

Farrow & Ball wallpapers are as unique as the paints they are made with, and because their colours are the same as the paint colours, they can be seamlessly coordinated with paintwork in a room scheme. Designs are adapted from archives, whether the simple 'Polka Square', taken from the background of an 18th-century paper, or the fabulous 'Wisteria', translated from a 19th-century fabric. All patterns have a painted ground, applied using brushes, and designs are either block printed or trough printed onto it, adding another layer of texture and contributing to the rich, handcrafted character of the papers.

Famous for their quality, Farrow & Ball paints are almost as famous for their names. While many are descriptive, 'Fawn', 'Blue Gray', 'Off-Black', and others such as 'Joa's White' and 'Calke Green' refer to people or houses, a significant minority are memorably odd. 'Dead Salmon' is probably best known, but there are also 'Mouse's Back', 'Elephant's Breath', 'Ointment Pink', 'Churlish Green', 'Smoked Trout', 'Cat's Paw', 'Matchstick' and 'Bone'. The names themselves are a tradition, and whenever a small number of new colours replace existing colours in the 132-strong chart, there is a meeting to discuss what they should be called.

As for how to use these evocatively named, carefully made paints and wallpapers, it is reassuring and possibly a little daunting to know that there are no strict rules. Colour is a matter of personal preference, as is pattern, and who knows whether the shade of green one perceives is exactly the same as that seen through another person's eyes? There are, however, guidelines to minimize the possibility of getting it wrong. Before making a decision, it is helpful to buy sample pots of the colours that you are considering and use them to paint a large piece of card that you can move around a room in order to see the colour in different lights. It can also be useful to



know whether a colour has a warm or a cool tinge. Cool colours should generally be avoided in north-facing rooms, as the effect can be too chilly for comfort.

The houses featured on the following pages offer inspiration, as do the swatches at the end of each colour chapter, although it should be noted that colour accuracy cannot be guaranteed due to the printing process and variations in light during photography. If you remain unsure of what goes with what, there is help available, either on Farrow & Ball's website, through their stockists or at a Farrow & Ball showroom where trained colour consultants can advise you in person.

Paint is the least expensive way to transform a room. And, unlike knocking down a wall or tiling a floor, it is not difficult to rectify if you have made a mistake. Colour should be fun; at its best it is joyful. 'Why do two colours, put one next to the other, sing?' asked Picasso. 'Can one explain this? No. Just as one can never learn to paint.' Even Picasso didn't understand how colour works. But it didn't stop him using it.

Ros Byam Shaw



THIS PAGE *The spectacular indoor pool has a ceiling in 'Joa's White' and walls painted in 'London Stone', a neutral that matches the colour of the limestone flooring almost exactly. Glass doors beneath pillared porticoes slide away into the walls when the weather is warm enough and the floor of the pool can be raised to lie flush with the limestone, transforming the space into a summer ballroom.*

