

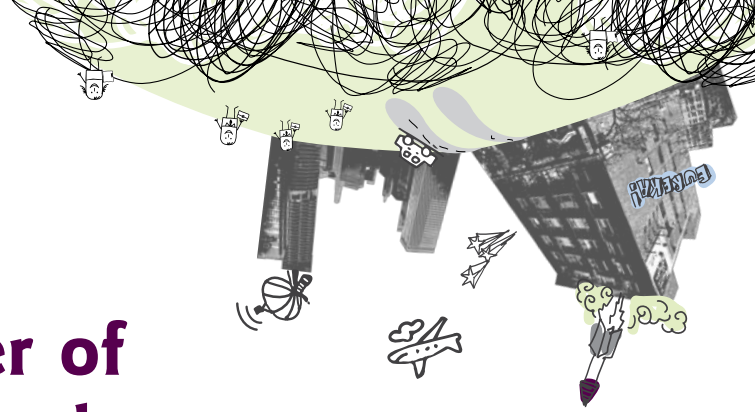
Updated For 2013-2014

Harness the Power of Color for Your Brand:

Color Psychology and How it Affects Your Marketing,
Your Target, the Globe and You

By: Flora Caputo





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An Introduction to Color

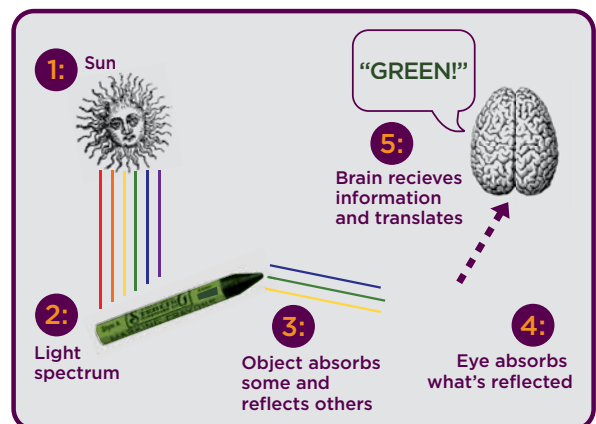
Color surrounds us, from the moment we open our eyes in the morning and look out our window, to the moment we close them at night. It's a dynamic, complex and scientific process of moving wavelengths, firing neurons and synapses and active brain function. Color is pervasive, so pervasive that many decisions are made each day based on it. But there is a method to the madness of how and why these decisions are made. Once your brain deciphers what color you're looking at, your emotional, physical and psychological selves play a factor in how you interact with that color. Harnessing the power of color and using it to shape marketing strategies is a powerful way to add impact and relevance to your efforts. But first, you must start with the basics: color itself.

At its core, color is light. Period. The Impressionists created a whole artistic movement based on that concept. Sunlight, to the naked eye, looks white but is made up of three spectrums—light, ultraviolet and infrared. During the process of sight, your eye and your brain are doing a lot of talking. Your eye can only see the light spectrum, which is made up of wavelengths. Each wavelength is a different length; the eye will interpret each length as

a different color. Violet is the shortest wavelength, while red is the longest. (Is your grade school science class coming back to you?) Objects all around you are absorbing different wavelengths. What gets bounced back, or reflected to your eye, is what gets sent to your brain and then interpreted as a color (see diagram below).

Man's first interaction with color was primal, an interaction with the natural world around him. Red and orange were in a sunset, as well as in an exploding volcano (inspiring awe and a sense of danger). Brown was the color of shelter, fire wood and food-bearing

THE SCIENCE BEHIND COLOR:



dirt (having a more stable and safe feel). If we look to nature and the world around us, we can start gathering a collective base for color psychology; from there, cultural implications need to be taken into account. For instance, the Western Hemisphere reacts to colors differently than Asia or the Middle East. Areas that are deeply religious, political or remote attach a great deal of symbolism and mythology to color. Combine the primal instinct of color with cultural implications, and one can see how color can affect a person physically. The study of the physical effects of color is called chromodynamics.

Different colors cause your body to do different things. Red has been shown to stimulate senses and raise blood pressure, while blue has the opposite effect and calms the mind¹. Focusing on Western cultures, Chart A (below and next page) illustrates how the physical, primal and cultural contexts of each color inform an understanding of color psychology and how it works.

