The 2019 Color of the Year:
LIVING CORAL

By Marilyn Nieves

Every year, the world's experts on color at the Pantone Color Institute designate a "color of the year" which drives loads of trends in design, décor, fashion, and advertising. PANTONE 16-1546 (Living Coral) has been declared the color of the year for 2019. For stock photography, you can bet that images that feature this coral color will be in demand from photo buyers since it's a color that's sure to be popular across so many industries this year.

It feels like a happy, mellow color, and it's said to be warm, sociable and spirited. As photographers, there's a ton of potential here, so let's explore how we can shoot stock photos using Living Coral as a main color theme.

Living Coral as Stock

In terms of stock photos, this color evokes joy, optimism, lighthearted activity, and playful expression. These are rich concepts for stock photography because photos that leave the viewer feeling happy, positive, and upbeat are sure to be top-sellers. For this reason, Livin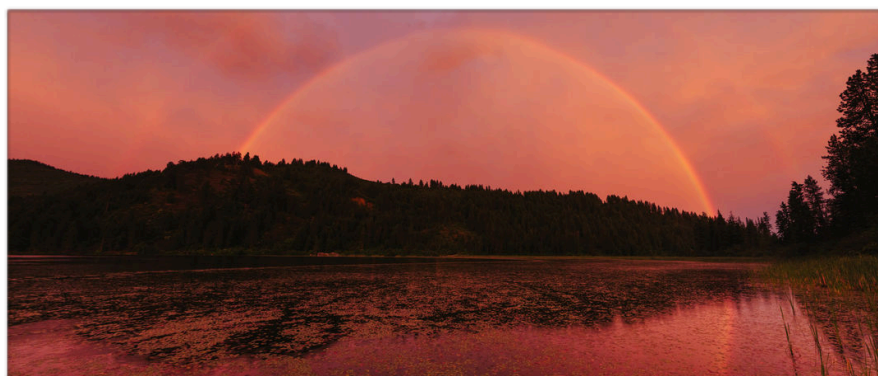g Coral is an ideal color to feature in stock photography. Let's take a look at some stock photos for inspiration on where to find the color Living Coral and ideas for how to create strong stock images with it.

The Natural World

This warm, earthy color can be found throughout nature. In the photo above, Antelope Canyon's full spectrum of warm corals is captured. Depending on the light, you will see a large range of hues from vibrant to muted tones.

Looking to the sky, this amazing view of a full rainbow is glowing and engulfed by the vibrant coral tones of sunset. You can often find coral tones in the morning and evening golden hours.

Depending on where you live, autumn can bring a beautiful array of colors when the leaves start to change. To the left, this carefully composed photo of autumn leaves has a feeling of peace and vitality. The sun is peeking through and the cooler background colors compliment the warm tones nicely. Even though it's not currently fall, it could be worth digging through your image library to see if you have any autumn images that feature the coral color. If so, now would be the perfect time to add them to your stock photo galleries.

Unlike most of the examples so far, in this photo above, the coral tones are more subtle, but still prominent in the image. The warm tones of the sunrise bring attention to the coral tones in the lifeguard hut, creating a beautiful panoramic beach shot.

In this lovely ocean shot to the right, the coral color is once again more subtle, but you can see it in the highlights and details of the foreground, bringing a nice warmth to the entire image. If you want to capture golden, coral hues like this, be sure to head out well before sunrise or sunset to get setup and ready for the right light.
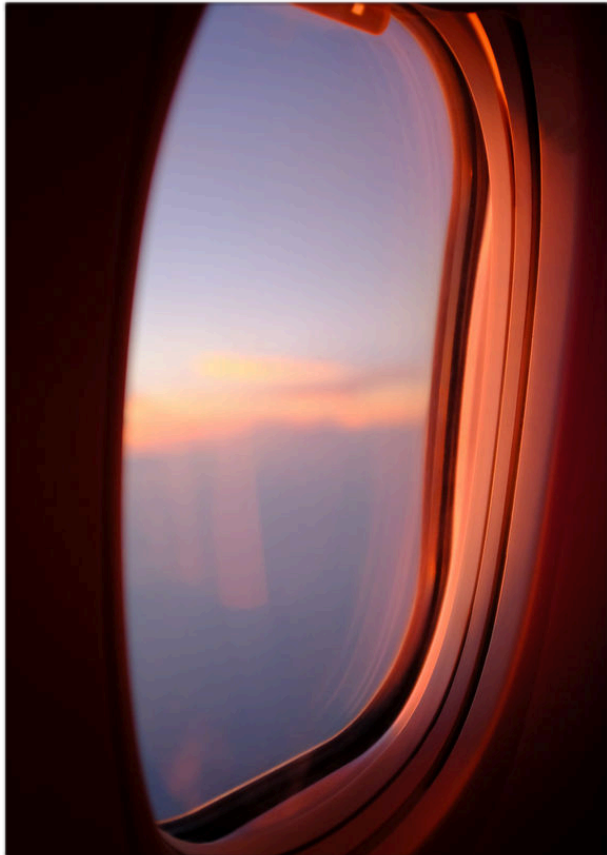
Daily Life

