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bath art

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Individual Style

Bright, warm colors and striking finishes spark comfort and personalization



Evoking sensation, mood and personality, colors and finishes reflect the way consumers live in their kitchens and baths. They breathe life into the spaces, allowing form and function to take shape. Creative experts have pinpointed several "it" trends for the coming year that are driven by consumers who have become more open to vibrant hues and striking finishes. This shift in attitude can be attributed perhaps to a newfound desire for more uplifting living spaces or, as noted by color and texture consultant Laura Guido-Clark, of LGC Design Inc., a "representation of home that makes everyday experiences happier."

The most popular trend is color palettes inspired by nature, especially those with shades of green and brown. In addition to receiving positive feedback at international trade shows, warm browns are appearing in kitchens featured on several television shows, drawing interest from consumers, said Renee Hytree Derrington, formerly a member of the Color Marketing Group's board of directors. According to Doty Horn, director of color and design for Benjamin Moore, the aesthetic of food is also inspiring color palettes, with hues like raspberry, sage green, plum and light yellow now being found in kitchens.

Continuing to resonate with consumers, however, are real-world blues and vibrant reds. And appliance manufacturers are responding, offering a wider array of bold, edgy color options on their products, especially washers and dryers. After all, with laundry rooms emerging from basements and being integrated throughout the home, design-savvy consumers are requesting more attractive spaces with stylish units to match. "Homeowners are bored with shades of white and beige," said Tracy Frye, senior contract marketing manager for Whirlpool Corp. Underscoring this trend, later this year, the company's Maytag brand will

introduce signature colors, including emerald green and oxide, for its front-load laundry pairs.

Bathroom environments are also becoming warmer and cooler with the fine texture and color tones of heavily grained wood finishes, such as white oak, teak and zebrawood, growing in demand. "Teak is a color language that people already speak," said Tim Schroeder, president of Duravit. "The bathroom is no longer a sterile environment. It's become more of an area to relax and rejuvenate. We've seen a renaissance of wood finishes and natural materials in the bathroom."

For faucets, natural-metal surfaces are more complex and richer than in the past, taking on a softer, more genuine look and feel. The most popular finishes include polished nickel, brushed chrome, satin nickel and Tuscan brass. "Consumers want authenticity and an Old-World feel, but they don't want to give up modern convenience," said Lou Rohl, COO of Rohl LLC. "We'll continue to see a growth in more antique-looking finishes in modern settings."

Observing recent color and finishing trends, Phil Norman, CEO, of Norman Design Group in Torrance, CA, summarized today's homeowners in three distinct categories based on individual preferences. In the first, clients are looking for a coastal-style home with soft yellows, bright blues and light-colored wood finishes. The second group consists of homeowners who are attracted to Mediterranean or Tuscan-inspired hues such as mossy green, gold and Chinese red, as well as variations of dark wood finishes. And the third is the sophisticated contemporary homeowner who's attracted to monochromatic colors and clean lines. Whatever the category, there's a perfect color for everyone. ■

—Matthew Math