Chart A

Color	Where in Nature	Meaning	To Note
Red	Many flowers and fruits, roses, fire, blood, explosions, volcanoes, sunsets	Energy, war, danger, fire, strength, power, excitement, determination, speed, arrogance, passion, desire, love, ambition, leadership, provocativeness, sex, heat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highly visible because of long wavelengths (stop signs, stop lights, fire equipment) • Increases heart rate and blood pressure • Color that most sets off the pituitary gland
Light Red		Joy, sexuality, passion, sensitivity, love	
Pink		Romance, love, friendship, gratitude, appreciation, femininity, passiveness, admiration, sympathy, gentleness (lacks passion), youth, sweetness	
Dark Red		Vigor, willpower, rage, anger, leadership, courage, longing, malice, wrath, richness, refinement, expensiveness	
Orange	Sunshine, tropics, fruit, flames, fall, pumpkins	Enthusiasm, fascination, happiness, creativity, determination, attraction, success, vitality, heat, encouragement, stimulation, energy, balance, playfulness, strong emotion, aggression, fire	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Known to increase oxygen supply to brain • Known to stimulate appetite
Dark Orange		Deceit, distrust	
Red Orange		Desire, sexual passion, pleasure, domination, aggression, thirst for action	
Gold		Prestige, illumination, wisdom, wealth, quality	
Yellow	Sun, moon, bees, sunflowers, daffodils, wheat, lemons, honey	Imagination, idealism, cheerfulness, warmth, hope, instability, spontaneity, happiness, joy, intelligence, optimism, enlightenment, air, liberalism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Known to stimulate mental and muscle activity, memory and concentration • Seen before all other colors next to black due to ancient associations with predators/stinging insects
Dull Yellow		Caution, decay, sickness, jealousy	

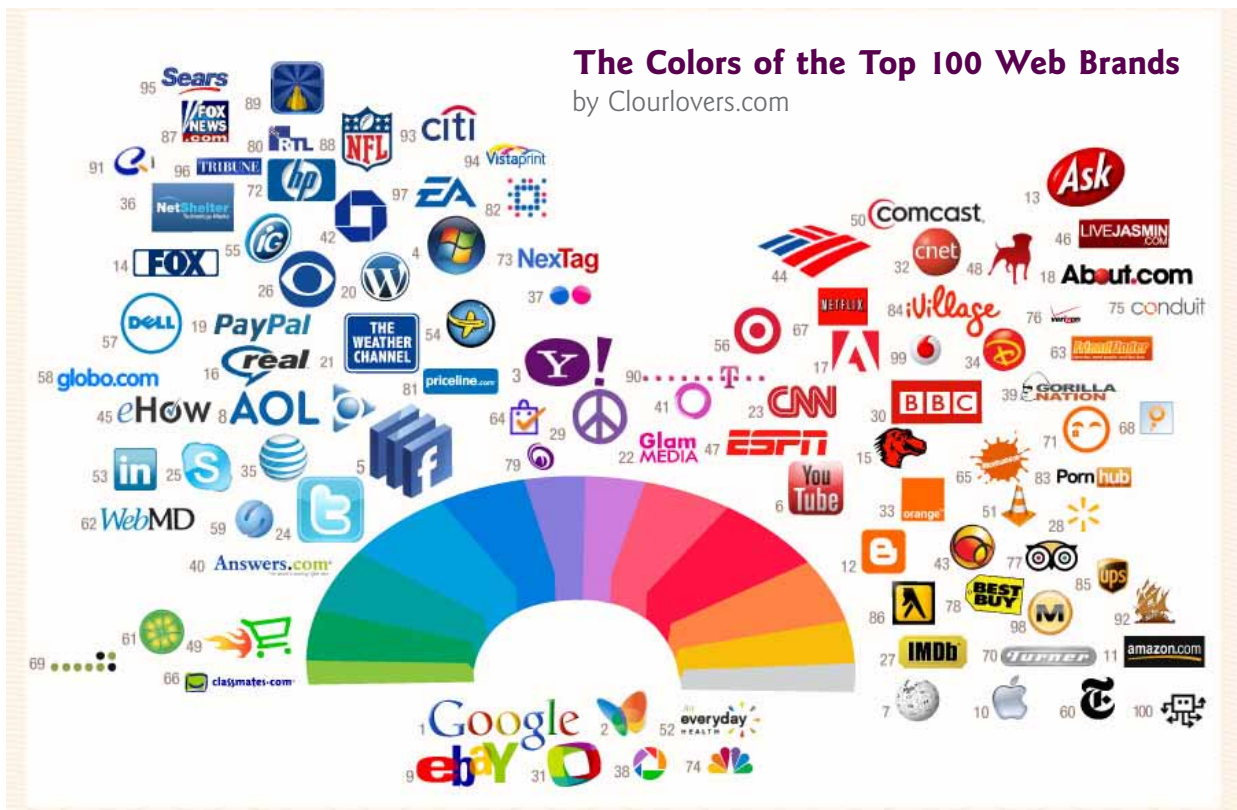
¹ "Color Psychology." <<http://www.pantone.com/pages/Pantone/Pantone.aspx?pg=19382&ca=29>>

