Car Colors

Driving out of Utah's Canyonlands National Park this winter, there was a fairly new, brown Eddie Bauer Ford Explorer parked by the ranger's booth in an offical space, as if one of the big wigs was holding a surprise inspection. Normally, a brown vehicle of any sort makes me shudder. I admit that once I owned a brown '73 Z-28, but that was different. That Chevy was dark brown with broad white stripes and the only bowtie I've ever owned. Anyway, this brown SUV, which would be considered unfortunate in Kalamazoo, looked good out in the West surrounded by mountains. Gosh, I might even consider buyng a vehicle that was that candy apple, golden chestnut, if I lived in a state with red rocks sticking out of the ground all over the place. While in my real life here in Kalamazoo, I would never consider "Stay around brown."   As we drove across the muted vast spaces between mountains, I mulled over the spectrum of car colors that have impressed and repulsed me. Perhaps our reaction to a cars color is dependent upon being seen in the proper environment. After all, 1950's turquiose pick-ups which look to me gaudy and slightly goofy in Michigan look pretty good cruising along US-60 in Phoenix. Black Lincoln Town Cars seem out of place in the Valley of the Sun, but look right when parked outside the Newark airport or gliding along the Dan Ryan. Light green metallic Aston Martins look fabulous when photographed in moody and overcast England, but light green cars here in the U. S. of A. always seem to suggest government ownership. Somehow it seems car colors appeal to us depending on where we see the car. It may be the dominant colors and type of light of the surroundings that make a cars color look excellent or afflicted. Then there must be a place where even an orange car looks good. I just haven't found it yet.

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