

Color Forecasting

by Michael Pacitti

The lists of design colors that appear annually are based on a lot of research into what will appeal most to clients, and you can use those colors to create trendsetting art and frame designs

Color trends are diverse. They influence the environment in which people live, from industrial products and packaging to fashion, food, and technology—as well as framed art. More than ever, color trend forecasts are important in selecting images and designs of framed art. The ability of such forecasts to predict big sellers is becoming better and better as more is known about color and color combinations. Forecasted color trends help framers create art and framing that sells.

It's important not to confuse trends with fads. Fads come and go quickly, while trends evolve based on broader style influences in society as a whole. Many different sources are researched to determine the real color trends. Using the results of that research can lead to color combinations that result in successful wall art designs.

Understanding which colors will work for your designs can be an asset if chosen properly and used tastefully. Just because a color is “hot” doesn't mean you can use it any old way. For example, one of the forecasted hot colors for 2012 is Tangerine Tango, but using a little of that hue will go a long way.

As with most things, it can be deceptively simple just to look at the latest list of forecast colors and use them in designs without thinking much beyond that.

Understanding where the trends come from can provide a deeper understanding of the function of color in design. It can also open your eyes to the influences on color trends that are all around you, from movies to fashion to media. Color forecast trends are not just picked out of a hat by some design association. They arise from real trends in how the world is using color today and what colors society is likely to want to see in the foreseeable future.



The designer used colors from a portion of the 2012 CAUS forecast colors (right), including reds, taupes, grays, to create artwork that would go with this year's designer looks. The design also combines modern art with a traditional frame, a common look in today's interiors.



The Impact of Color

You can't put a color in your hands and feel it, weigh it, smell it, or taste it. It is purely visual.

For this reason, it has to be combined with form and design. Despite the intangible nature of color, it has a very definite impact on the senses in a very practical way. Color, in fact, can be up to 85 percent of the reason that people decide to buy, from art and framing to other kinds of products.

Color in Period Design

There are 13 global period designs, each with a color palette. For example, the Art Deco time period of 1925 to 1937 had 10 colors as well as numerous design schemes, frames, artwork, and textiles. The Art Deco period colors featured mostly cool colors like turquoise. The overall tone

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of most of those color palettes was cooler and more metallic than the warm palettes of previous periods. Just as with color trends today, events and global influences during a period resulted in colors that were significant for that time.

Influences on Color Trends

Color trends come from everywhere. Colors do not change, but consumers' attitudes toward colors change. A color does not suddenly become popular one day. The purple trend, for example, began in the late eighties when Desert Sky Purples first appeared in the Southwest look. In 1990, they began to show up in art images. This was followed in the fashion world with purple as an accent color. Home furnishings accent pieces soon used purples as a coordinating jewel tone. The next thing you knew, cars were showing up in many versions of purple. Purple became an important color bridge into the millennium for many products of the nineties. It also reflected a larger shift from green and gold to blue and silver tones. None of this would have happened unless consumers were willing to buy items with purple. Colors cannot be trends if they won't sell, and consumers drive color trends.

Nobody Makes a Trend

There's no one association or company that determines color trends without first studying how color is being used in the world at large. In addition to Color Association of the United States (CAUS) and the Color Marketing Group (CMG), color trends are determined by technology and by what major players in the design business are using. Computers are able to adapt and deliver color faster than anything else—faster than printed material, clothing, or furnishings. Big box retailers like Crate & Barrel, Home Sense, Bed Bath & Beyond, and the Pottery Barn influence color choices through their advertising, store displays, and ultimately the products bought for homes. Magazines such as *House Beautiful* and *Architectural Digest* continue to influence people through advertising. Constant viewing of color images depicting people in an environment sur-



This collection of fused glass pieces incorporates all the colors from the Art Deco period, one of 13 major international historical period designs, surrounded by a contemporary Art Deco green frame.

rounded by color plays a significant role in helping set the next color trend. When coupled with global influences or a rave in social media, this can set the pace for the next color wave. Color trends start with fashion and from there trickle out to other things, such as interior design, which includes wall art.

There are a number of contributing factors affecting color trends:

- Media and pop culture, music, art
- Economy
- Technology, Internet, computers, etc.
- Environment
- Global influences
- Social Media
- Television
- Production Technology

The art world and art events also have a significant



This collection features the Color Marketing Group's 2012 Global forecast colors for consumer products.

influence on color trends. For example, whenever Monet's art travels around the world, there is an upswing in an exhibit area in the use of colors from Monet's paint palette—generally secondary colors of green, orange, and purple (a fact not generally recognized until long after his passing).

