

DESIGN COLOUR

Go for bold

The oracles of the interior design industry foresee a brighter, less earnest future, writes **Anna McCooe**.

Do we really need a new black? In the first few months of each year, trend forecasters and marketers go into overdrive to predict the colours that will excite consumers into the redecorating mood. Some of these design prophecies are self-fulfilling; trends are forecasted, manufacturers and buyers listen and all manner of products in those colourways hit the shelves before the year is out (and then migrate to the sales bin in January). Other trends encapsulate the spirit of their time and become the visual calling cards of an era.

Back in 2008, when the world was propelled into financial distress, the design industry adopted a pensive approach to colour. White, stone, concrete and timber were hailed as the foundations for good, honest, timeless design. In 2013, global finances are just as uncertain – especially for creative, young trendsetters – but a rainbow of colour is breaking up all that grey.

Interior designer and trend blogger Dana Tomic Hughes says, “We’ve witnessed a recent explosion of vivid hues. Historically, people have turned to colour in times of hardship. There is no quicker, easier and more cost-effective way to lift the spirits than by using bold colour – whether we wear it, live with it or drive it.” Founder of the influential trend blog and design practice Yellowtrace, Tomic Hughes has more than 250,000 followers.

“This vivid colour movement began some time ago, as bright colour accents emerged in fashion and home furnishings. It then quickly evolved into the bold colour-blocking trend, followed by daring neons and fluorescents.”

Bright colours such as blue, fuchsia and yellow will see out the year, eventually mellowing to the neon pastels that Phillip Lim and Jonathan Saunders sent down the catwalk in 2012, Tomic Hughes forecasts. These colourific trends aren’t made to last forever; they simply cleanse the palette, re-energising all the white, steel, timber and stone surfaces of this modern era.

This year, expect to see copper, brass and gold paired with matt black as well as colourful graphic patterns painted on walls and furniture. Clean “gallery whites” will continue to trend and so will neutrals with cool undertones.

The most prevailing colour trend of 2013, however, is a move away from prescriptive style. “We will see more individualism, more colour, more pattern and a break away from a homogenised

aesthetic,” says Scott Lewis, curator of the Colour: Texture: Form trend platform at the Australian International Furniture Fair in Sydney next week. “We are becoming less scared of colour and its applications and adapting trends in creative ways.”

Global colour authority Pantone has announced emerald as their colour of 2013. “Green is the most abundant hue in nature – the human eye sees more green than any other colour in the spectrum,” Pantone Color Institute executive director Leatrice Eiseman says. The clarity of this jewel-like green responds to the complexity of today’s world, but it’s also an easy colour to add to neutral interiors, she says.

This explosion of liberal colour is spurred on by a generation of modern crafters who view design and decoration as a continuous act. Interior designer Kimberley Wiedermann of Mim Design says this group of design-savvy DIYers is hungry for new colour trends to fuel the creative process.

“A fresh colour scheme captures and surprises the senses in an era when we are constantly searching for new ways to be inspired and evolve,” she says.

Wiedermann insists change is good, whether it be a coat of vibrant paint reviving a worn out table or a bold fabric updating an old chair. “It’s about the feel-good factor. Some colours, particularly brights, encourage a strong feeling of happiness and power. This can dramatically lift a room and sometimes change one’s perspective in the process.”

Interior trends have typically enjoyed a seven-year lifespan, kicking off slowly with the innovators and early adaptors before infiltrating the mainstream. In this era of blogs, Instagram and Pinterest, fresh ideas are moving at lighting pace. “If anything, 2013 will see colour trends span further and faster than ever before,” Tomic Hughes says.

“We live in an era replete with information. The internet, phone cameras and social media are making design more accessible to everyone, anywhere, any time.

“It’s not uncommon for a clever design idea to go viral in a matter of days and spread across the globe.”

Of course this volume of visual information can make it difficult for a new concept to take hold in the real world.

“It’s only the ideas that filter through a range of industries – fashion, design, architecture and automotive – that have real longevity,” Tomic Hughes says. The



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Nick Hall, Projects of Imagination

rest tend to be forgotten as quickly as they appear.”

Designers Dion Hall and Nick Cox of Projects of Imagination see the dark side of all that ephemera. “Consumers need to be aware of what this all means. The idea of trend has become a commercial methodology for financial gains,” Hall says. “By following trends and their cycles, consumers are buying objects they often do not need, are commonly low in quality and will be thrown out when the next trend comes along.”

Projects of Imagination is responsible for some of the hottest

Clockwise from top, Dana Tomic Hughes styling; colour makes a comeback; Dion Hall (left) and Nick Cox of Projects of Imagination; and Chin Chin interior. **Photos** Luis Enrique Ascui, Richard Kendall, Mauro Pomponio

restaurant interiors in the country – Chin Chin, Coda, Print Hall. Still, they try to stay removed from “what’s hot”. Cox says, “Trend is a dangerous word. We as a studio definitely do not set trends, nor do we intrinsically follow colour recommendations in trend forecasting. Instead we hope to achieve innovation and longevity as designers and outcomes that are successful for our clients.”

Hall and Cox believe the only trends worth following are those that promote a movement for positive change, such as the support of local practice or a shift towards environmentally conscious architecture and building.

“In most cases the stuff design trends tell us to buy usually ends up in landfill; certainly not what the world needs,” Hall says.

“Let’s get back to the basics – quality, durability, longevity and simplicity. Maybe we need to simply slow down on consumption, purchase quality items and be happy with the white on our walls. Read into architecture and design to appreciate their true values, and don’t be in such a hurry.”