



# Color Trends for 2011

By Patty Bonnell

**G**OOGLE COLOR TRENDS for 2011 and you're hit with a bewildering array of adjectives: mosaic, tribe, skin, reinvention. Seriously? Skin as a color trend?

Deconstructing color forecasting jargon can be a job in and of itself. Many builders feel hopelessly underqualified when it comes to navigating the vast landscape of color trends and forecasting. Turning a blind eye to what consumers want can lead to unsold inventory. What to do?

## Pay Attention

It's true: Fashion and home décor are inextricably linked. What comes down the runway this fall will upholster your sofa next spring. Consumers are quick to be influenced by trends, whether they're consciously aware of it or not. The more certain color combinations are repeated in stores and magazines, the more people identify and desire those combinations in their homes.

Check out shop windows featuring women's clothing, scan magazines at the check-out counter, wander through the designer tile or paint section and speak to someone about where the trends are going next year. Chances are, you'll find some clues to start you on your course.

## Is This Trend Right for You?

Awareness of color trends doesn't always mean you should dive right in. It is important to consider your geographical location (Southwest brights don't play well in the gray Pacific Northwest), your interior finish style and, of course, the demographic of your buyer/client.

Tricking out your latest model or spec home with vivid tribal tones may be in trend, but if your buyers don't respond, you've wasted precious time and money.



Melinda Sechrist is a principal of Sechrist Design Associates, Inc. (Sechristdesign.com), an interior design and landscape architecture firm that specializes in multifamily and single-family design. She says that designers today often shy away from trends, instead considering the entire landscape.

“Trust me, I contributed to the mauving of America back in the day,” she laughingly admits. “So many of my clients wanted it, though we were personally done with it, but people want what they want.”

At her firm, they don’t look at trends, but rather search for what is interesting and different — and how it will help their clients’ buildings stand out from the crowd. They seek to create a signature stamp for a multifamily or commercial building that helps the client’s product stand out from the neighbor’s product and stand the test of time. “Clients don’t want to look dated. That’s always a fine line,” she says.

### Know Your Market

Susan Brockway (Brockway Designs) and Sharon Hale Mooney (Hale Mooney Design Associates) work together and have years of experience working with contractors on spec and custom homes. They advise that younger buyers appreciate a more neutral palette throughout. This helps avoid potential repainting projects that they may feel ill equipped to handle. Mature, higher-end buyers seek individuality and stronger color choices that offer a signature look and may be more in trend.

The designers note that a builder is definitely sending a message out about the

price point and quality of the construction through color choices.

### Paint by Gender?

Brockway and Hale Mooney note that deeper, more masculine colors tend to be perceived as richer and are used in higher-end homes. Lighter, more feminine tones tend to be perceived (and used) in lower-end homes. It’s true: Male colors read “money,” while female colors say “budget.”

They strongly advise, “Don’t push neutrals into tones that read yellow or pink [a common error]. People have a very strong reaction to pink. It can be too sweet or feminine and connote a lower-end product. Try muddied colors that don’t read ‘dirty.’ For example, grayed-down neutrals keep it sophisticated but clean.”

No matter what the price point, even a budget-conscious buyer wants to feel pride of ownership. No one wants to feel that they’ve bought something cheap. A lower-end product that utilizes the right color palette will absolutely read as more valuable.

### Refresh Your Look

Designer Pam Saftler (pcs-design.com) advises, “Don’t get stuck in trends. People look for classic colors and combinations. The trick is to convert that red dining room into the fresh red of today, rather than the tired burgundy of a few years ago.”

Using three colors on the exterior, and even adding a fourth color for the door, is a great way to set your property apart. Hit a home run by using classic color combinations in today’s fresh tones. Create continuity by extending the color to the interior with one or two carefully chosen accent walls that repeat the strong color of the

front door or window frames. An example: Start with a subtle grey and off-white outside with rust accents. Inside, use the same palette, but pump it up, using stronger orange tones and other complementary colors.

### Plan Ahead

Ideally, color is an integrated piece of the overall design, which should be considered from the beginning of the process. That can often come down to color, textures and finishes — how they combine to create an overall effect.

Advises Melinda Sechrist, “Plan ahead. Considering exterior colors, their relationship to interiors and how the colors play off the textures of the building materials is the smart way to go from the get go. Too many clients are tempted to view color as an afterthought or way too far down on the priority list.”

### Color Me Sold

Color can’t necessarily make a design, but it can break one. The application of color, and the emotional response that color evokes in a buyer, can make a huge difference in the overall product. Working with a designer, color consultant or even online websites can keep you in touch with what consumers are looking for and help you convert today’s trends into smart color choices that sell.

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