IT'S ALL WHITE

WHITE PROVIDES A TIMELESS BASE FOR ANY INTERIOR SCHEME, HOWEVER THE RIGHT ONE IS OFTEN HARD TO FIND. HERE, WE'VE ASKED THE EXPERTS TO HELP SIMPLIFY THE SEARCH

Words KAREN SPRESSER

GETTING STARTED

Choosing the perfect white paint can often be a little overwhelming – pick up a colour chart and you'll see row after row of whites on offer, many somehow looking confusingly similar. According to interior designer Karen Akers from Designed by Karen Akers, there is a lot to consider when choosing a white, including aspect, lighting, furniture and what a room is to be used for. "You can paint the best colour white on the wall and then, if you flood it with the incorrect lighting overhead, forget it," she says. Get the white right, though, and it can help bring a space to life, providing a perfect backdrop for your decorating. According to Karen, it's best to go with what you're drawn to. If your natural colour palette is more towards the blue spectrum, then you'll probably like a cooler white. "If you want more of a cocooning effect, then pick one that has more of a warmer undertone," she suggests.

MATT OR SHEEN?

Matt and low-sheen are popular finishes for walls, with semi-gloss and gloss best suited to woodwork and trims. What you use where comes down to the look that you want to achieve. "We prefer matt on walls in interiors," explains interior designer Suzanne Gorman from Studio Gorman. "A matt paint will highlight texture and we love the imperfections that are revealed – it gives a space a more layered and relaxed feeling. On trims we use gloss paint. It creates an interesting contrast in texture to the matt walls." >

"IF THERE'S ANY SORT OF SHEEN LEVEL TO THE PAINT, THE LIGHT BOUNCES AROUND AND MAKES THE ROOM APPEAR BRIGHTER"

~ SERENA ELISE, INTERIOR DESIGNER, WHITE CHALK DESIGN

PHOTOGRAPHY (OPPOSITE) JOHN MANGILA

LIGHT WORK

Light – both natural and artificial, and direct and indirect – impacts how a white will look in a room. "The more natural light in the room, the warmer the space will be," explains interior designer Serena Elise of White Chalk Design. "If you've got a west-facing room that is going to throw off a lot of warmth, you're better off using a slightly cooler white, otherwise it may come across very yellow as the sun hits it. If there's a lot of greenery outside (such as in the living room, left), it's always a good idea to go a little cooler on the whites as green reflects a lot of warmth." A warmer white will help to brighten up a darker room and, for the kitchen, match your white with the undertones of your benchtop surfaces, as illustrated in the Studio Esteta-designed kitchen (below).

"STAY AWAY FROM ULTRA COOL WHITES IN RESIDENTIAL SETTINGS AS THESE ARE TOO CLINICAL AND NOT COMFORTABLE TO LIVE WITH"

~ SUZANNE GORMAN, INTERIOR DESIGNER, STUDIO GORMAN

PHOTOGRAPHY (THIS PAGE TOP LEFT) **BRITTANY AMBRIDGE/OTTO/RAVEN & SNOW** (OPPOSITE) **JOHN MANGILA**

TOP COOL WHITES

PAINT
Lexicon Quarter, Dulux

"THIS IS A FRESH COOLER-BASED WHITE THAT IS MY GO-TO FOR A MORE MODERN SPACE. IF THE ART-GALLERY VIBE IS WHAT YOU PREFER, THIS IS YOUR ONE-STOP COLOUR."
~ Serena Elise, White Chalk Design.

PAINT
Vivid White, Dulux

"THE 'PURE WHITE' – THIS IS ONE OF THE MOST NEUTRAL-BASED WHITES THAT GIVES A VERY CLEAN CANVAS. THIS COLOUR IS SO CLEAN IT USUALLY REQUIRES THREE COATS TO GET AN EVEN COVERAGE COMPARED TO THE USUAL TWO."
~ Karen Akers, Designed by Karen Akers.

"IF THERE IS A GREY TONE OR BLUE PAINT COLOURS, SELECT A COOLER WHITE"
~ FELICITY SLATTERY, INTERIOR DESIGNER, STUDIO ESTETA

PAINT
White On White, Dulux

"IT'S FRESH, CRISP AND CLEAN, AND NOT TOO BLUE."
~ Felicity Slattery, Studio Esteta.

IN THE TONE

Look to your interior scheme and furnishings to decide what end of the spectrum to steer towards – warm or cool. The warmer whites present more of a cream/yellow undertone, while cooler ones have more of a blue/grey undertone. Whites with a warmer undertone will lend more of a cosy feel to a room, while those with a cooler undertone can give it a crisper and more modern look. "If we had a project with a lot of timber veneer, we would select a much warmer white to complement the warmer tones of the timber," says Felicity Slattery, architect and interior designer with Studio Esteta. "It really is dependent on the site, the lighting, the materiality – all those things define which white you go with."

"FIND THE WHITE THAT WORKS FOR YOUR HOUSE AND YOUR LOOK – WHAT FEELS RIGHT FOR YOU" ***~ LISA BURDUS, INTERIOR DESIGNER***

PHOTOGRAPHY (THIS PAGE FROM TOP) **CATH MUSCAT, SIMON WHITBREAD** (OPPOSITE) **JOHN MANGILA**

TEST IT OUT

The final step before committing to a white paint is putting it to the test. "Get sample pots, try it in the space, live with it, look at it at different times of day," suggests interior designer Lisa Burdus, of Lisa Burdus Design & Decoration. Don't just do a small wall swatch – most experts advise a space at least 1m x 1m. "Put your furniture up against it, put your artwork up against it and stand back and have a good look at it at different times of day," she says. "It's like buying a white shirt – there are so many variations of a white shirt you have to match it against your skin... this is the same."