

# Colour Confidence



By interior designer Azra Zakir



**Green mosaic tiles create a refreshing feel in this modern bathroom**

Colour is something we're drawn to as children and often nervous of as adults. Colour can be one of the most powerfully emotive aspects within your home. Some colours will lift your spirits, others will dampen and depress. Colours can fill you with warmth, happiness, joy. They can be sultry and sexy, rich, gorgeous, opulent, feisty, vibrant, serene, calm, harmonious.

Colour is very personal.

Some people prefer the softer neutral or pastel palettes. Others prefer bright, bold colours, the ones that give energy and attitude to a room. Some like dark, moody colours, others like colours that shine with theatrical brilliance. We can make our homes wonderfully individual by the colours we choose to use in them. But for anyone lacking the confidence to experiment with colour, it can be a scary prospect to bring any colour into the home.

## Choosing colours for the home:

The colours you choose for the walls, ceiling and floor will affect your perception of space. Pale colours appear to recede and create a spacious feel while darker colours absorb light and make a space feel smaller.

See how much natural light a room gets before deciding on the colours for it. Cool colours (blue or green or colours with blue and green in them) are more distancing than warm colours (red and yellow or colours with a red or yellow tinge).

Using the same colour or lighter and darker shades of a colour throughout the home will create a unified, harmonious feel and enhance the feeling of space and flow.

Although it may be tempting to paint every room in a completely different colour, there will be a lack of cohesion and harmony throughout. It will be more difficult to unify spaces and there may be a startling effect when you see a number of rooms simultaneously. Overall the space will feel smaller. For a light, neutral background that isn't white, consider natural colours such as bone, stone, ivory and cream.

A white or neutral palette is often recommended for homes. It helps to create a calm, serene environment and will maxim-

ise light and space. However, neutral palettes can often end up feeling bland or minimal – colour can be used cleverly to inject life into a room, to lift it and balance out the empty feeling that minimalism can sometimes produce.

Choose a signature colour and find other colours to team up with it. My personal favourite is lime green, combined with fuschia pink, turquoise or orange in the summer and chocolate brown or aubergine in the winter. All the combinations are exquisite and look stunning against an all-white background.

Look to nature for inspiration – the bright pink of bougainvillea against a whitewashed wall can be interpreted in the home too. Fuschia pink towels in a neutral white bathroom inject colour and bring the room to life.



**The orange chair provides a splash of colour in this neutral open-plan interior**

Any colour other than pure white will have numerous shades to choose from. Tester pots are useful when choosing colours. Paint each colour onto a large sheet of paper and tape up around the room. Leave them up for a few days and see how you feel living with the different colours. Also see how the light affects the colour at different times of the day. Try to make choices instinctively when using tester pots. Pay attention to the

shade your eye is drawn to naturally, even if it's not the one you expected to be attracted to. Also beware that a warm colour with cool undertones will feel cool. Likewise a cool colour with warm undertones will feel warm. And expect some trial and error when you first begin selecting colours – it's not always obvious which colours you're going to love.

## Clever ways to bring colour into the home

Offset against a neutral background, strong colours can be brought into the home in a way that prevents the interior from becoming bland but at the same time doesn't take over.

Feature wall – keeping three walls a neutral colour, paint one wall a stronger colour to create attitude and interest. This is one way of bringing a strong or bold, vibrant colour into the home in a small enough dose that it doesn't take over. Focal point – create a focal point of an existing feature such as a chimney breast or alcove by painting it in a different colour to the rest of the room.



**Burnt orange tiles in an unusual rectangular size create the focal point in this all-white high gloss kitchen. The colour tones in well with the wooden worktop**

Accessories – a neutral room provides the perfect backdrop to colourful accessories like cushions, curtains, rugs, towels and bed linen.

In kitchens and bathrooms, use coloured wall tiles or coloured furniture and kitchen units.

### Create art in the home



**The red table teamed with brown chairs adds colour to this white interior. The curves on the furniture also provide the perfect balance to the sharp clean lines of the interior.**

If you have a bare wall crying out for some colour, create your own art using either a selection of your favourite colours or lighter and darker shades of the same colour. For a modern look, draw nine squares each 30cm x 30 cm in rows of three, equally spaced out. It's important to spend time getting the preparation right, making sure all lines are straight and even. Using a good quality small paintbrush, carefully paint each square a different colour. Although it is possible to use masking

tape, it has a tendency to bleed and it is better to practice painting straight lines freehand. For a more pop art feel, use a round dinner plate to draw circles randomly on the wall. Paint each circle a different colour. Covering a wall or section of a wall in multi-coloured stripes of varying thickness is another fun way of bringing colour into the home. The stripes can either be straight or include some swirls.

Ultimately choosing colours for the home is all about identifying the colours you love and bringing these into the home. You need to feel happy with your choices, you need to be able to live with them and know that they make the most of the space you live in!

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