



Linked to creativity and peace of mind, blue takes on a vibrant feel via monochromatic, jewel-toned mosaic tiles in this National Kitchen and Bath Association award-winning kitchen. Designer: Tim Scott.

COURAGEOUS WITH COLOR

Fight the winter blahs and embrace the emotional side of design
with warm, bright, sensational shades

Written by
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As the Earth sleeps, blanketed by the travails of icy weather, we alternately bundle up and hunker down, awakening to shivers and daily doses of brittle air, blustering winds, brutal temperatures and barren landscapes. Dark skies and hard rains also dampen spirits, while mudrooms fill with wet boots and overcoats as gloves and hats sporadically adorn every part of the house.

Rather than waiting for the clouds to part, ward off bleak, colorless days and the sense of “blah” that gloomy weather inspires with interiors awash in vibrant hues, taking refuge in bright spaces designed to lift moods faster than a warm, spring day.

Psychologists and color designers say color is one of the biggest influences on the human state of mind, and our language regularly references the emotive connection. After all, we “see red,” we’re “green with envy” and we feel “peachy.” Retail products are carefully packaged in colors selected to make us buy. And in

commercial settings from restaurants to hospitals, color specialists encourage the use of various wall colors to inspire desired emotions and behaviors. Red stimulates the appetite; pastel blues and greens calm and soothe the soul.

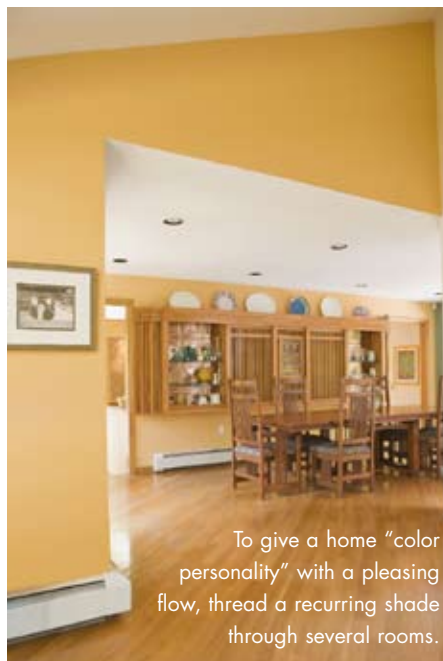
“Color is powerful,” says designer Kate Smith, founder of Sensationalcolor.com and a self-described “color maven.” “It’s

the essence of emotion. Whether you see a certain color in a positive or negative light, it’s highly emotive.”

Because of this, Smith says there is only one way to approach it in your home. “Go with your gut,” she says simply. “There are no hard and fast rules about how to integrate color into your home. There’s a lot of information out there about the psychology of it and how certain hues affect us, and that’s fun, but all that really matters is what you like and the importance of surrounding yourself with what makes you feel good. Color is a huge part of that.”

POPULAR PALETTES

In trend-conscious home environments, neutral tones are still dominant, only they’ve taken on an expanded palette. Smith says the latest hues are deeper and more versatile than earlier versions. Newer shades such as soft peach and blush pink have appeared in the mix, and blended shades like sage green, buttercup or warm gold are showing staying power as versatile accent colors.



To give a home “color personality” with a pleasing flow, thread a recurring shade through several rooms.

“The newer neutrals are more complex and almost hard to describe, like greenish gray and brownish purple,” she explains. “They span all the hues. We’ve got something like 36 shades of gray now, with tones like lavender, blue and green. You can always find one that will work with any other color.”

Inspired by the environmental movement and showing lasting appeal, earth tones evoke thoughts of outdoor elements like stones, pebbles and even bamboo. A newer version of builder beige is “greige,” a fusion of gray and beige.

When selecting paint colors, pay attention to sheen, cautions Don White, owner of D & M Painting and Custom Molding, LLC. “The most common sheens are semigloss,

eggshell and flat,” he says. “Semigloss is a very tough and durable finish that can be washed easily. It’s primarily used on doors, trims and moldings. Eggshell is a very popular finish used on walls.”

RICH AND STRONG

A rediscovered classic in both fashion and paint fields, brown has been dubbed “the new black” in some circles. The dark, purple-infused browns Smith mentions have also impacted the marketplace and owe inspiration to the popularity of dark, exotic woods in furnishings and décor. A surge of nature-inspired tones such as earthy browns, deep floral tones, foliage greens and ocean blues all point to a back-to-basics environmental trend, and experts attribute the abundance of colors drawn from nature to a societal need for balance given the frenetic pace of modern life.

