



PERSONAL PALETTE

Find out what colors bring out the best in you

Melissa F. Pheterson

Have you ever wondered what colors look the best on you? My quest to find new colors — the right colors — started in the gray studio of Indigo Tones, 32 S. Main St. in Pittsford, while wearing a gray shower cap and smock in front of a gray dresser.

Owner Kerry Stich, a certified color analyst, needs the visual silence to apply her color science, including the “seasonal color theory of Impressionist painters” who understood there were different color harmonies for each season.

First, Stich will settle three key questions: Dark or light? Warm or cool? Soft or bright?

Then she’ll pinpoint my “month,” one of 12 on a palette of seasonal tones — Cool Winter, Bright Spring, Soft Autumn, etc. From there, she’ll help me achieve color harmony in my life — wardrobe, hair, makeup, jewelry, even home décor.

“We’re born with everything in perfect harmony,” she says.

“I was born blonde,” I say, glancing at my red hair.

“We’ll get to that.”

She begins by holding my hand against four colored boards, each representing a different season: navy, peach, soft blue and brown. The different light reflecting off each one changes the hue of my hand to an amazing degree. Stich then drapes fabrics across my smock: tones

Roxanne Skuse and Kerry Stich discuss flattering colors during a color consultation as Paige Skuse and Maggie Fleming watch at Indigo Tones in Pittsford.
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Colors

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of summer, fall, winter, spring. I watch as my eyes turn blue and then gray, color rushes in and out of my cheeks, shadows chop my face and then vanish.

"This color looks like it arrived 10 minutes before you did," she says of a burgundy. "It's too distracting for people to notice your face."

Switching to a French blue: "Now you look like you got 10 more hours of sleep."

Stich's tentative pick for me: Cool Summer, or "July" on the palette.

But she checks the other summer months to be sure. The cornflower blue of Soft Summer (August) immediately drains my complexion. But switched out for the Light Summer (June) aquamarine, color jumps back into my cheeks.

My defining traits are Light, Soft, and hovering between Warm and Cool.

Handing me a plume of swatches, she says: "Now you won't be random in how you wear your colors or spend your money, whether you're stitching a quilt or painting a room or buying jewelry."

"A Winter, like Liz Taylor or Courteney Cox, would look washed out and dull in gray, and perfect in a bold red. You're the opposite. Don't wear too many brights at once."

To tailor my colors to my style, Stich shows me five boards: Classic, Natural, Romantic, Dramatic and Creative. I'm Classic all the way: tailored, traditional, symmetrical.

"I bet you have a lot of black and white," says Stich. Guilty as charged. Stich wants me to phase my staples



Kerry Stich, of Indigo Tones in Pittsford, explains color families to (seated, from left) Maggie Fleming, Mary Pat Fleming, Paige Skuse and Roxanne Skuse, during a color consultation. MEGAN DAILOR

(black pants! little black dress!) out of my closet.

"My goal is perfect authenticity between color and personality," says Stich. "Your new blacks are gray, taupe, stone, slate — even white."

Jewelry should be of a piece with Summer. Or, as she puts it, in the "season of the water and moon:" pearls, seashells, flowing lines.

Now for the hair.

"You need that ashy, mousey brown back in your hair," Stich says. "I know that very few hairdressers will agree to do a 'dishrag brown.' But you've got to get the red out. It's turning your face yel-

low and it's clashing with your skin."

On the plus side, I suppose, I'll go gray elegantly.

Stich has managed in two hours what my grandmother has been attempting for 15 years: sold me on going back to blonde.

As for makeup, "the cheapest, fastest and simplest way for your eyes to pop is to fill in your brows" with a matching pencil. For eye shadow, I should stick to blues, grays, and pinks — nothing too black.

While I have Stich's blessing to wear peacock blue, emerald gray, and even Barbie pink, she warns me to wear them



In this "after" picture, it's out with the winter red, in with the "cool summer" tones chosen by Kerry Stich for our writer, Melissa Pheterson.

selectively — and to ground the look with "watery" neutrals, the shades an Impressionist might take to paint Canandaigua Lake in July. I miss my red hair and basic black — it's hard to work a room by shaking loose dishrag locks with ashy pallor over a little gray dress.

Still, I know she's right. As soon as I don that royal blue sweater, my eyes pop, my skin glows — and I don't feel like my clothes are screaming over my soft-spoken self.

Pheterson is a Rochester-area freelance writer.