

A day that changed the way I look

My day with Pauline Harwood of House of Colour by Deborah Smyth

I arrived at the house a little unsure what to expect as I turned up for my colour analysis day. But amidst the inviting studio, friendly people and delicious coffee, I was soon completely at ease.

I looked up at the huge colour wheel on the wall opposite me. The idea is that each of us is most suited to the colours in one quarter of the wheel and this is referred to as a particular season. But where would I fit in? Thinking of all my clothes, I realised I wear colours from all the 4 quarters. It's no wonder then that my clothes never seem to match!

To work out which season we all were, we sat in natural light and Pauline placed coloured silks across us.

Charlie went first. I was stunned at the effects the silks had on her. Every warm colour seemed to make her face go yellow. If I hadn't seen it for myself, I wouldn't have believed it! So having established that she needed cool colours, we looked at the difference between the bright and the subtle colours. Again there could be no doubt. The strong, clear winter colours were for her. With Chris, again the results were undeniable. She needed the warm yet vivid colours of spring.

Finally, it was my turn and I was intrigued to see where I would end up. The cool colours washed me out and yet, surprisingly, many of them were colours that I love to wear. It dawned on me that my skin isn't that pale after all, it's just that these colours were actually draining my skin. Conversely, the warm colours, well they literally warmed up my skin tone. Isn't that fascinating?

But did I need bright or subtle colours? In my early days I had always worn bold colours but now I tend to go for more muted colours. But which is right for

me? Pauline explained that we are born with a particular season so, even though our skin colour changes as we get older, we still need colours from the same palette. Well the silks proved it. The bright colours overpowered me whereas the softer colours seemed to lift me. This placed me in Autumn.

That established, we looked at which of these autumn colours suited me best. Slowly the penny began to drop. "There don't seem to be any pinks here. . ." I mumbled. You see if someone had said to me "You can't wear pink," I would have thought they were off their trolley! As I voiced my concerns, Pauline obligingly placed my favourite colours across me again. As I

watched, I saw the effect they had on my skin. Whilst, admittedly, they didn't look terrible, they did nothing for me. Yet those new autumn colours gave me a healthy glow. And the two other people in the room confirmed it.

It was a wonderful day. I had been taken away from my normal life and my children and immersed in a whole new world. I came home brimming with excitement. I was desperate to go through my wardrobe. For me, this was so therapeutic. The fact that I could throw out some old colours (throwing out old bits of my life that are no longer required) and try some new ones (embracing the new and starting on a new path) is really great. It was a bit shocking though to find that I had lost half my wardrobe in this exercise. And a little disheartening to realise that this was all going to take somewhat longer than I had envisaged. But the upside of it is that I feel so good. Not only that, but I've lost track of the number of people who have exclaimed



how well I look, which is strange considering how little sleep I've had lately! Pauline was also able to advise me on shops that I could go to find my new colours. So that night, I was on the internet ordering new autumn tops.

You might be forgiven for thinking that you can work out what colours suit you for yourself. Well, I'm living proof that you can't because I've got it wrong all these years! I needed Pauline to not only tell me, but to show me which colours work for me. Pauline has immense skill at being able to know exactly what works and what doesn't. During the day there was nothing accusatory and certainly nothing to make me feel stupid. The hardest thing was my own preconceived ideas about what I should be wearing or what I should look like. So what about all those times I've tried things on that look good on someone else but just look wrong on me? I now see that it's not because I'm the wrong shape or too old (no, it couldn't possibly be that), it's just that it's not my thing.

I can't wait to do the image day and the make-up day. I'm left thinking what a fantastic gift this would be for someone and how different things could be if you had this information early on in your life. Just a small note though. If you see me in the street wearing pink, just be aware that there are one or two items I can't bear to part with yet!



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