

# The Natural

Gary Glant travels the globe seeking color inspiration — and usually finds it outdoors.

By KIM PALMER



*Featured mills and fabrics: (top to bottom) Bon Bon Linen, Coral; Cannes, La Mer; Embarcadero, Spinnaker Yellow; Quinnault, Moss. All from Glant's Classic Colors collection.*

*Opposite page: Chaine, Tomato.*

If Gary Glant, founder and CEO of Seattle-based Glant Textiles, has a muse, it's Mother Nature. The colors and textures of the natural world influence many of his upholstery and drapery fabric creations — including a piece inspired by lava that found its way into New York's Museum of Modern Art. His approach resonates with designers, who named Glant one of their favorite brands in House & Garden magazine's 2004 poll "The Best on the Best."

## What are your earliest color memories?

When I was young, my sister and I used to see people as colors. I also saw numbers and words as colors. I still do. My wife is a clinical psychologist, and she showed me an issue of Scientific American that talked about that phenomenon — it's the way certain people's brains work.

## How about an example — what color is your wife?

She's a very rich golden color, with an almost luminescent pink aura around that. There's also a drop of a very rich sable-espreso that has emerged.

## How has your approach to color evolved?

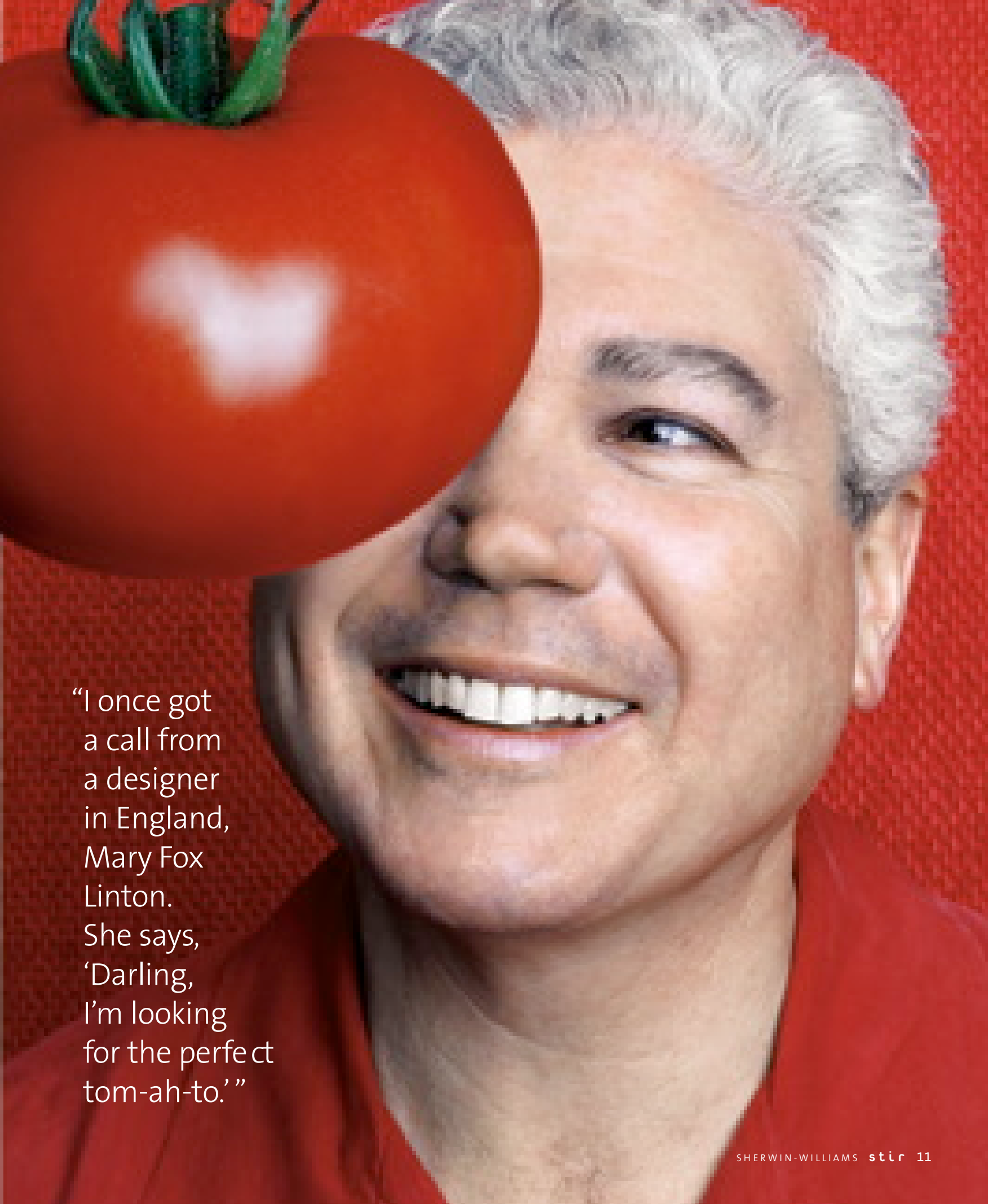
In the early days, I was not very colorful. My first collection was based on texture. It was beautiful, but so boring! The whole spectrum was balsa to chocolate, and I thought that was a very colorful offering. Then, after I went to China, I did a collection that was my interpretation of Chinese screens. Interior Design magazine wrote about it, and said, "Keep your eyes on Glant Textiles in Seattle." That gave me the confidence I needed to go for it.

