, so the open house décor is coolly basic to work in any house and so potential buyers can see themselves in the neutral background presented. No need to deal with the current owners’ fussy personal tastes (or real life, like toys, a humming fridge with leaking teriyaki marinade or ants marching up to the cat’s food bowl) when it was the goal to sell it from the get-go.

I believe this trend has now frightened people into the duller homes ever. And yeah, I have a pink kitchen, complete with pink oven. Yeah, I may work hard at getting my living room to feel like the lobby of The Polynesian Resort at Walt Disney World. And yeah, I have a bathroom stuffed with the scariest clown paintings known to humanity, so I guess you can take it all with a grain of perlite. But fair warning: If I ever walk into another home with a white slip covered sofa (and pale beachy decor 1,000 miles from the nearest ocean) I might scream. In January, I received an issue of Country Home magazine’s “The Neutrals Issue” in the mail; I usually enjoy the quirky mixes of florals and vintage finds in that mag. I paged through this one briefly and tossed it into the recycling bin within three minutes. I live in a garden—neutrals just don’t do it for me.

People are so afraid of making a mistake that they don’t even try anymore. Paint it white and leave it white. “Which shade of gray should I use for my front door?” I say “SHUT THE FRONT DOOR and paint it a hot and spicy coral, pretty please!”

I even had a woman come into a garden center I was working at and she asked for a taupe garden. I’m not kidding. It’s gone too far.

Bland mashed potatoes and gravy colors aren’t just a trend, it’s a fear. Fear of making mistakes, fear of being too bold, fear of losing money, fear of not being accepted. I haven’t seen too much of this leak into the outdoors, but where it does it’s in those “Buxus and Hedera” crowd (oh, you know the ones).

But what if it did? What if fear of gardening came across in an overall blanding. Could it happen to us? I think it's possible, but we'll never see 24-hour gardening programming on cable, so maybe we don't have to stress it. Let's ham it up, just in case! Color like a rainbow in a blender; you'll have to hand out mandatory sunglasses at the gate. Color like a psychedelic ice cream shoppe or a candy store on a snowy day. Color like tropical fish and talking parrots at a polka dancing party.

I say we do what we can to be sure. Let's not remain neutral. **GP**

Amanda Thomsen is now a regular columnist in Green Profit magazine. You can find her funky, punky blog planted at KissMyAster.co and you can follow her on Facebook, Twitter AND Instagram @KissMyAster.