It wasn't until I started looking for it that I realized Living Coral is truly all around us. This simple image of fresh potatoes at a farmer's market, though the focus of the image is the white potatoes, the prominent Living Coral hues help to create that focus.

Below, warm coral tones shine through an airplane window.

You might even find the color of the year as you're preparing dinner, such as the photographer did below with these fresh salmon steaks.
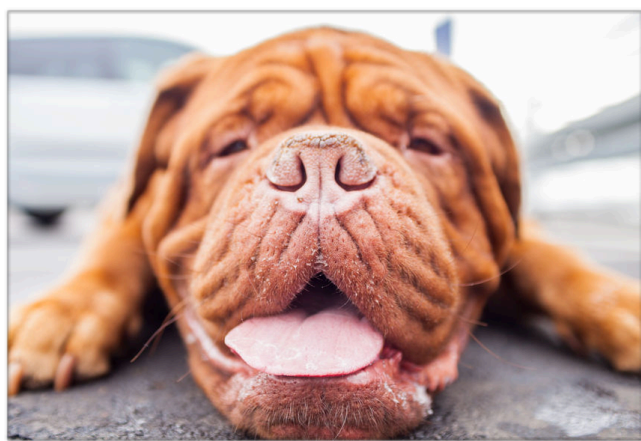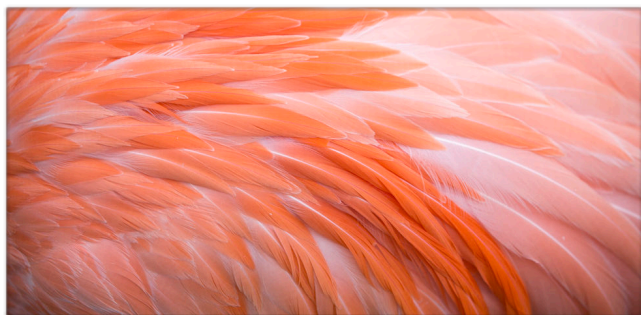
Pets & Animals

Looking to the animal kingdom, you can find Living Coral in many places, such as the soft beauty of the feathers on a flamingo. See it close up like this image of feather details or from a distance as a pop of color surrounded by blue water.

Living Coral, pun intended, takes over this image below, of a clown fish in its environment. If you have an underwater camera and are headed to a tropical destination this winter, be sure to keep a lookout beneath the surface for this color.

The four-legged members of your family may be willing to pose for you, or wait until they are so tired they'll just plop in front of you as this little guy did.

