

COVID-19 influences 2021 color palettes

Color palettes in 2021 will center on hues that make us feel safe and grounded but also inspired, particularly as we continue to live and work at home simultaneously.

"In uncertain times, the home shifts from the idea of simply cozy hygge to a protective space, so we are seeing a return to natural finishes in materials like flooring, counters, furniture and other elements around the home," said Sherwin-Williams' director of color marketing Sue Wadden. "Using natural materials and a muted, earthy palette will provide a sense of comfort and safety."

Indeed, earth tones are trending for next year, said Shaw Industries vice president of residential product design Pam Rainey, and for that reason we will see the return of brown in many different shades. "Think about all the different species of wood and how these are all shades of brown colors," she said. "Terracotta will be an important material but not just the orange colors. Raw clay colors that range from orange to pink, to gray, to taupe, to greige, to white."

For flooring in particular, however, it's all about context, said Pantone's executive director Leatrice Eiseman. "Where and

how will the colors be used — what mood is to be expressed?" she asked, noting, "The economy is a big deciding factor and often the consumer leans to more neutral tones that mean longevity when they are being more practical. However, even in the neutral ranges there are nuances of color."

And consumers are buying more patterns which typically results in the purchase of a bold color, said Brittany Stanley, senior design manager for Mohawk.

"This influences the color palettes greatly. You will see a healthy mix of neutrals and accents in 2021," she said. "People will be looking to freshen up their interiors by adding color to what was a pretty neutral palette."

Color, however, always comes in cycles, added Stanley. "[People] wanted everything white and now they want to warm up their spaces. I think the need for security will influence this," she said.

There is also a refocusing of design to simple, functional and clean solutions, said Color Marketing Group's vice president of PR and communications Sandy Sampson. "Our work-life balance adapts to our desire to build new meaning with our employer and wellness," she said.

Color Wheel

Experts said to expect a lot more color next year. "We added more color into the palettes for 2020 and they are proving to be great sellers so you will see us continue that into 2021," said Brittany Stanley, senior design manager for Mohawk. "Blues always sell well — it is America's favorite color — greens are starting to pick up ground as well as the desert tones you have been seeing. Neutrals have been warming up the last year or two and will do so even more in 2021. You will see a lot less true gray, it will be much warmer."

There are many driving forces behind color palettes this year such as COVID-19 which, explained Mohawk's director of design hardwood and laminate Adam Vester, is driving consumers towards classic and timeless traditions. "Color trends for 2021 will be full of optimism from fresh vibrant colors paired with comfort and peaceful themes," he said.

For its 2021 Colormix Forecast, Sherwin-Williams is celebrating the Rhythm of Color. "The forecast is composed of shades from bright and bold blues, muddy greens, muted reds, bright pinks and warm whites," said Sue Wadden, director of color marketing. For more on the 2021 Colormix Forecast, [see page 7](#) or [click here](#).

The theme for Pantone's View Home Forecast is "Innovation

and Transformation,” noted Leatrice Eiseman, executive director of Pantone. “We chose that theme as it expressed what we see as happening in the home furnishings world. Familiar habits are morphing before our eyes into new ways of thinking, doing, buying and communication,” she explained.

The 2021 Shaw Floors color palette will include hues influenced by nature and minerals. “The colors in this palette are very easy to mix together with other colors to become the foundational layer of a room,” said Pam Rainey, vice president of residential product design, Shaw Industries.

Indeed, neutral colors will remain strong and rooted in the earth, said Color Marketing Group’s Sandy Sampson, vice president of PR and communications, adding, “Saturated hues such as orange-influenced browns and red-based blues connect us to each other and calm our fears of the unknown.”

Comfort through color

Inspiration & security emerge in 2021 palettes

Industry experts agree COVID-19 will undoubtedly impact color trends moving into next year. Specifically, color palettes will revolve around soft, soothing colors to create comfortable at-home sanctuaries.

“We are currently witnessing the biggest global drivers of change seen in most people’s lifetime,” Sherwin-William’s director of color marketing Sue Wadden shared with *FCW*. “These shifts in our culture create significant impacts on design, so we can expect to see more design professionals and homeowners developing creative solutions as people become increasingly aware of how spaces affect our moods and health, our physical comfort and our ability to work.”

Offered Pam Rainey, vice president, residential product design, Shaw Industries, “Consumers will want to create sanctuary spaces in their homes to promote well-being. We will be cocooning in our homes with a desire to create a feeling of being protected by a hard-shell type outside but having a soft and nurturing interior.”

And with consumers creating their own sanctuaries at home, Mohawk’s senior design manager Brittany Stanley said we should expect to see more colors from nature pulled into the home.

“We were seeing this trend before COVID-19 but that will be amplified now — greens, blues, desert hues, more than ever [consumers] will want to bring the outside in,” she said. “Those warmer tones are embracing colors, they make you feel at ease and comforted and in a time of uncertainty,

people are going to be trying to achieve that feeling within their homes."

The pandemic has transformed consumer priorities — they're now desiring colors that instill reassurance, noted Adam Vester, director of design laminate and hardwood for Mohawk. "Consumers are revisiting time-honored staples over 'flash in the pan' trends," he said. "For 2021, I believe greens, purples, pinks, oranges and blues will be highlighted."

But while COVID-19 can — and will — enter into design choices, Leatrice Eiseman, executive director of Pantone, said there is no "one color palette fits all" mentality.

"Some consumers will feel the need to be grounded in earthier tones or in the quiet, Zen-like softer shades," she said. "Others will feel, after being sequestered for so long, to make extreme changes to their surroundings and opt for brighter, optimistic hues, so options and choices in color that reflect varying lifestyles remains an important factor."