85% of shoppers place color as a primary reason for why they buy a particular product²

Color and Brand

Once you have a base understanding of the power of color, you can harness it to bolster your branding and marketing efforts. Every color has positive and negative aspects to it. Also, a color's impact can be affected or changed just by placing it next to another color. Red next to its complement green, for example, can cause the eye to vibrate with energy, while red next to black may have an air of power and sophistication. Culture, the user, competitors and the business landscape all play a role in color interaction in marketing. Do not be afraid to choose your colors boldly. Studies have shown most colors have more positive than negative associations.

Color can be used in marketing to send a powerful message about your brand or product. In fact, color and packaging make up 65% of the purchasing decision³. Color plays a vital role in brand personality as well as message comprehension. Because reactions to color can be so subjective and personal, it is important to take a step back and consider the meaning of your choices, and how they are achieving your strategy and brand goals. Rationale should always be part of the color sell. It helps to keep conversations focused on what is right for the brand versus personal style and taste.



To view complete infographic go to <http://static.colourlovers.com/s3.amazonaws.com/uploads/images/top-web-brand-colors.html>

Chart A (pages 3 and 4) shows how some colors are more applicable to certain industries and products than others. Chart B (page 7) uses color psychology as a base to create a foundation for understanding which colors are most suitable for various marketing applications.

How Important is Color to the Bottom Line?

Color Increases Brand Recognition	80%
Color Improves Readership	40%
Color Accelerates Learning	55-78%
Color Increases Comprehension	73%
Color Ads Readership Versus Similar Black & White	+42%

From The Profit of Color!, Color Marketing Group 2010

² <http://blog.kissmetrics.com/color-psychology/>

³ "Color Psychology." *Wikipedia*. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Color_psychology>

Color and Purchase, Proof is in the Numbers

This great infographic by Kissmetrics tells a compelling story when it comes to how color affects purchasing behavior.

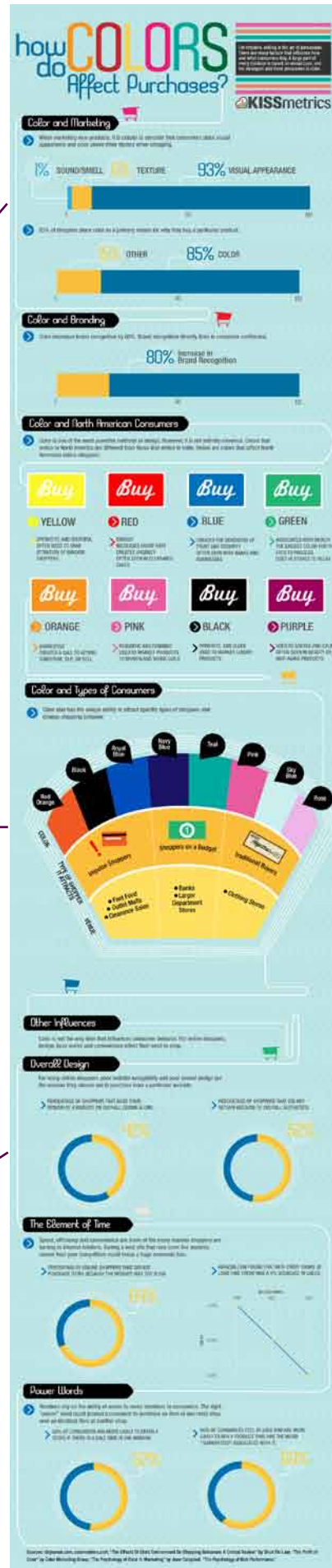
Here are some key takeaways:

