

White

White isn't really a color - it's an absence of color, or it's the combination of all colors into perfect light.

It sounds like nothing, like silence, the clinical silence of fluorescent lights as you sit on the table in a doctor's office, waiting. It sounds like underwater, like bubbles and plugged ears, or like a peaceful night in a stone cliff house off the Adriatic Sea with the ocean far below and the hum of the overhead fan lulling you to sleep.

It smells like exotic garden flowers, like cool, tall lilies opening in the spring, or the sultry smell of jasmine vines overgrowing the lanai where you meet someone secretly, or tiny sweet gardenias hiding deep in their leaves. White contradicts, though. It also smells like bleach, like soap, like a clean and gleaming tile floor or the humid air of the shower. And it smells like brand new paper, an unlined notebook of limitless possibility.

White tastes boring and bland, like things you eat when you're sick. It tastes flavorless, like water, and heavy, like milk. It's smooth and inoffensive - when you order a white coffee in Europe a Portlander can hardly taste anything, it's so white. White is noodles, potatoes, rice, soft bread, with no salt or butter or sauce of any kind.

It feels cool and clean, like the Pond's cold cream that my grandma, and my mom, and now I, use every morning. It feels soft and soothing, like sliding into clean sheets when you're very tired, like all the pillows you ever wanted, like a mountain of cotton balls.

White is the color of absence, of the void, of nothingness. It is a wonderful color for meditation; to picture a pure white light is to enter Zen, detached from the world and all the noise and color and crazy activity that surrounds us. In China, it's the color of mourning; when a person dies, everyone wears white, which makes sense, since it's the color of absence. Bones are white, too.