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The case for moody neutrals

Deep, rich, mercurial colors flatter whatever is set in front of them, as interior designer Barbara Westbrook details in her new book

BY KATHRYN KELLER

THE TRANSFORMERS. That's how Atlanta interior designer Barbara Westbrook refers to color and paint. "There's no easier or more affordable way to change a space or create a mood," she points out in her new tome, *Gracious Rooms*. The proof is in the pictures. Olive greens, café au lait taupes, bark-like brown-grays, dark chocolates—she wraps rooms in such nature-inspired shades for an effect both relaxing and elegant. And as often as not, the same color covers walls, casings, paneling, and built-ins. "Painting trimwork a contrasting color tends to chop up a room," she explains. "Covering it all in the same color lends a space some drama." Here, a few qualities that these velvety shades all share.

1. they're soothing

"I find rich, warm neutral colors comforting," says Westbrook. While she normally keeps a bathroom pale or white, she says the one shown here, in a 1930s stone house, "called for something different." A quietly luxurious shade of taupe filled the bill. Covering the walls and all the woodwork in the space, the color is an invitation to relax. *Paint: Pratt & Lambert's Putty*



Gracious Rooms (Rizzoli, 2015), by Barbara Westbrook, is available at independent booksellers and on amazon.com.



2. they can be dramatic

Westbrook likes to go deep and dark in the dining room, since it's most often used at night. "I want you to feel embraced when you walk in," she says. The gray-brown shade on these walls is one of her favorites. To balance it, she lightened up the chairs, carpet, shades, and artwork. *Paint: Pratt & Lambert's Anubis*

pro advice BARBARA WESTBROOK, WESTBROOK INTERIORS, ATLANTA

"People, furniture, flowers, and artwork all look great against these colors. They create a lovely backdrop for whatever else is going on."

3. they add warmth

A kitchen naturally has a lot of hard surfaces—in this case, a stainless-steel range and slab marble countertops and backsplashes. A true warm gray on the cabinets—and on the crown molding ringing the room—helps soften those elements while unifying the space and complementing the wood floor, door, and accessories. *Paint: Benjamin Moore's Galveston Gray*

