

MAKE A FRESH HUE AND CRY

Bath interior designer Clair Strong gives us her thoughts on interiors direction for the coming year

Pantone announced its colour of the year for 2016 back in December. For the first time, its chosen hue is actually a blending of two colours: Rose Quartz and Serenity. Not so far away from the traditional shades we know as powder pink and baby blue. The two shades have been paired together to evoke feelings of mindfulness and well-being, something that's really important in the home, particularly in the bedroom. Pantone says: "Rose Quartz is a persuasive yet gentle tone that conveys compassion

and a sense of composure. Serenity is weightless and airy, like the expanse of the blue sky above us, bringing feelings of respite and relaxation even in turbulent times."

Pantone's annual decision always influences the year's colour trends in fashion and interiors, and I expect this year to be no different. We're already seeing gorgeous pale pink and hazy blue sofas from Sofa.com and matching accessories from brands like MiaFleur and Oliver Bonas. I predict a return to soft, pale hues across the board for Spring/Summer 16.



PLAYING WITH COLOUR: Sofa.com is running the whole gamut, from this Whitby modular sofa in Blush pure belgian linen, to right a Bluebell daybed in Saffron smart velvet

ARTISAN GOODS

As cottage industries go from strength to strength, more people are choosing artisan goods. There's a really strong community of designers and makers offering beautifully crafted items, from furniture and textiles to pottery, tiles, glassware and everything in between. If you went to the Bath Christmas market, you'll have seen this community in all its glory! Our love of handmade will continue to grow and I think we'll see greater interest in local and globally sourced handmade items. There are so many benefits to buying handmade; the quality, the originality and the great feeling that comes from supporting a small business to name just a few. Don't be afraid to mix artisanal items with goods from the high street and antique finds to create a unique space that reflects your personality.

The Winchester Tile Company handmade tiles



HIGH CONTRAST

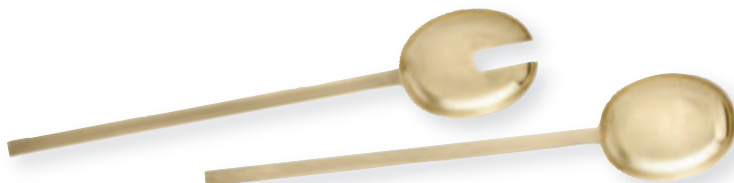
Creating contrast will be at the forefront of many designers' minds this year and they'll be using colour, shape and texture to create depth and drama. Contrast is an interesting design technique because it builds atmosphere, evokes emotional interest and creates instant impact. But it can be quite jarring, and it takes a skilled eye to make opposing elements work together. It's easy to over-do it, but is so effective when it works. It really brings life to a space. I hope we see more people take the brave step of introducing contrast in their homes.



BOLD AS BRASS

I first noticed the resurgence of this decidedly retro metal at the autumn 2015 Design shows. Brass was everywhere. It's a deeply warm and inviting metal, so I'm pleased to see it back. Brass won't be alone, I think gold and copper will continue their reign of popularity but I can already see designers favouring it over these two elements. From accessories, like pendant lamps and trays to tableware and furniture, brass has worked its way into every area of interior design. This metal is great because it can be used in so many different ways, and it ages beautifully. I look forward to seeing more innovations using this material.

BOLD AS: Idyll brass pendant lamp by idyllhome.co.uk and LoandBehold brass salad servers by FermLiving



SMART FURNITURE

Homeowners are becoming increasingly tech savvy, using smartphones and tablets to control things like the temperature or lights at home. I think we'll see an increase in this sort of technology use in 2016, but we'll also see more high-tech furniture reaching the mainstream market. IKEA has launched a range of furniture with in-built wireless charging, making the process a natural part of home life, so its designers chose the kind of furniture that's used frequently (like side tables and lamps) and turned them into wireless chargers. I think we'll see furniture with all sorts of hidden talents designed to make our homes and lives more seamless and flexible.



Clair Strong Interior Design is a small, friendly, creative business based in Bath and London, providing services for residential and commercial clients. Visit: clairstrong.co.uk or contact: clair@clairstrong.co.uk.