

1 Whatever Happened to Color?

Think About It...

Butterscotch by any other name is a shade of beige.

“WHATEVER HAPPENED TO COLOR?” I asked myself as I sat in a client’s home not too long ago. My client, Brooke, is a handsome woman with definite taste and great style. When she called me for an appointment, I was excited by the possibilities of designing her home with its panoramic views of the desert and the mountains. But, as I sat in her living room and listened to her describe the room she envisioned, my excitement vanished.

“I want to use vanillas and crème de caramel and butterscotch and chocolate throughout the house,” she explained, almost swooning at the thought of these tones.

“Brooke,” I asked, hesitating to break through her reverie, “aren’t you really talking about brown and beige?”

“Oh, no,” she protested, “I’m not.” She continued to describe her ideas. “And over here”—she gestured toward a large area—“I see a luscious crème de caramel sofa.”

“Crème de caramel?” I gulped. “Crème de caramel is beige.” As we continued to discuss her plans, I realized that Brooke was not going to budge.

When she rolled the colors off her tongue, she tasted butterscotch enveloped in ribbons of cream. She did not equate “chocolate” with brown or “vanilla” with off-white. In her view, these delicious shades were tempting and luscious. There was no way she would agree that butterscotch by any other name is a shade of beige.

As with so many other sophisticated Americans, Brooke was sold