

## PAINT THE TOWN

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Summary: Interior colors on the horizon echo the great outdoors

Until four years ago, Michele Thomases' world, in a manner of speaking, was cold and white.

She was surrounded by cold, white walls in her home. Then something happened: she painted her family room yellow.

But little by little, a warming trend has swept into the rooms of her Wilsonville home: today a soothing mauve covers the walls of one bedroom and a crisp lime green beams from another. Her bathroom is lathered in hot pink.

And Thomas isn't looking back. "I will never live in a house with white walls again," she says.

She's not alone. Color has become as much of a decorating essential as furniture or lighting.

Today's trends appear in palettes rather than single colors, which offer a range of intensities and moods. Compared with traditional shades of burgundy, navy or hunter green, late '90s colors are described by designers as complex and sophisticated, playful and versatile.

Designers and color experts agree that green -- whether it's crisp celadon or soothing sage -- is riding a wave of popularity. Also on the horizon are shades of the great outdoors. Pick up any fashion magazine to see what they are: penetrating periwinkles, soft lilacs and clear ocean blues are at the crest.

"Fashion leads color trends," says Kathleen Donohue, kitchen and bath designer with Neil Kelly Designers/Remodelers. "If you see a color on a sweater now, you're likely to see it on the wall soon."

No longer do color trends hang on for seven to 10 years, says Leatrice Eiseman, executive director of the Pantone Color Institute. Accessibility has speeded everything up. And unlike past eras, people no longer follow color trends blindly. "Everyone did avocado in the '70s because that's what everyone did," she says. "There hasn't been just one color in style since the '80s, when everything was mauve."

Today's trend is about personalization: If you have a favorite color, go with it, Eiseman says. That's not to say that decorators and designers won't shake things up to get the public's attention. That's when new colors begin popping up on accessories and low-ticket items.

"Not everybody will rush out and buy chartreuse," Eiseman says. "But it will show up in linens or combined with colors that (people) love."

In the Northwest and beyond, a new attitude about paint has emerged, bringing more color into homes than ever. A decade ago, people were more likely to go with neutral shades

and reserve bold colors for accessories. Then people began painting accent walls. They splashed one wall in a room with color and painted the others with a neutral. Now it's common to see vibrant colors on all the walls.

"An accent wall says, 'I'm scared,' " says Mitchell Compton, an interior designer and color consultant. "If I have anything to say about it, clients are doing all of the walls in color."

## DESIGNERS ON COLOR

Here's what local designers have to say about Northwest color trends:

1. Karol Niemi, interior decorator
2. Mitchell Compton, interior designer, color consultant.
3. Stacey Matraw, co-owner, Urbino and Urbino Home
4. Gretchen Schaufler, Devine Color
5. Gail Weiss, Gail Weiss Interiors and custom home decor sewing
6. Shirley Roggen, interior designer
7. Kathleen Donohue, kitchen and bath designer, Neil Kelly Designers/Remodelers

What's your favorite color?

1. There isn't a color I don't like. There are just improper uses of color.
2. Deep khaki and olive greens seem to be the path I'm taking now.
3. Chartreuse.
4. Purple. I'm on a big purple kick right now.
5. I love shades of green, from celadon to deep sage. I also love terra cottas.
6. A deep purple that the Japanese refer to as blue iris. It's very difficult to use in interiors because it's so intense and saturated.
7. Currently, I'm in a yellow and sage stage.

What are hot colors for today's interiors?

1. The colors of water, fruit and flowers.
2. Everything is earthy.
3. Green. Especially chartreuse or kiwi green. You see it in all the magazines. Five years ago I couldn't sell it. But now I can. It's popular on chenille throws, candles and soaps.
4. Blues are going to take everyone by surprise -- periwinkle, cobalt and ice blues.
5. Definitely sage green. Yellow is popular in kitchens. There's a lot of Tucson colors, like terra cottas, in living rooms.
6. Vivid colors. Blue is coming back as a neutral -- it's one that's more interesting than navy. But we're still seeing a lot of rich beautiful warm colors, like the yellows from the south of France. There's also a Chinese influence with intense oranges, greens and celadon.

7. Purple blues, browns and terra cottas.

How are today's colors different from previous trends?

1. For years we've had a love affair with golds and natural colors. The new colors are clearer and brighter.
2. Last year everything was candy colors and frosted. This year's are more natural.
3. I don't see a lot of difference between this year's colors and last year's.
4. We're moving away from taupes that were tone on tones to crisp, saturated colors. More contrast is also coming into play.
5. Eggplant was very popular last year.
6. Last year's colors had more yellow and gray. We're pulling away from sages and mulberries. Now reds are coming in clearer with more blue instead of orange.
7. Today's colors are less saturated than last year's. They're more refined and subtle.

