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DESIGN & DECORATING

War of the Roses

She wants a pink bedroom. He says no way. Can input from professionals broker a design detente?

BY SARAH KARNASIEWICZ

WHEN Pantone declared Peach Fuzz its 2024 Color of the Year, I had to chuckle. A similar hue happens to be responsible for my longest-running—and most ridiculous—design-related marital squabble.

It began innocently enough. Weary of our bedroom's stark walls and inspired by the early morning light that creeps through its northeast-facing windows, I decided the space needed paint that mimicked that ethereal sunrise glow. Creamy blush, pale terracotta, shades of faded peach—my stack of samples

'There are so many tones that look dreamy and natural.'

resembled a Monet skyscape. Unfortunately, when I unveiled my favorite swatch, I made what I now understand is a rookie mistake: I let my husband see its name. Reader, I regret to inform you that it was called *Bride to Be*. His raised-eyebrow response? "You are *not* painting my bedroom pink."

That was three years ago. Though the man is otherwise a reasonably enlightened non-Neanderthal, on the pink point he has not budged. And because I am stubborn (and also right), our bedroom remains white. Which is why, when I noticed salmon-hued rooms filling up my social media feeds recently, I decided it was time to call in some pros to settle the stalemate.

"It doesn't have to feel like a gender reveal," Sara Story said when I explained my predicament. The New York City designer blames last year's

"Barbie" movie for some pink backlash. "But there are so many tones that just look dreamy and natural."

"Earthy pinks used as neutrals have been a thing forever," noted Brooklyn-based decorative-arts expert Jacqueline Wein. (This is true: It wasn't until almost the 1940s that most Americans even began to regard pink as culturally "girlie.") "Now you're also seeing the Farrow & Ball effect," she added, referencing the British paint company whose U.S. presence has grown dramatically in the last decade. Indeed, many of the pros I polled steered me toward that brand's cult-favorite rosy hues, including Smoked Trout, Setting Plaster and Calamine, as stylish, stereotype-defying options. Why? Subtle black and yellow undertones keep them from veering sweet, says Wein.

"When a color skews more fleshy than sugary, it tends to be received less controversially," noted Washington, D.C., designer Zoë Feldman. Said New York photographer Robert Bredvad, who convinced his wife to paint their bedroom Benjamin Moore's Brandy Cream earlier this year, "I think if it's desaturated enough, a dusty pink is very flexible."

"The idea of pink is often what gets a reaction from couples who don't want the bedroom to read too 'feminine,'" said Victoria Gray, co-founder of London's Olivine Design. "But as soon as it's on the wall, it fades into the background." On a recent Miami project, New York designer Nicole Fuller witnessed this dynamic firsthand. "At first the husband was like, 'Absolutely not.' But all it took was shifting a shade lighter for him to say, 'This is it.'" (Are you reading this, honey?)

Of course, how you fill the rest of your room also has powerful impact. I think I'm in good shape in that department: Our bedroom



GLOW UP Setting Plaster adds warmth to the primary bedroom of a Cotswolds cottage by London's Olivine Design.

is otherwise outfitted in decidedly gender-neutral indigos and woods. "[Rosy] colors are beautiful with camels and browns," said Fuller. "Add something like an oxblood chesterfield and you can make it feel really masculine, even tough."

Perhaps the most persuasive testimony came secondhand, via Wein, whose boyfriend adores her shell-pink boudoir. "His take is that it makes skin look amazing," she said with a laugh. "And let's just say it's suggestive, in the best way, of everything you want to be doing in a bedroom." Need I say more?

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Dusky, sexy Malted Milk is on designer Sara Story's shortlist. [From \\$59 a gallon, BenjaminMoore.com](#)

Design pro Nicole Fuller dubs Tailor Tack a barely-there 'pinkie cream.' [From \\$120 a gallon, Farrow-Ball.com](#)

Little Greene creative director Ruth Mottershead calls Masquerade 'alluring' and powdery. [From \\$125 a gallon, LittleGreene.us](#)