You can also set something up with your pet and a coral colored backdrop or props such as the photographer did here for this image of a napping poodle.
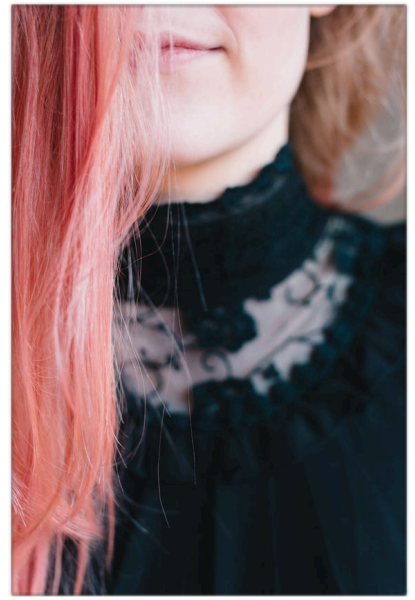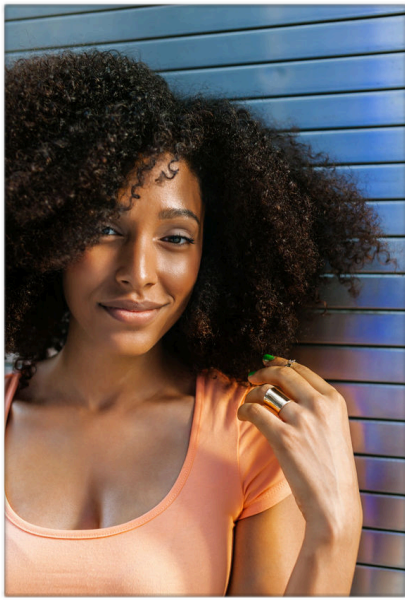
Architecture & Interiors

This color is common in old world architecture, the desert southwest, and coastal regions. In the image to the right, it provides a lovely backdrop for the blue bicycle leaning against it.

This retro kitchen below uses a splash of coral and highlights the dining space within the kitchen. Notice how it adds a cheerful warmth and really draws the viewer into the scene.

Fashion

You don't have to wait for nature to find the color or the year. Keep an eye out for Living Coral in fabric like this shot above of an afro-latina model. Living Coral compliments all skin tones beautifully.

In the center photo above, the coral hue adds warmth to a winter day. If you live in a snowy place, Living Coral will add a welcome pop of color to a snowy, otherwise monochromatic scene.

This teen's individual form of expression through her hair color really stands out.

This newly married couple dressed in traditional attire has many coral tones complimenting the Henna tattooed hands.

Summer Vibes

This first image features summer cocktails against a coral-colored building. Even though we're in the middle of winter, if you can create a summer vibe in your images, it will be the perfect complement to the coral color. Since designers are always working months ahead, now would be the perfect time to add some images that evoke summertime to your collections.

Objects & Still Life

Look around to see if you already have objects around the house in a "Living Coral" color. Or, set out to buy a few props and set up a still-life shoot at home.

This simple shot to the right combines a favorite hobby with stock photography, including just a splash of today's hot trend color.

Consider finding some coral-colored paper to use as a background. The photographer of the top left photo did it in a fun and unique way, by making everything monochromatic.

And the photographer of the top right photo went simple, with paint on a white background.

You can even paint your food! These donuts are a lighter hue of the coral color.

Have fun with this color. It is very versatile and easily available. Use it as the main color that fills the entire frame of your photo or compliment it with cooler tones.

Use a Color Wheel

A vibrant color like Living Coral will definitely draw the viewer's eye, so you want to keep that in mind as you're composing your shots. You may choose to have Living Coral as the main color in your image, or you might try pairing it with complementary colors.

