

COLOUR » THIS LAUNCHES A NEW COLUMN BY JANICE LINDSAY ABOUT THE LATEST SHADES AND HUES



Green: the shade of things to come

Mother Nature plays muse at the trendsetting Color Marketing Conference in Tampa



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Colour trends are coming down to earth. Literally. At this fall's Color Marketing Group Conference held in Tampa, Fla., North America's colour design specialists agreed that a concern for the environment is making green, browns, greys and complex neutrals the natural colour choices for products and interiors.

For 40 years, CMG members have been meeting twice a year to predict what colours consumers will be seeing in everything from phones and frocks to cars and carpets. This year, the experts are forecasting that the grounded hues of nature infused with bright colour punch of flora and fauna will start finding their way into the decor of hotels and hospitals, retail stores and office buildings – and eventually into our homes and closets.

There is a bumper crop of new browns coming – from the dark colour of damp fertile earth and bronze to a range of wood colours and the lighter, more orange-tans of leather.

Green will continue to be popular because it is the environment's signature colour and because it works so well with brown. Heritage greens, which are dusty or muted hues, are used as neutrals. As accents, greens will go very bright, fresh and clean – leaf and citrus shades. These

move from a secondary to primary role; a colour hit to replace red as the sizzle in many palettes.

Grey becomes a thing of beauty. It loses its connection to drab functionality and cold, corporate efficiency. The new greys are not made by mixing white and black. They are complex and soft – the colour of stone, sand and shell – cooler than beige. They harmonize with all colours, making even the boldest accents look less aggressive and more sophisticated. Grey will be used to enhance colour not avoid it. The metallic finish of choice returns to classic silver because it plays well with the new, cool neutrals.

As in nature, earthy colours and neutrals are a perfect background for showing off bright colours. The new accent colours – blues from nature, rich reds, glowing oranges and botanical greens – are clear and bold, with energy that brings a liveliness essential to even the most serious colour schemes. Bright white moves into the accent colour category, often with a glossy, translucent finish that echoes the iPod influence on design. (Thanks to performance-enhancing technology, it will be a new choice for commercial-use upholstery.)

But almost as important as colour are the special finishes applied to it. Interference colours, which are chameleon-

like and change with the light like a peacock's feathers or a piece of taffeta, turn objects from green to grey depending on the angle from which they are viewed. This effect will be used on products as diverse as cars, floor coverings and placemats.

New application techniques will also give coloured surfaces the look of natural materials. Textured and honed finishes mimic the raw, unrefined surfaces of stone and cement. Colours take on patinas that look aged or weathered. And just as in the natural world colour is mottled or translucent, full of tonal variation, so too are the new colours. The consensus among CMG members was that it is not just certain colours that are going to be important but what is done with them.

The bad news is that just because something looks natural doesn't mean it is. Earth tones and natural finishes will be used on commercial properties and products to make them seem environmentally friendly even if they aren't. The good news is that at home or at work, spaces will look and feel more connected to nature, even if the colour and materials used are far removed from nature itself.

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The new palette

GREEN continues to reflect our concern with the environment. Traditional muted shades of green work as neutral background colours. Brighter leafy greens and citrus shades make vibrant accent colours and give more subdued brown tones a lift. From Para Paints: Long Wood and Dew Tipped Moss as neutrals; New Outlook and Summer Salad as bright accents.

BROWN is a colour that evokes such materials as wood, bronze and leather. Here are some great paint colours in the new earthy palette. From Pittsburg Paint: Friar's Brown, Stone Grey, Woodbridge and Granite.

COMPLEX GREYS, the colour of stone, rock and shell, will soften bolder accent colours and make an elegant alternative to white walls. From General Paint: Rockbridge, Jogging Path and Estate Grieve. From Farrow & Ball: Old White, Bone and Shaded White.

» Janice Lindsay

From top, PPG's Grassy Meadow (208-6), Lime Green (No. 209-5), Olive Sprig (No. 410-4) and Hidden Meadow (No. 408-6).

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PAGE L6 »

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How to make your Ikea sofa look pretty for less.

eBUY, PAGE L6 »

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PAGE L7 »

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PAGE L10 »