Vibrant color contrasts make a statement in smaller spaces like a children’s playroom or powder bath, but experts warn that the trendy colors of the day shouldn’t be thrown together haphazardly. Violet and lime green, for instance, may seem like a wild mix, but they work well together because they are complementary colors — positioned opposite each other on the color wheel. Turquoise and red-orange are also complementary, while orange and fuchsia, two hues you might think would clash, blend well because they are adjacent on the color wheel, creating a “color harmony.”

TONE IT DOWN

Bold colors are best confined to spaces with less usage, like hallways and small powder baths. In spaces that invite tarrying, brighter choices can be toned down with glazes and colorwashes. “There are all sorts of variations of any given hue and more ways to mute it or lighten it,” Smith says. For instance, a glaze on a bright red dining room may change its vibrancy to a burnished effect, and bright yellows applied over a white base provide a softer shade. Such texturizing retains the original character of the color while muting its brightness. Colors may also be layered for unusual effects.

Yellow and orange are linked with energizing effects of the sun, making them cheerful options for breakfast areas and kitchens — spaces where your energy might need a boost. Orange in a toned-down, terra-cotta form can be ideal in a home office, as it combines the effects of red and orange but isn’t so emotive as to prevent you from lingering or getting your work done.

BEAUTIFUL BLENDS

Working with a nonprofit organization called Color Marketing Group in Alexandria, Va., Smith is a member of a select set of experts who forecast color trends and says many people like to follow “dictates of fashion” in designing their color schemes. However, she also says trends aren’t meant to be followed

MIXING IT UP

Also called “color chords,” harmonies are combinations of different hues that have pleasing effects. Complementary color schemes involve colors directly opposite one another on the color wheel such as red and green or purple and yellow. Split-complementary combinations expand this concept with a base color paired with two colors situated adjacent to its complement — for instance, pairing green with pink and orange, which sit alongside red across the diagram.

Triadic color schemes are usually vibrant and involve a mix of three colors spaced evenly around the color wheel. Imagine placing a triangle on the wheel and selecting hues where the points touch — purple, light orange and green, for example. This combination works best with one dominant color and two accents.

Softer analogous color schemes that mix colors located adjacent to one another on the color wheel often duplicate combinations found in nature — dark blue paired with purple and ocean blue or red paired with pink and orange, for example.



Disregarding color trends and surrounding yourself with favorite feel-good shades creates rooms guaranteed to lift your spirits. Pictured: walls painted in Sherwin-Williams' "Blackberry."



mindlessly. “The key to making it work for you is to pull in a new tone and make it your own by mixing it with something you really like and have always liked,” she notes.

It’s important to make sure the hue in the store looks the same at home — many homeowners are unhappy when the color that ends up on walls doesn’t look the same as the paint chip. “Lighting is the biggest problem,” says Lori Goldman, owner of The Paint Barn in Lawrenceville. “When [homeowners] are looking in the store, they don’t understand the color is going to appear differently in the home. Sampling is really important, as is working with color consultants in the home.”

Disliked colors can be just as bad as outdated color schemes. To rectify an old-fashioned scheme, update with small accent colors. Subtle, muted wall colors like taupe and off-white are easy to live with and can be brightened up with updated accessories and upholstery highlights. Colorful rugs, bright ceramics, vivid prints or paintings and various cushions with sparkles and jewel tones

add flashes of color to an otherwise bland room.

LASTING APPEAL

Promoting the notion of trusting your own preferences or “color timbre,” Smith says many of us embrace our “signature colors” almost unintentionally. “I don’t think people should worry too much about the latest trends as much as what appeals to them,” she explains. “It’s like comfort food. It’s nice to surround ourselves with what we like and what have always been feel-good colors to us. ... And when you see something new that calls out to you, you’ll know that, too.”

It happened to her recently when she spotted a newer “almost textured” tone of turquoise that looked different in varying lights. She says she immediately went home and changed her computer’s home page to a facsimile of it. “Turquoise has always been one of my signature colors,” she says. “But seeing that new version of it just brought that all home.”

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EXPERT
OPINION
With “color
maven”
Kate Smith



The physiological effects of a shade only go so far, notes color expert Kate Smith of Sensationalcolor.com. More important is how a certain hue affects you.

“Even if it’s true that red increases heart rates and stimulates us, you still might not like that color,” she says. “So, your heart might beat faster when you’re in a red room just like the rest of us, but just because that happens, it won’t overcome personal preference. The physiological response doesn’t guarantee that you will like the color any more or less.”

RESOURCES

D & M Painting and
Custom Molding, LLC
609-598-1845

Sherwin-Williams
www.sherwin-williams.com

Brennan’s Custom Painting
www.brennanscustompainting.com
856-589-5895

The Paint Barn
www.thepaintbarn.com
609-587-0900