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What is your second favorite color

View SlideshowAl di là means you're far above me, very far / Al di là, as distant as the lovely evening star.""Al Di Là," a chestnut of Italian popular song, tells of flowers that bloom in the wake of the singer's beloved, of gloom that turns to sunshine with a single smile. It may not be Shakespeare, but as far as three-minute celebrations of otherworldly beauty go, it's hard to beat.Al Di Là is also the name bestowed upon a homestead in a lushly wooded sliver of Silicon Valley, anchored by a stone building that does indeed seem to possess magical properties. Erected more than 100 years ago, it became the headquarters of a successful winery that survived the physical devastation of the 1906 San Francisco earthquake and the economic devastation of Prohibition. Shortly after ceasing operation as a winery, the building and surrounding land were purchased and turned into a home.Roughly half a century later, a married couple from the Bay Area acquired the property and embarked on a three-year endeavor to transform a modest cottage into a delightful sylvan hideaway. Then they asked a friend and previous collaborator, designer Suzanne Tucker of the San Francisco-based firm Tucker & Marks, if she'd be willing to help them renovate.Tucker, who worked for many years alongside the legendary California designer Michael Taylor, was interested. Her interest blossomed into full-blown enthusiasm with a single word from her client: "As soon as she said stone, I got chills. I had always wanted to do a stone house. I'd always said that I would one day."Bronze statues—of attentive deer, a grazing horse, even a giant snail—surround the stone house, as if drawn ineluctably to its charms. Human visitors are pulled in much the same way to the front door, guarded by a pair of 19th-century Italian stone putti and illuminated by iron lantern sconces whose tops echo the roof of reclaimed Italian terra-cotta tiles.When the single, undivided space of the original stone building was converted into a house in the 1960s, it was broken up into three volumes, the largest of which Tucker and architect J. E. Caldwell turned into a great room. Although its 24-foot ceilings and contemporary cast-stone fireplace may come as a surprise to anyone who has just entered via the rustic front door, it's easy enough to return to rusticity by walking into the adjacent family room and dining area, where antique beams and the small, circular dining table surrounded by wicker-backed chairs affirm the farmhouse feel.Above this area is the new master bedroom, carved out of thin air when Tucker and Caldwell halved the family room/dining room volume and put in a stairwell leading up to it, creating a second story. Painted a warm cinnamon, it rests serenely up in the house's eaves, taking full architectural advantage of the pronounced angles afforded by the roofline.Other clients and designers might have insisted on expanding the original house, which would have detracted from the intimacy that makes it so special in the first place. "There's always the trompe l'oeil effect that you can usually get away with as a designer," says Tucker. "But if you just play the hand that you've been dealt as far as scale and form go, you oftentimes get something better. I try to appreciate space for what it is, not regret what it isn't." The solution came in the form of two new, freestanding structures that Caldwell and Tucker designed. One of them is the art studio/sitting room, where a magnificent arch of climbing hydrangeas frames the doorway. The other is the guesthouse, whose two bedrooms open onto a generous terrace and whose small sitting room—with its fireplace, denim-upholstered chairs and 19th-century Pyrenean pine chest called into service as a low table—is the quintessence of cozy."If I were to use one word to describe this house, it would have to be enchanting," says Tucker. Its namesake tune carries the theme: "Al di là, I wondered, as I drifted, where you were / Al di là, the fog around me lifted, there you were." When the famous Bay Area fog burns off to reveal a house like this one, festooned with flora and burnished by 100 years of history, it's hard not to hear a song in your heart. By Derek BlasbergAdmit it: There is nothing quite like the sensation of climbing into pure 1970s polyester after a long and lazy shower. Or the bliss of finding that old dress shirt or untouched suit in your father's closet that is just so...now. These are just a few of the joys of the vintage, a look and style that in the past few decades has become as acceptable (and encouraged!) as a sundress from Banana Republic or a Brooks Brother Suit.Not surprising then that this year's recipient of the Council of Fashion Designers of America International Influence Award was the virtual catalyst of the modern retro movement—Kate Moss, long heralded as the heroine of vintage chic. Sure, it's fun wondering who else has worn those jeans or where these boots have walked in a past life, but for us non-Kate Moss mortals, it's not always easy.That's why we turn to two New York shops, Amarcord, on East 7th Street, and Peggy Pardon, on the Lower East Side, and their lovely shop assistants for a little advice. Katie Hubbard at Amarcord, a vintage buyer since she was in high school, and Sasha Huetc from Peggy Pardon, who calls herself a "vintage couturier," offer Refinery29 readers their Five Points to vintage shopping.1. CHOOSE YOUR ERA. In the 