Consumers place **93%** of their factoring criteria in color and appearance when purchasing

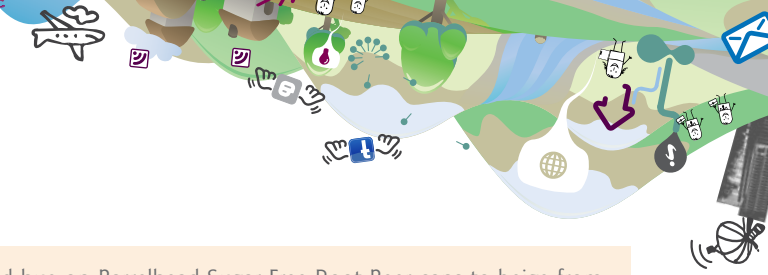
Color increases brand recognition by **80%**

Shoppers on a budget prefer blues and teals, "safer" colors

52% of online shoppers don't return to websites because of aesthetics



To view complete infographic and more metric tidbits, visit <http://blog.kissmetrics.com/color-psychology>



When designers at Berni Corp. changed the background hue on Barrelhead Sugar-Free Root Beer cans to beige from blue, people swore it tasted more like old-fashioned root beer served in frosty mugs. No matter that the beverage itself remained exactly the same. Similarly, consumers ascribe a sweeter taste to orange drinks the darker the orange shade of the can or bottle. It's difficult to correlate color with product sales, but Berni claims that when it changed Canada Dry's Sugar-Free Ginger Ale to green and white from red, sales shot up more than 25%. The red can sent a misleading cola message to consumers.

From The Wall Street Journal on Marketing. Ronald Alsop, Bill Abrams, p 143. (Homewood, IL.: Dow Jones-Irwin, 1986.)

Chart B

Practical Marketing Applications for Colors

Color	Application
Red	Used as an accent color, red stimulates people to make quick decisions. Great for "BUY NOW!" or "CLICK HERE!" Red evokes erotic feelings (think lingerie and other intimate applications). The color indicates danger, but also connotes energy. It works well for sports and sports drinks, games, cars—anything having to do with physical activity. Food and beverages could also be appropriate applications for red.
Pink	On account of its tranquil nature and softness, pink is great for spas, healthcare, cosmetics, young children's products or female products. Pink is thought to be sweet tasting and smelling, and therefore perfect for certain food, beverages, perfumes and bath products.
Orange	On account of its openness and friendliness, as well as being known to stimulate appetite, orange is a great color for use in food (particularly healthy foods) and toys for children. We continue to see a growing trend of using orange for technology and electronics. We think this is a way to make technology (thought to be cold) be more friendly, warm and approachable. Also, orange works well in ethnic applications.
Yellow	Bright and friendly, yellow is a good color for children's products. Yellow is not thought to be a stable or safe color—it is more for spontaneity and fun. Yellow would be conducive to items of leisure, play and the travel industry. Some shades have taste equated with them (banana creme and custard), which are perfect for food. Also, yellow with black has a primal "POW" effect, great for industrial strength cleaning, manufacturing.
Green	Green has many meanings but primarily represents environmental products and initiatives. It is also a great color for healthcare, construction, real estate, golf, health and promoting safety in drugs or medical products.
Blue	The most used color in logos, Corporate America has a love affair with blue. Blue is also nice for the education sector, technology, government, water purification, cleaning liquids, vodka, airlines, airports, healthcare industry, air conditioners, water, sea travel and consulting. It is not a great color for food because it is not naturally occurring in food.
Purple	Rarely seen in nature means rarely seen in logos. But that means purple can make a brand stand out and be very unique. This color is most conducive to high-end women's products, children's products, some beverages and liquor, and certainly fashion. Purple has a futuristic quality, perfect for products that involve newness or cutting edge technologies.
Brown	Brown can be used in tandem with green for environmental applications. Brown is also great for construction development and legal applications. The panache of coffee has brought brown into a more trendy light. Its use in leather products, interiors and fashion is on the upswing. Use in food is very acceptable—especially for wholesome, organic, natural foods (baked goods or grains) or decadent treats (chocolate and coffee). Overall a sign of good taste.
White	White is wonderful to use with any color to add balance and breathing space. As a prominent color, white is useful for high-tech products, charities, healthcare, diet foods, dairy products, infant products and spas.
Black	Very upscale food packaging can leverage the prestige of black. Any product that needs to communicate power, potency, weight and longevity (such as appliances, cars, trucks and manufacturing) are good applications for black.

