

Color Combinations Made Easy

Trendy Tips from an Interior Designer

BY LAUREN FOSTER | PHOTOS BY HOLLY DUNNING



Colors do more than look pretty in a room, they affect the way we feel in a particular space. They trigger our emotions and tug at our senses for a reaction that can range from energized to calm. But how do you know what colors will work together and what colors won't? What color combinations are popular today and how people are pulling them off? On a search for what works, what doesn't and why, we asked interior designer Stefanie Brooks to put together some combinations that use today's most popular colors in a tasteful way.



← This bold printed fabric would work well as drapery panels giving the room a powerful statement.

Mimosa in Moderation

A color scheme that is growing in popularity — gray, white and mimosa yellow — makes a modern combination that can add light to a room. Pairing the two neutral colors white and gray together gives ample room for yellow to really shine. "Beige, warm grays and adding bursts of color are the 'in' thing nowadays. Pairing yellow with warm gray and white is a way to add some warmth to the palette. Yellow is a cheerful, warm color that makes a bold statement," said Brooks. The key with this kind of combination is to make sure

there is fluidity between colors so it doesn't get too busy. Use yellow sparingly to keep it from overpowering the color palette. The fabrics Brooks chose are a good example. The colors look

as if they were painted on with watercolors, making it soft. Adding in gray marble or gray tile adds some shine and texture that doesn't put the combination over the top. "Gray is a good staple color, it's the new brown," she said. »

→ This gray velvet is a great example for a neutral sofa color.

← Use this 12x24 honed gray marble as a fireplace facade.

Adding Color to Gray Skies



This funky floral designed fabric can be used as a duvet cover or bed pillows.


This punch pink is named Pantone's color of year.

This new line of larger scale pebbles from Statements would work well as a shower pan or laid vertically on a wall.

Honeysuckle, named color of the year by Pantone, is actually not a flowery yellow but this deep, watermelon pink that has been popping up in fashion and fabrics as well as in homes. The color seems to have gained its fame due to its powerful red and pink tones that illuminate a charming energy. According to Brooks, homeowners in the Pacific Northwest seem to lean toward warmer tones.

"This stimulating and striking color gets us energized and uplifted, the perfect color for warding off the 'Northwest blues.' Our gray skies play a huge role in the color selections homeowners are choosing to incorporate into their homes," she said. A bold color, honeysuckle works well with cream colors as well as light grays. The softness of off-white allows honeysuckle to pop while the combination as a whole is unobtrusive to the eye. Adding white marble with bits of sparkle contributes to the already-feminine color scheme.

Color Placement

Having the perfect color scheme isn't everything while designing a space. Knowing where to incorporate specific colors is a huge part of the overall design. For this color combination we asked Brooks how she would use the colors in a room. Her idea was to use the purple textured fabric as drapery panels and the chartreuse fabric for accent pillows on a gray or neutral toned sofa. The chartreuse would work well with both the gray and the purple adding brightness and depth to the room. Brooks also recommended the black and gray floral pattern be used on a side chair in the space. The fabric's bold pattern makes a statement that will be noticed. Bolder patterns work best on one special piece that won't compete with the other fabrics that are being used in larger quantities. Having a "statement" piece allows the room to be more charismatic without detracting from the overall flow of the colors. 

The iridescent sheen of this orchid-colored fabric adds a subtle shine to the overall scheme.

This grooved textured tile gives dimension to a space.

This paint is from Authentic Home, a Seattle company.



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2 A Kitchen Sizzling With Color

This 1960s water-view Gig Harbor kitchen is light and bright and full of personality thanks to some fun colors and smart ideas from designer Stefanie Brooks of Stefanie Brooks Interior Design in Tacoma and general contractor Gary Howe of Gig Harbor.

"The kitchen was a galley-style kitchen that was closed off to the dining room. Gary opened up the wall to make the space bigger and now it's better entertaining," Brooks said. The homeowner already had a Pottery Barn sort of beachy style. She liked light bright kitchens with blue accents and had magazine pages to show the designer exactly what she was hoping for. Brooks helped her develop her personal style by together choosing a gray-washed finish for the floors, bright white cabinets, subway tile backsplash, a quartz counter and other details to tie the space together.

The blue island is painted a shade called storm cloud and gives the kitchen an unexpected pop of creative color. The stand-alone wall cabinet custom built by Howe is painted a shade of pale buttery yellow and offers more storage. It looks like it came with the house. The seating nook in the corner offers extra seating for guests. Brooks advises people to collect pictures of the look they are after and to work with a designer who will listen to them. "After all, it is your home, so you need to find a designer who will create a space for you that you'll love!" »



PHOTOS BY DENISE KNUDSON

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