

## Color Trends

By Kathy Barry,  
Home Life Interiors

# The Colors of 2004 — CMG's Forecast

New decorating trends are always interesting to watch, and the upcoming year will be no exception. The general trend has been toward a casual elegance, and you can see it in an array of products. The surface detail that is being applied to products from fabrics to tile is very exciting. We're still using lots of trim and detail to dress things up on the high end. The slipcover look seems to have had its day and is gradually losing its appeal to a more tailored look.

The Color Marketing Group (CMG) brings together industry leaders from around the world to regional and international forums, representing a broad spectrum of residential and commercial furnishing providers, to determine what we will be buying in the near to far future. Generally they aim for a slow shift in color changes, adding new colors to go with the old, so we don't find ourselves having to replace an entire room to stay current. The advantage of an industry wide forecast of a trend is an ability to find home furnishing products across a wide spectrum that work together. The only downside is if you still like your 1980s era mauve and teal family room, it could be difficult, although not impossible, to work around it today. For example, if you need to reupholster a chair, it may be difficult to find a fabric to go with this older color scheme.

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used as a casual guide to confidence in the economy; i.e.: a strong economy meant a short hemline. Where are the hemlines today? They are all over the map (or leg, as the case may be), which graphically describes the general schism of confidence in our world today.

As predicted by the CMG, the overall color trend for 2004 continues to be warm, enhancing a feeling of welcome, with red being very strong. A variety of shades of red, from earthy to clear, are being used. Orange is still popular although in this area we see it in the more subtle rust and brandy tones. Warm, yellow-greens work well with this palette along with golds and yellows.

The environmental palette, popular for the past few years, is also expected to remain strong next year. Distressed finishes, natural fibers, "organic and real" materials best typify this look. The increase in stained kitchen cabinet finishes, as well as stone, granite and other natural materials, all work well with the subtle greens, browns, and grays of this look.

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nirvana brown, a medium-value cocoa, work as neutrals. Pretty and light, this is a great look for our own lakeshore homes.

For those who need a spot of excitement, the use of “global warming” brights against a neutral or darkened background may suit. Molten Lava Orange, Fandango Pink, or Pool Blue Turquoise are just some of the possibilities. These really strong accents can brighten anyone’s day but when used with subtle neutrals still provide that “cocooning” feel.

Predictions by the CMG were evidenced in the new market introductions shown at the Michigan Design Center last month, including a surprising number of fabrics in the aqua and teal/turquoise family. (Which just goes to show that if you wait long enough, your 15 year-old sofa may be in style again.) Actually, the new teal and turquoise are not exactly the same as we saw in the past; they are brighter and clearer, less gray. The industry doesn’t want it to be too easy to use your existing pieces!

The brown family is another color scheme that is growing in popularity. The new market introductions also featured fabrics using cocoa with coral, and sable brown with red and rust. Look for this color scheme to continue to expand. It is a warm, nurturing look and fits with our need to feel secure in our home.

Another color scheme we can expect to see includes muted pastels from the seashore, ranging from soft blues and golds to an aqua gray green. Pale oyster and

Furniture trends continue to be eclectic and personalized. Style categories such as traditional or contemporary are blurring, as consumers generally want their homes to reflect themselves rather than a particular style period. Again, we see a casual elegance, which combines simple lines with detailed finishes and luxurious fabrics. Layering, mottling and other techniques enhance the depth and richness of wood finishes.

The European or Tuscan look remains strong, especially in the upper market. This warm and inviting style is easy to adapt to because of its use of a variety of woods and finishes. Just as a home evolves over time, this look appears to have aged and been added to through the years. Painted finishes with a little wear mingle with sun-drenched colors and trimming details.

We are also seeing an interest in the Southwest, not in the blue and peach of several years ago, but with leather, wood and natural materials. In combination with the lodge look and using browns, rusts, and reds, it is a beautiful appreciation of another culture.

Good news is anticipated in the scale of upholstered furniture. It is swinging back to a smaller, more reasonable size that can be more easily adapted into an average room. This is a trend that I am particularly glad to see. The over-scaled California look, popular in the last few years, has been difficult to use in the average home. There is little flexibility in placement of these over-sized pieces, or in the long-term, moving them to use in different rooms. **WMRR**

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### Child’s Play

Gone are the days of just a color coordinated comforter and valance treatment in a child’s room. Now you will often see a Parisian street theme, a medieval castle, a day at the beach, or an exploration of outer space. Consider a car race theme with a track painted on the floor and checkered flags as bedpost finials or custom built storefronts, Punch and Judy puppet show theatres, or a space ship to sleep in. Hand painted furniture with Beatrix Potter or a zoo scene is also being used.

Is this indulgence, or does it feed a child’s growing imagination? Whatever the reason, the market is here to stay. “The children’s market has multiplied by 150% in the last five years,” according to Mark Fisher, president of Dragons of Walton Street, a UK firm specializing in children’s furnishings. Today’s consumers are spending more on furnishing and decorating their children’s rooms. Muralists and faux finishers have done some amazing work for children and their environments. A Detroit-area muralist showcased for me a commission she had for an entire room themed with fairies and other assorted creatures in a wooded glen. She had painted familiar, family faces into the scene so the child would feel at home. This trend is expected to continue, as more parents are willing to invest in furnishings that will transition from one stage to the next and an environment that will enrich their children’s lives.

Overall, we expect consumers to continue to make their homes a priority in their expenditures and time, which is a good sign for the housing industry.

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