Color and Identity

Color plays a vital role in your brand and corporate identity. Be certain that your color choices speak to who you are and what your value proposition is. Make sure your color choices have longevity, while giving your brand room to flex and expand. Beware of painting yourself in a corner. Logo colors are part of your brand, but they are not your whole personality. It is important to develop a diverse yet relevant color

palette as part of your guidelines, particularly if you are a national or global brand. A broader color palette gives your regions flexibility to be relevant to the area's target as well as control and consistency. A broader palette also gives your brand mobility to reach other verticals, tweak messaging and stay fresh simply by varying color. An approved color palette is most important when marketing on a global scale, as it can address some of the cultural challenges brand directors face.

Globally, color reactions have much to do with the political, socioeconomic and religious makeup of each individual culture.

Color Psychology on a Global Scale

As previously mentioned, color reactions have a great deal to do with cultural and social environment triggers in addition to innate primal reactions. If you look at the wide range of cultures that exist globally, you will encounter an equally wide range of reactions to every color there is. This poses some issues when it comes to branding. And even if you are a company that does business solely on the Internet, remember, the Internet is global. Knowing who your audience is and where they are coming from, and understanding their reactions to color will help to identify potential pitfalls.

Globally, color reactions have much to do with the political, socioeconomic and religious makeup of each individual culture. Chart C (next page) takes a look at a range of countries and their different color associations. The vastly different, sometimes contradictory reactions individual colors can provoke from one culture to the next can be alarming (enough to give anyone embarking on a rebranding effort cold feet). But there are ways to navigate such issues; one great method that one of our clients uses is a "tool box" approach.

For a global campaign, creative is chosen, then five to six templates are created. Included with these templates are four to five approved background colors

that are true to the brand, a handful of approved headlines that are

translatable and address a myriad of messaging, and a library of approved images that go with each template.

Once regions get their toolbox, they can pick and choose which images, headline and colors resonate with their community. This ability to pick and choose elements gives the regions a sense of ownership, while keeping the overall control of the brand and message within corporate headquarters. Everyone is happy!

Another approach (as mentioned before) is to ensure your brand platform includes a wide range of approved brand colors that reach beyond your logo (a sub-palette). Just be sure to provide usage guidelines to regional agencies and outside designers.

Remember, the Internet is global, too.



Color Trends

And then, of course, there are color trends to stay abreast of as well. Whether it's what's in season or what's happening at Fashion Week, there are always set colors that are forecasted to be the "new, hot thing." So who comes down from on high and decides what these sought after colors will be? Understandably, designers set the tone each season as far as fashion, but what about marketing? And is it really important for marketing to care?

Pantone, the behemoth of all things color, always comes out with their forecast as expected. There is also the Color Marketing Group (CMG, www.colormarketing.org), a not-for-profit organization that meets twice a year to forecast what the "hot colors" of the season will be, for use in everything from cars to lipstick. These meetings sound a little like herding cats. Four hundred attendees go to each meeting, including color designers (who are mostly competitors) from around the world. They work for three and a half days, mostly in smaller groups, hashing out color. Once the smaller groups reach consensus, they send their reports to a steering committee who works through the night, resulting in an actual printed color card. CMG urges that their forecasts are "directions" and not "directives."

"Consumers are becoming increasingly color savvy and color aware, said Leatrice Eiseman, executive director of the Pantone Color Institute®. To successfully entice them, colors and color combinations must be appealing, evocative, transformative and most importantly, on-target."

Some CMG Forecasts for 2013

Three "Big Drivers" for 2013 color

Full Circle — This driver reflects an inspiration from nature and respect of our limited natural resources. "We want the products we choose to be Fair Trade, to aid our neighbor, and to have meaning," explains Margie Teraoka, CMG member and Resource Librarian for ReelGrobman. "We contribute to sustainability by making prudent selections, repurposing materials and creating with significance."

