

because white is the new

black

No more darkness visible. It's time to lighten up around the home. Fortunately, there are many shades—and manifestations—of pale to choose from right now. *by Ruth Myles*

With all apologies to Tina Fey ("Bitch is the new black"), there's a new queen on the colour throne and she's wearing white. For far too long, wenge—a tropical timber with a dark appearance—ruled the roost at home-decor stores. Sure, wenge and its colour imitators lend themselves to creating warm, cosy atmospheres, but after a while, those dark walls and looming pieces of furniture begin closing in, snuffing any spark of vitality in a room. Stroll the aisles of those same stores today, though, and you'll see splashes of white, refreshing pops of pure relief on the colour landscape.

"I don't think white ever went away, but people have learned how to use it," says Tamara Robbins Griffith, design spokesperson for IKEA Canada. "Now, when people do white, they realize that they can really do it to their own tastes." For those looking to ride that style pendulum to the top of the arc, there's the all-white colour scheme. The August e-catalogue for Design Within Reach, a San Francisco-based retailer that specializes in modern design, features a spread on the white colour story. "White doesn't have to be vanilla. Ivory, snow, cream, powder, platinum—these shades are just the beginning." Layering and varying tones and shades of white add depth and interest to what can come off as flat and stale.

What often holds people back from going all white is the fear of creating a space that's as sterile and cold as the ice plains of the planet Hoth or the interior of the spaceship in *2001: A Space Odyssey*. "It's really important to go for texture: textiles with a nubby finish, white high-sheen cabinets, silk drapes, velvet. Layering is key," says Robbins Griffith. In addition to softening that sci-fi vibe with texture, pay attention to the lines. "As soon as you bring in soft textures and round shapes and finish off (the space), it's not going to end up cold."

Thinking outside the Crayola box and taking a design chance on an all-white space can really pay off. "I think it's totally liberating. The absence of colour is an achromatic colour palette. It takes away that visual clutter. It's very soothing, especially if you're a person who is very busy. It's great to come home to white. That doesn't mean it has to be an empty room with one piece of furniture. You still want those decorative finishes—mirrors, tex-



tiles, art—but keeping it achromatic."

But a whiter shade of pale isn't limited to the realm of accessories. People are putting their money where their design sensibilities lie and ponying up for an unpigmented palette when it comes to countertops, says Sophie Belanger of Icon Stone & Tile in Calgary. "It's not even a direction, it's a major trend. The dark colours don't seem to have the same appeal. Designers and architects are leading the way in specifying that it has to be light," Belanger says. "It's marble, marble, marble and quartz, quartz, quartz." Two newer shades from CaesarStone, in particular, are at the top of her clients' lists when it comes to quartz countertops, she adds: Pure White and Organic White (which has a slightly mottled grey pattern). "Designers are coming in for it, and even retail customers seem to know it." Another hot item is Calacatta marble, a classical white stone with veining from Italy. Who knew the ancient Romans were so on trend when it came to design? **S**

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