1980s, if you didn't like blue eye shadow or look good in shoulder pads, well, you were screwed. The best thing about vintage is that with so many different decades to choose from, it's easy to find an era that fits. Thus, even though Hubbard cites the '70s as a hot decade right now and Huetc is watching Edwardian things fly out of her store, if prints or high collars don't work for you, try another period. Hubbard offers a rule of thumb for vintage rookies: "For slim and square, go '20s. For curvier girls, look to '40s and '50s."2. MAINTENANCE. Like that guy that treats his 1964 Ford Mustang like an actual member of the family, a dedicated vintage collector will be sure to take care of their pieces. "An avid shopper must have a good tailor," Hubbard advises, before warning of the dangers of dry cleaning certain fabrics and smoking in polyester.3. THRIFT VS. VINTAGE. There is a major difference between thrifting and vintage shopping. Whereas the former is typically a free-for-all of disorganized garments, vintage shops contain an edited collection of the same clothing, neatly cleaned, merchandised, and stylishly coordinated for the consumers' enjoyment. Be warned: Thrift stores are not for the easily bored. It takes patience and hard work, but as Huetc will attest, "Never underestimate a thrift store. Sometimes after a good hunt and when cleaned up, treasures can be unearthed."4. VINTAGE, INCORPORATED. "It's important to know how to mix vintage into your wardrobe," Hubbard advises. "So get what you like, what matches your style, then you can coordinate new-old pieces with things you already have." It can be tricky, Huetc warns, with the biggest pitfall being you wind up looking like a refugee from the circus. "It can be quite easy to look costume'y when people start over-accessorizing or taking a look or period too literally."5. ACT NOW, OR FOREVER HOLD YOUR PEACE. Huetc's last rule of thumb, regarding vintage hunting is an simple one: "Don't wait. If you like it, buy it." One of the best parts of vintage is that it's unique—see it once, you probably won't see it again. So, remember, if something looks good, it's a risk to leave without it. Hubbard's farewell rule is even stricter: "If you're new to vintage, or any style of clothing for that matter, you have to wear it the next day. Buy it today, figure out how it works that night, and wear it the next day." Make it work immediately, or be careful. "If you don't, it'll most likely become just another relic in the back of the closet." Destined, no doubt, to become someone else's treasure someday.Two New York experts in vintage show us how all things old can look spankin' new (and ever appropriate) with just five crucial guidelines. Colorism is the practice of favoring lighter skin over darker skin. The preference for lighter skin can be seen within any racial or ethnic background. While some say that they are color-blind, it's hard to deny that many people not only see color but they also use it as a way to judge or determine someone's character. This article explains colorism, its relationship to racism, and offers ways you can help to combat the pervasiveness of colorism. Colorism finds its roots in racism because, without racism, someone's value and perceived superiority wouldn't be based on the color of their skin. Colleen Campbell, a Ph.D. candidate in Sociology and African Studies at Princeton University noted, "When we think of racism in the U.S. especially, we think of anti-Black attitudes or institutional processes that entrench whiteness at the top of the social hierarchy." Furthermore, the preference for lighter skin tones is a result of slavery and since then there are many methods people have used and still use to determine someone's value in society. During the enslavement of Black people, those with lighter skins tones (the children of a slave and their master) received preferential treatment. One of the reasons for this favoritism is because Black people with lighter skin have more European features and a closer "proximity to whiteness." Additionally, "We know that, historically, lighter-skinned aristocratic Blacks engaged in opportunity hoarding practices to keep darker-skinned poor Blacks from their social networks," says Campbell. The enslavement of Africans in America brought us the "one-drop rule," which impacts our definition and impression of our varying shades. The one-drop rule dates back to a 1662 Virginia law that addresses mixed-race people. It asserts that anyone with even one ancestor that is Black is considered Black. After slavery, the preference for lighter skin continued and became evident within the Black community and Black people showed a preference for lighter-skinned Black people. Consequently, "a dark-skinned individual not only faces discrimination from white society but will also be discriminated against by Black society," says Campbell. For example, light-skinned Black people formed clubs that catered only to other light-skinned Black people. These types of exclusive clubs were known as Blue Vein societies and its organizers only admitted Black people who were light enough to see the blue veins in their skin. The "paper bag test," was used to determine if someone was allowed to enter churches, night clubs, and fraternities. So, people who were darker than the color of a brown paper bag would not be allowed to enter. Colorism, a global cultural, social construct with its roots deeply embedded in racism, exists within many groups, including Black, Asian, and