Color Forecasting

Color plays a key role for professionals dealing with design and color. Color direction can be greatly affected by a single significant global event. New trends can show up in a matter of months after such an event. The colors selected by various forecasting groups, such as Pantone, CAUS, and CMG, are intended to show the course that colors may take. They are not meant to represent exact shades or precise value, hue, or chroma but are meant to be interpreted by each colorist in their usefulness for specific products. One colorist might use a lighter value, while another may find a brighter chroma more useful.

Pantone

The Pantone Color Matching System allows manufacturers in different locations to use a standardized system to make sure colors match without having to contact one another. Pantone colors are described by their number (referred to, for example, as PMS 130). The idea is to allow designers to match specific colors when a design enters production stage—regardless of the equipment used to produce the color. This system has been widely used for a number of years.

Pantone annually announces a particular color as "Color of the Year." This color is chosen to ostensibly connect with

This reproduction baroque period frame uses colors from one of the 13 major period designs. The fillet's and frame's muted gold tones work well with the artwork, creating a tone-on-tone look.



the spirit of the times. For example, the press release declaring Honeysuckle the color of 2011 said, "In times of stress, we need something to lift our spirits. Honeysuckle is a captivating, stimulating color that gets the adrenaline going—perfect to ward off the blues." Pantone's forecasts show up in markets across North America and impact buying decisions in consumer goods, from images and framed art to accessories, automobiles, fashion, and textiles.

For 2012: Tangerine Tango

For this year, the color is Tangerine Tango. "Sophisticated but at the same time dramatic and seductive, Tangerine Tango is an orange with a lot of depth to it," said Leatrice Eiseman, executive director of the Pantone Color Institute. "Reminiscent of the radiant shadings of a sunset, Tangerine Tango marries the vivaciousness and adrenaline rush of red with the friendliness and warmth of yellow, to form a high-visibility, magnetic hue that emanates heat and energy."



Tangerine Tango, 2012 color of the year.

This is a bit of frothy language used to describe a color that has grown in popularity among designers and consumers over the past few years. Creating wall art that incorporates Tangerine Tango will involve discipline, however, as the color can easily overpower the subject matter. Used in moderation, however, this vibrant color will complement artwork when used as a thin sub-mat matching the colors in the image. Interior spaces can be energized with Tangerine Tango home accessories, such as thin picture frames, bedspreads, and tabletop accessories.

Color Lists

Color organizations such as the CMG include two specific groups related to consumer and contract color directions. Both of these "workshops" require participants to be color



“Everything Orange for the Month of May” was a window display theme (above) at Framed! in Ottawa, Ontario, tying into Tangerine Tango as the color of the year. The window and displays at the gallery and frame shop are changed frequently, offering customers a look at the latest designs and color trends, including vignettes (right) that highlight the latest colors in art and design.



designers. They develop a multi-industry forecast of color movement for products that are under consideration for future introduction. These are new colors not represented on previous CMG forecasts and are not yet visible in the marketplace. Both workshops require participants to be involved in consumer/residential or contract/commercial work at least 35 percent of their time.

The Current Forecasts workshops develop lists that reflect the consensus of colors that are most important in today’s markets. These workshops are for members who are responsible for the application rather than the creation of color. Participants analyze color trends and bestselling colors within many specific market segments, including new introductions. Color designers who specify color for products and marketers who develop new products develop a list of new Color Introductions. These colors may or may not have been previously introduced in Color Directions.

Colors that have been introduced, accepted in the marketplace, and are selling well are called Established Colors. CMG members marketing products or making color selections from existing color lines establish the current list of such colors.

The result of all this work is the color lists you see annually for different market segments. These lists generally represent the best estimates of color professionals as to which colors will be the ones to use for the coming year in each category, whether Consumer or Contract, and for the Introductions, Directions, and Established Colors levels. A lot of research into color use in many areas is taken into

account, and determining these colors can sometimes be as much of an art as a science.

The hot colors for the year can also be used to promote art and framing. Not every customer is going to be interested in the latest colors, but many are interested in keeping their home interiors up to date with artwork and frames that reflect the latest trends. Some frame shops also use color to market art, framing, and artistic craft items to their clients. They use in-store displays that feature hot colors or particular color palettes, while other framers use their shop windows to attract customers with displays based on the latest colors.

When it comes to using these colors, incorporating the latest trends is an important part of keeping art and framing design in tune with current tastes, resulting in the maximum appeal to the public. ■



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where he has been teaching seminars on color and design to framers throughout North America, Europe, and China for a quarter century, including at the National Conference in Las Vegas. He has also written numerous articles on color and design and often visits facilities noted for their designs, such as the Hotel Pantone.