Endurance — Security is the new luxury, and we're going back to our roots. "This driver is about us linking to our heritage with an emphasis on lasting value with color that transcends," says Teraoka. "We seek nostalgic and hand-crafted products. We make a thoughtful investment and look for vintage colors, paired with vibrant accents."

Technology and New Materials — "New technology affects how we see color in various forms," explains Teraoka. Light changes color, and it becomes part of the color—and with LED lights becoming more common, it's changing how we see color. Smart phones and tablets are changing the way we work, learn and shop. Digital technology impacts images and product development, creating vivid canvasses on unlikely surfaces.

Excerpt and colors below from <http://www.tri-kes.com/blog/article/detail/the-color-marketing-groups-2012-2013-color-forecast/>, cmg.com and ReelGrobman (www.reelgrobman.com)

CMG COLOR FORECAST 2013

REDS/GOLDS	BLUES	NEUTRALS
"Each of these reds can be paired with a golden color for a romantic and timeless look."	"All are inspired by the colors in the ocean and remind us of the valuable resource it provides."	"These colors range from the color of smooth river rocks to that cashmere coat in the back of your closet."
		
Benjamin Moore's Cottage Red	Benjamin Moore's Surf Blue	Benjamin Moore's Scarecrow
		
Benjamin Moore's Sandy Valley	Benjamin Moore's Patriot Blue	Benjamin Moore's Horizon Gray
		
Dunn Edwards' Wine Stain	Benjamin Moore's Galapagos Turquoise	Benjamin Moore's Stone
ORANGES		GREEN
"Returning in the new forecast, both of these colors provide a feeling of heritage and craftsmanship."		"Yellow greens have run their course as we shift to a fresh, intense color with blue undertones."
		
Benjamin Moore's Fire Dance	Dunn Edwards' Burnt Almond	Sherwin Williams' Españer

Pantone has also announced some color trends for 2014. Technology as well as a pendulum swing back to what's natural, physical and vintage seem to be drivers. (see below). Recently they announced specific

2014 colors for Spring, the "star" being "Dazzling Blue". It's a cobalt blue color reminiscent of all things Facebook®, Twitter® and the new, trendy Citibank® bike share program.



Color trends, being so time-sensitive, are good to know if you are creating a trendy, short term product or campaign. This is even more important if your work is tied in some way to the fashion and/or beauty industries. However, do not allow trends to drive your

brand identity and basic platform. Your brand needs to stand the test of time. As one of our staff members has pointed out, "Trends are great for your closet, but not for your brand."

The world of color is as deep as it is wide—as deep and wide as the world itself. The deeper you go, the more information and contradictions you may face when choosing the right colors for your marketing efforts. As long as you stay true to the essence of your brand and keep that at the heart of all your decisions, color will be a wonderful partner on your brand journey.

Pantone's Key Color Trends for Home and Housewares 2014

Techno Color: Recognizes technology, its advances, the speed at which it is advancing and how it is



impacting the world of design. Melds both vibrant and deep hues frequently executed in reflective surfaces. The key is to combine to be inventive.

Physicity: Speaks to the colors of power and energy



counterbalanced by the presence of hues that express the necessity for introspection and calmness. Like forged iron and satellite gray balanced with healing shades of herbal lavender, grayed grape and rosy brown.

Sculpted Simplicity: Speaks to how important shape, form and structure are to the end product and/or environment. Colors are unassuming and do not take center stage, like greys, silvers and browns.



Fluidity: Understands the inevitable human need for life-sustaining cool water tones, and rendered largely in dazzling blues and blue-greens counterbalanced with corals and jeweled greens.



Collage: Recognizes the home as a gathering place for found objects that are well worn and somewhat nostalgic – hues are cozy and familial.



Intimacy: Implies a certain affinity and relationship expressed in tints and tones that are inviting in nature and softly tactile – closely connected, yet subtly different, a happy marriage.



Moda: Represents attention to detail and drama, whimsy and fashionable but done with finesse.



Tribal Threads: Inspired by the idea that we are all members of tribes whether through cultural background, religion, political affiliation or community. Simple in color collection, yet woven together can create a complex tapestry.



Eccentricities: Color juxtapositions that are highly original and cleverly conceived in evocative combinations.



<http://www.design-confidential.com/pantone-2014-home-color-forecast/>



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