

Let's Get Practical: Just what are the colors of 2021?

By Edy Keeler For The New Mexican
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Above, Aegean Teal (Benjamin Moore) sparks up a kitchen **Right**, Urbane Bronze (Sherwin-Williams) is both sophisticated and cozy for a dining nook

Left, design by Hendricks Churchill; photo Amanda Kirkpatrick

What color is practical for your life? First, let's redefine "practical" to mean what helps to make you feel good, now. You deserve that. We need that. Paint companies come through with next years' color picks right about now. After last year for the record books, we want colors that can both capture our mood and then give it an uplift. Color professionals factor in that desire. In 2020, for whatever reasons, a single committed relationship with a color eluded many. Major paint companies, like our off-shore favorite Farrow and Ball in the UK, couldn't pick just one color, but presented a raft of 12 choices.

Farrow and Ball migrated away from gray-blues toward what they call "rich and warm" — "Deep Reddish Brown is from our new Colour by Nature palette, created in collaboration with the Natural History Museum to bring the true colours of nature into your home." Their Preference Red will cozy up any room, especially your home office or small den. I also embrace greens, any time of year. Look out the window at the huge palette of greens around Santa Fe. And my favorite green of the year is Farrow and Ball's Green Smoke.

The company has an Ultra Marine Blue in favor since the 18th century, when it was often used to make small rooms feel bigger. For a modern home, it looks striking on cabinetry. And since I design and remodel a lot of kitchens, I am thrilled to see any mention of cabinets and kitchen walls other than white.

Color and mood are on the lips of every paint marketer this year. For the cheeriest day starter, how about having early coffee in a yellow morning room? I laughed out loud the moment I walked into a morning room recently painted an outrageous shade of yellow green. It was a pleasant jolt.

Pantone is decidedly on the cheerful spectrum with a vibrant yellow, which they contrast with an enduring gray shade that adds a little sophistication to the no-holds-barred cheer of their yellow. “The selection of two independent colors highlights how different elements come together to express a message of strength and hopefulness that is both enduring and uplifting. The union of an enduring Ultimate Gray with the vibrant yellow Illuminating expresses a message of positivity supported by fortitude.” It is a sure thing that writing about color challenges the vocabulary.

I plan to use this shade in a family kitchen this year. It’s not a nursery yellow, and it will pair well with blue-black or rich green countertops. I am loving soapstone for counters.

A locals’ favorite paint provider, Benjamin Moore, has added a soft teal that will fit right in here in Santa Fe. Aegean Teal, a blue whipped with enough green to be super kitchen-friendly. The company created a full palette of hues to work with the new teal. A buttery yellow called Chestertown Buff, an off-white cream, and some deep earthy hues are subtly perfect with this one.

Of special note, Benjamin Moore suggested using it with natural materials such as stone, wood, and brick for a textural look. These materials are basics in our market, connecting us to what we love in our environment and providing the perfect backdrop to intense and interesting color.

One other local paint leader, Sherwin Williams has a rich dark bronze — Urbane Bronze — that will find walls in my work in 2021. I like it to create a cozy dining nook off a kitchen that needs a little drama. Or, for a contemporary look, cabinets or storage in Urbane Bronze, surrounded by a warm white for balance. The color has a gray undertone, it is not just “brown.” It’s one of those colors we love because it makes us stop and ask, now exactly what IS this color?

Last and not least, Dunn Edwards, with the best color selection tools, also has multiple offerings of new shades. I am drawn to Bohemian Jazz, the name as well as the color. It’s classed as a “red-violet,” medium dark and a bit muddy. Truly another moody color that I would not hesitate to use in a large space with a quiet purpose.

Hues of red, yellow, blue... we cover all the points on the color wheel this year, all with secondary non-primary shades, although the yellow “Illuminating” is close. We are wondering, does one of these colors serve your mood this year? The big question. Beyond reflecting your feelings, could adding some color to your world possibly elevate or enhance that mood?

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