Latino American communities. "Colorism can occur intra-racially (i.e., within groups) and interracially (i.e., across ethno-racial groups). It can manifest both interpersonally and systemically," says Campbell. As the inculcation of racism is detrimental to Black Americans' advancement, colorism can be equally crippling and maybe even more so. The preference for lighter-skinned Blacks by Whites and Blacks can cause darker-skinned Blacks to have poorer outcomes in many areas such as education and income than their fairer counterparts. It can even affect health and marital status. "The same stratification that we witness in racial outcomes between Black and White is also visible within groups. In ways, the gap between light and dark skin Blacks have been more pronounced than the Black-White gap," says Campbell. Suffice it to say that colorism is so prevalent it isn't limited to minorities but can even exist with White Americans. In a study published by the Journal of Social Cognitive and Affective Neuroscience, researchers used MRI to determine activity in the amygdala (a region in the brain that processes potential threats, emotions, from sensory, social, and emotional stimuli), when shown photographs of unfamiliar Black and White faces with varied skin tones. However, while there was noticeable activity in the amygdala for light- and dark-skinned Blacks, dark-skinned Whites elicited more significant amygdala activity than light-skinned Whites. The prevalence of colorism isn't limited to our day to day lives; it even extends itself into areas that one might assume to be liberal and thus inclusive, Hollywood. "It is visible in the media and advertising industries," says Campbell. "Actress Lupita Nyong'o accused a magazine of airbrushing her hair to look more European," she says. We have even seen it played out on screen in movies such as Spike Lee's movie "School Daze" where dark-skinned and light-skinned girls called each other names such as "tar baby," "Barbie doll," and "wannabe white." In a recent episode of the tv sitcom "Black-ish," titled "Black Like Us," when Diane (actress Marsai Martin) looks darker in a classroom photo, it was made clear, we are still grappling with colorism. The storyline drew on the experiences of one of the show's executive producers Peter Sars, who is of mixed-race and admits he never really acknowledged his light-skinned privilege. BIPOC will face struggles whether they are mixed or not, but preferential treatment is given to those on the lighter end of the spectrum. "For dark skin Black women, it not only means being passed over for lighter skin women in the dating and labor market, but it also means rarely seeing a dark skin woman as the love interest of the main character." In 2016, Zoe Saldana was deemed as not being dark enough by some to play the eponymous Nina Simone and had to use makeup to darken her skin, but usually, it is the opposite. "The skin lightening industry is a multi-billion-dollar industry profiting from the stigmatization of dark skin everywhere (India, Asia, Africa, the Caribbean, and Araba countries)," says Campbell. The centuries-old practice, which is common in the U.S. and throughout the world, is achieved through pills, creams, and soaps, is still ever so popular. The World Health Organization reports that skin lightening is widespread in many African, Asian, and Caribbean countries. "When the media or advertising industry uses dark skin actors, it tacitly engages in bleaching or lightening these actors," says Campbell. The practice doesn't show any sign of slowing down as it is estimated that the industry market could be valued at \$31.2 billion by 2024. "It breeds destructive colloquialisms, such as, 'you're beautiful for a dark skin woman,'" she says. "Skin lightening advertisements reinforce the stigma against dark skin people." As is the case with racism, uncomfortable and honest conversations need to take place in order for there to be self-reflection and change. We need to get to a place where it is intolerable to judge someone based on the color of their skin. If you have lighter skin, you are much more likely to be afforded privileges that people of darker complexions (of any race/ethnic background) do not have access to. You can, however, use this privilege to advocate for the better treatment of people with darker skin. "Lighter skin people (like myself) must be cognizant of their skin privilege and consider how to use it to remedy some of the harm against dark skin individuals," says Campbell. "For those men who rarely date darker skin women, perhaps they might reflexively consider how colorism affects their dating preferences," she says. The cosmetic industry must be challenged, and actors of all backgrounds must address practices that suffocate, stigmatize, and diminish others. The attitude and acceptance that aligns whiteness with beauty have real-world consequences. "At the very least, I think we must center colorism in the wider conversation of racism in America," says Campbell. Colorism is rooted in racism and can have devastating impacts on those who are affected by it. It's important that you take the necessary steps to learn about colorism so that you can properly address it when you notice that someone is being treated differently because of their skin tone or if it's happening to you. An understanding of colorism will allow you to have more informed and effective conversations about race and skin color.

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