## Where do you find color inspiration today?

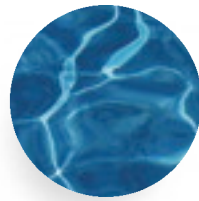
I am turned on to color wherever I see it. In Bali, I was amazed by the green of nature, the spectacular red of dragonflies, the gorgeous violets. Living in Seattle, I am incredibly inspired by the colors I find in walks by the ocean. I'm amazed by a day when everything looks gray, and then, suddenly, a thousand colors emerge. I'm drawn to colors I see in fashion, and on a plate in a restaurant, and the nuance of color in a glass of wine.

## How does a color idea become a fabric? Give us an example.

I once got a call from a designer in England, Mary Fox Linton. She says, "Darling, I'm looking for the perfect tom-ah-to." I was in Italy at our textile mill, and my son Adam was 11 at the time. We went to the green grocer, where they sell 14 different kinds of tomatoes. I got one of each and cut them in half to expose the skin side and the meat side. I said, "Adam, show me the perfect tomato color." I kept steering him to the perfect tomato red — 60 percent red with a yellow undertone. When he got there, I said, "Great job, I agree." Then we dashed over to the dyer and asked him to



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match it, which he did. After we sent (Linton) the prototypes, I get a phone call with just two words: “Spot on.” Then she hung up.

**What impact has the introduction of microfibers had on color?**

A great impact. Microfibers can give you such luminescence. They take colors forward and open them up. You can add finishes that approximate other surfaces, like glass. We have Glant Iridescent Leather, a jersey that gets coat after coat of polyurethane until it’s almost like Japanese lacquer. It’s incredible in platinum — it looks like stainless steel or a mirror.

**What colors or combinations are we going to start seeing a lot more of in interiors?**

Neutrals are always a gorgeous mainstay, but I’m starting to see more mixing and matching of cool and warm neutrals — like in nature, in a pile of rocks. I’m very glad to see gorgeous grays returning. They’ve been missing for a long time; they’re a beautiful foil for other colors. I just came up with a new color I’m very fond of: Antique Pearl. It’s taupe and pink, reduced to practically nothing.

**You talk about color like it has a mind of its own.**

Yes! I think it does: “I’m a medium-value green — what do I want to be next to? What do I want to be a little farther away from? Can I work with you in the next room? Can we

be friends? Are you going to like me in the summer as much as you do in the winter?”

**What colors do you surround yourself with at home?**

We collect contemporary art, so the color is mostly in the artwork. In the public areas, the house is medium-toned warm neutral — quiet but not boring. The color goes warmer in the private areas — camels and caramels and deep persimmons.

**How would you describe the color era we live in today?**

I love it because it’s not narrowly defined. In this country, color is a smorgasbord — like our restaurant scene. You get to sample everything.

**What color mistakes do people commonly make?**

The same mistakes chefs make. Trying to put too many things together, trying to be too different — like putting raspberry-anchovy sauce on vanilla ice cream. Although that’s actually a very nice color combination! ■

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