If you are unsure of what colors work best with Living Coral, a great place to begin is by referencing a color wheel. The topic of the color wheel could be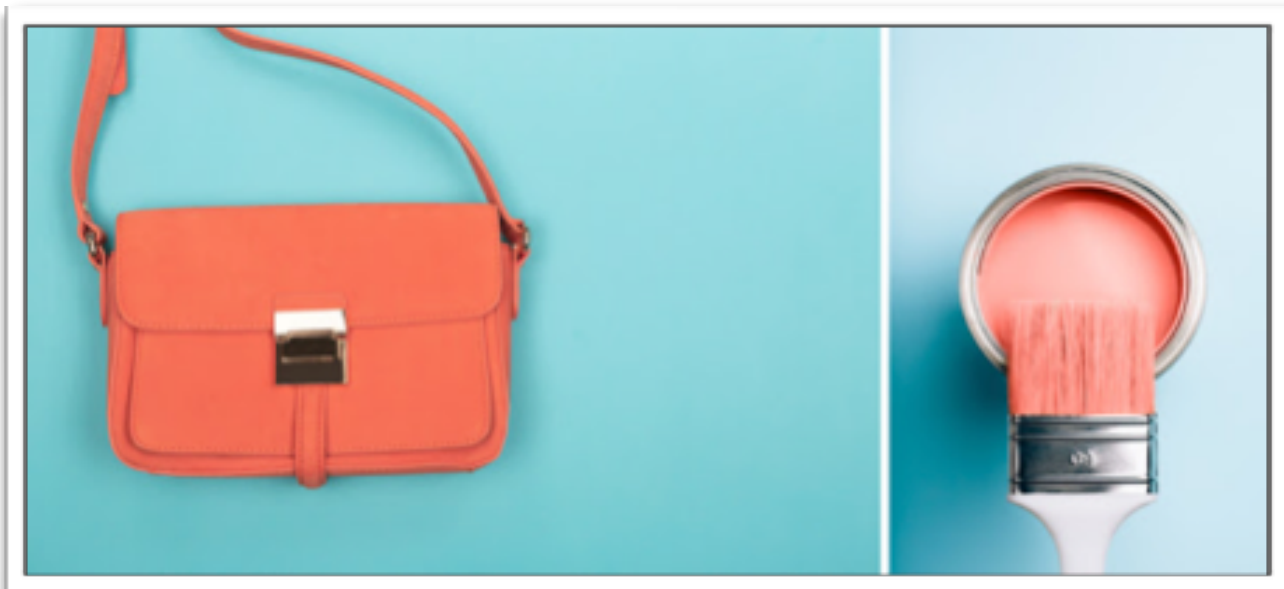 a college course all on its own, but to keep it simple, start by selecting a complementary color (a color across the color wheel from main color). Using them together will provide contrast, and depending on your composition, will help create a point of interest. Living Coral isn't depicted exactly on any color wheel, but it is in the warm, orange/red tones and its complementary would be in the cooler tones. Think: blues and teals.

Combining opposite (complementary) colors like this creates fun, high-energy images that really pop.

Play with Light

Try different light sources and change the direction in which you light your subject. Although Living Coral is generally a lively color, you can change the emotion of your photo with your lighting. Challenge yourself to create different moods with the same color by adjusting the direction, quality, and intensity of your lighting.
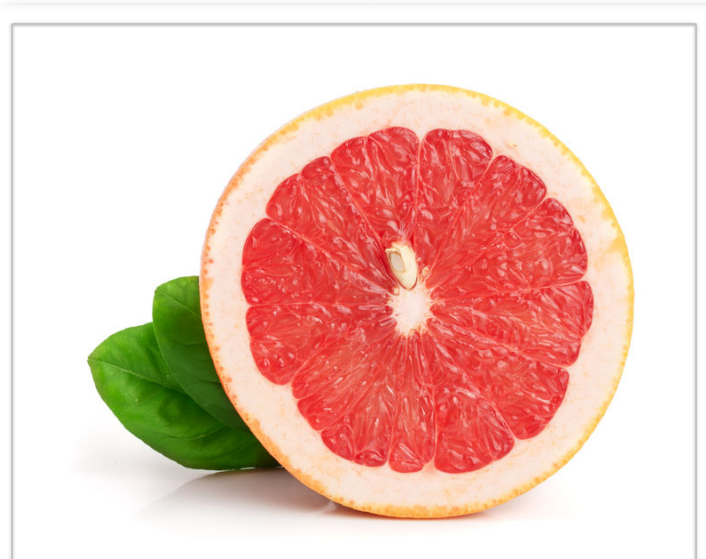
Living Coral can depict a large range of emotions. It can feel content and stable, exciting and vibrant, or serene and peaceful. When keywording your photos, don't forget to include words that depict the emotions relevant to your image. Here are some examples.

This popsicle feels like: happiness, vitality, summer, and fun.

In this architectural shot below, the feeling is: serene and peaceful.

This juicy coral-toned grapefruit makes you think of: freshness and health.

This fun photo is full of: joy and youthfulness.

You'll also want to be sure to add these keywords to all of your images for this month's theme: living coral, color of the year 2019, Pantone, and 16-1546.

More Inspiration

One way to look for more inspiration for this month's theme is by trying the "color search" feature that many stock photo sites now have. When you search using their hue bar you will get a page filled with beautiful tones of the color you have selected. It may take a few tweaks in the search to get the color you want but it's a great place to start.

While the color Living Coral is not specifically associated with a holiday, it's in the red family and with Valentine's Day coming up, it's a good time to shoot with it in mind.

I hope you can see the large range of possibilities for the color of the year and have fun taking on this Challenge.

Happy photographing!