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TRENDS IN CORPORATE
2016 COLOR TRENDS
CARPET TILE UPDATE



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2016 **COLOR** TRENDS

The latest trends in commercial color.

■ By Todd van der Kruik



At the close of 2013, we discussed the rise of the selfie, and its filtered effect on color, borrowing muted, grainy undertones from the explosion of a new(ish) generation of photo sharing apps like Instagram, Snapchat and others. Although the demand and influence of the selfie has not waned in the last two years—MasterCard predicts that the selfie will replace passwords within five years—the application and motivation has evolved to influence society in new and unexpected ways.



As the phenomenon of experience-sharing reaches an all-time high with events like Coachella and Burning Man being shared by tens of thousands of people in real time, these once must-see-to-believe events now become virtual events you no longer have to attend in person. With the experience delivered to their smartphones, virtual attendees can now focus on more personal and meaningful experiences in smaller settings. This gives rise to a new wave of close-quarter events like dinner and craft parties, along with a yearning for social content that feels like normal life—unstaged and real.

Although new apps and social networks will continue to create global connections, they will not surpass our need to connect with nature. In fact, as we progress through the new year, we become even more acutely aware of our place within the world. It's no longer enough to know where our food comes from, but now we demand to know how its elements will affect our bodies—and we are more educated on the subject than ever. With this, healthy living becomes a key influence.

Color will borrow as much from the idea of healthy living as from the yearning for comfort, connection and the wholesome idealization of 'home.' Although flooring may only get a glimpse of Rose Quartz, Pantone's soothing color of the year (one of two Pantone colors this year; the other is a soft blue called Serenity), its influence will be felt among a new generation



of muted, sophisticated colors. These colors, including dusty blues, chalked reds and muted yellows, evoke an almost retro memory of the pottery of the '60s and the desire for a more personal, low-fi interaction today. Following these comfort colors will be a jolt of the unexpected, like an uncommon orange, which moves from citrus to a warmer, accessible but still non-traditional hue.



The need for authentic experience collides with the hallmarks of our time: economic instability, unemployment and personal safety. Manual labor becomes an inspiration for key trends, lending nobility to the handmade. Colors and shapes are taken from mechanical processes, tools and factory life. Casual materials become elegant when applied to thoughtful design. In 2016, we find that blues have refocused to a dark, rich hybrid, taking a cue from denim but shifting to a darker, more saturated color—not quite navy but not yet cobalt/black. This color of the cosmos takes us to a more natural, dean state.

Cryptocurrencies like bitcoin grow as confidence in traditional banking declines. Our new world of clicks, likes and



follows makes paper money seem dated, and our global outlook embraces any idea that could help us to move between borders with greater ease. Green, although less interesting in paper form, is still making its presence known, not only as an accent but also as a dialed-up neutral. It borrows from nature an ability to blend with its surroundings; its leafy tones range from sunny celadon to moss-like hues. Green remains neutral and in balance with nature.

As the glorification of "normal" continues to gain momentum, we look to a simplification of material and color to push us into the future. A new form of minimalism evolves, with the consumer looking for reduced collections that are both highly curated and thoughtfully designed. Natural finishes become increasingly important as materials like wood, metal, clay and denim continue to create demand.

A reduction of materials signals a sense of importance and imbues meaning in the object, evoking past experiences or perhaps aspirational ones, as well as expressing both material worth and the values of the purchaser. Consumers demand products with purpose and corporate accountability as they look to make purchases that transcend their own lives, reflecting a need for design that serves the greater good.

Sustainability becomes more sophisticated as the expectation of manufacturing transparency and product lifecycle continues to grow. We have a greater inclination to purchase objects for life, not for labels. Stripped down design, minimal materials, re-use and re-purpose grow in demand—not as a fad, but as an expectation of manufacturing process. As less becomes even less, its meaning becomes significantly more.

Color and pattern continue to borrow from natural materials as well, bringing the geometric shapes of rock and metal into focus. Organic textures allow color to be introduced in purposeful ways, drawing comparisons with the diametric nature of oxidized metal. Neutrals become lighter, taking inspiration from clay and stone—signifying a desire for wholeness and completion. White contains all colors of the spectrum, imparting a sense of fairness and equality we deeply crave.

A powdery grey brings with it a lighter but more functional take on the movement in paint to use white as the primary color. Other natural neutrals create a stable foundation, including hues of cement grey and cobblestone. These unbiased tones gain energy from natural patinas acting as a splash or accent. Their multi-colored veneers show us how rusted layers can become neutral foundations, even with unexpected colors like pale yellow and softened reds playing significant roles.

Happy to finally put 2015 behind us, the only thing we're sure of is that nothing is for sure. With the economy moving in the right direction, despite instability in the world at large, 2016 proposes to be another wave of highs and lows. We will continue to balance real life with our tech lives and seek more ways to strengthen our connection to what's most important. Design, and especially color, will help us to stay grounded and focused on the path ahead. ■

