

VOC-FREE

Healthy paint in critical colors

Two Portland, Ore., women, Janie Lowe and Virginia Young, had been working as custom paint finishers for several years when they started to get sore throats and headaches from the volatile organic compounds (VOC) in the paint. They tried making their own clay paint from the dirt in Oregon's Painted Hills but gave that up for a wiser alternative.

They approached Rodda Paint of Portland to make them a paint line. "We had a palette of colors. We wanted high-performance paint that covered well and that laid-out well," Young said.

"They were making a paint with low VOC," Lowe added. "We wanted them to make one with zero."

Rodda Paint came through and **Yolo Colorhouse**, a highly unusual set of paints with an equally unusual system for choosing correct room colors, was born.

Lowe and Young — Yolo is combination of the first letters of their last names — say only certain colors fit interiors well and users get confused by the excessive offerings from most paint companies.

Instead, they offer a palette of just 40 colors in seven family groups based in nature that, they have found, work really well indoors. "Some colors may look good in clothes or in graphics but they just don't look good in interiors," Young said. "If we can limit choices, choosing paint is less scary for people."

Yolo also revolutionized the process for choosing the right color by eliminating the quart can of sample paint that always ends languishing on a garage shelf.

They sell posters with real paint as samples, giant swatches with repositionable tape on the back (shown above with paint cans) that can be tacked up on walls and used for wrapping paper or art projects later. The family cards help narrow down the choices.

The whole kit and caboodle — 40 8-by-11½ sample cards and family cards — come in a design kit (shown above) for \$80.

The entire palette is designed to be harmonious throughout the home, another concept unique to Yolo.

"The whole idea was to simplify things," Young said. And be able to breathe better as well.

Yolo Colorhouse paints are available at Eco Home Improvement, 2619 San Pablo Ave., Berkeley and online at www.yolocolorhouse.com.

— L.T.