How closely does the Northwest follow national trends?

1. Because of the media, the Northwest follows trends as closely as anywhere else.
2. Native Northwesterners are cautious. They wait to see what happens with colors. My clients from out of state are more open to color.
3. The Northwest is a little slower. But we're eventually receptive.
4. Because of our weather, we have a harder time accepting new colors like chartreuse or lavender. The Northwest is more conservative, and people here tend to like a stronger sense of stability than the trends offer.
5. The Northwest follows national trends very closely. There is a very sophisticated population here that is very up-to-date on what's happening all over the country and the world.
6. The Northwest is slow. It takes awhile for things to catch up.
7. The Northwest doesn't follow color trends. It's one of the hot spots and is trend-setting. Earth colors, like greens, taupes and aquas, started here.

Best white for trims and interiors?

1. White-white for trims. It has no color cast. It makes all other colors look very crisp and cuts a good edge.
2. I prefer a warm white trim rather than a crisp white. It's a smoother transition. I've seen too many houses with stark white. It's too much contrast.
3. Warm whites for trims on old walls. I'm a purist. I only use white on trim. It makes any color really pop.
4. I like a warm white, but not a yellow white. A warm white has a hint of brown. Yellow is more custardy.
5. Creams. I prefer a warm white with a tint of yellow as opposed to cold whites with a blue cast.

6. Pratt & Lambert's Seed Pearl is a wonderful, crisp white that works well with warm colors. Pearly Gates white (also Pratt & Lambert) has a lot of yellow for clear-colored walls.

7. Creamy white with a yellow tone. I steer away from gray tints. Too often people overcompensate with whites that have too much gray. It doesn't work here because we have so much gray lighting.

Favorite neutral?

1. A grayed brown. It looks great with really intense, highly saturated colors, like acid green, magenta and cobalt.

2. Green is the direction I'm going. I like khakis and tans with green in them. I like to use neutral and give it a punch with color.

3. Greens. They mix so well with everything. I really like sage. I don't like lime or fluorescent green.

4. I like all neutrals, as long as they are saturated. I prefer a rich coffee over a light brown or a deep taupe over a light gray.

5. I use taupe a fair amount. It works well as a third color to keep everything cohesive. It can bind terra cotta with sage.

6. I love khaki. It goes great with everything.

7. Buttermilk. I used it on my own house and I love it.

Favorite interior color?

1. I work with so many that I don't have a favorite. The others would feel slighted.

2. Burgundy and teal.

3. Any kind of chartreuse.

4. I love the new blues and purples. Blues and purples with green or golden tones are beautiful.

5. Green is very soothing and peaceful. It puts me in a very serene place and reminds me of the outdoors.

6. I like to use yellow in this climate. I have yellow walls with dark blue and metallic gold on the ceiling.

7. Sage.

Any mistakes we could learn from?

1. Before you paint, put up a 4-foot sample.

2. Yellow is difficult because of lighting (and it) varies so much from room to room.

3. Periwinkle is really a hard color to get right. I went through several incarnations on a room in my home. Now that room is ripped down to the studs, and I'm going to start over.

4. Pay attention to the color's value. I was working on a master bedroom that had yellow, golden oak and periwinkle blue and purple. We wanted to bring the golden up on the

walls. But when we finished it was too vibrant, so we had to bring it down several shades.

5. Here's a trick: I hold my teensy color chip at an arm's length against the wall that I'm choosing the paint for. I squint my eyes to see if the color is too strong. This helps me to see it with other colors in the room.

6. Yellow is a difficult color because some have a lot of chromium, which makes it appear harsher in the can. Blues are also difficult to get right.

7. I was working on an orange front door. But it came out too orange, so we immediately changed it.

Favorite paint?

1. We use a lot of Miller because that's what our painters use. Pratt & Lambert is great for intense colors. It provides rich, dense coverage.

2. Sherwin Williams. They have the best color selection, and they are consistent. You don't need to use three or four coats. One coat, and I'm done.

3. I always go to Fuller-O'Brien Paint Store on Northeast 44th and Sandy. They're great at mixing color from anything -- a ribbon, a broken piece of pottery.

4. My new line of paint, Devine Colors, because it has such a beautiful sheen.

5. I don't have a favorite.

6. Most paints are pretty good. Pratt & Lambert offers a good color system. But I tend to work with about six color lines. Some have more gray, some are clearer. It depends what effect I'm looking for.

7. I use a lot of Benjamin Moore and Sherwin Williams.

Caption: 4 Color Photos by SERGE McCABE - of The Oregonian staff

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