

Housewares and Color in 2009: Reinvention and Renewal

The latest trend in housewares is something old, something borrowed, and perhaps, something blue. It is definitely something old and borrowed, as consumers are focused on reusing and refurbishing what they have and infusing new colors into it, says Leatrice (Lee) Eiseman, (www.colorexpert.com) executive director of the Pantone Color Institute (www.pantone.com) and director of the Eiseman Center for Color Information and Training. For 10 years, Eiseman has unveiled color palettes for the year to attendees at the International Home + Housewares Show.

“Housewares consumers, while they will always be interested in new colors and new designs, now feel a necessity to refurbish, to add to what they have, and to do it in a different way,” Eiseman says. The renowned color expert will give two presentations on color at the 2008 International Home + Housewares Show, March 16-18 at McCormick Place in Chicago.

“There is a lot of talk and concern about reinvention, and that will be a key factor with the 2009 color palettes. We’re at a point in history where everyone is concerned about reusing rather than buying what they already have,” she says.

Consumers may not necessarily have a new matching set of dishware, for example, but instead may combine their current selection with other items and patterns. “Today’s consumer is focused on getting the most usage out of what they have,” Eiseman explains.

“That’s where the ‘buy’ part of the equation comes in, in addition to color,” she adds. “Color is the best way to reuse and reinvent, to make it feel new. And truly, that’s what color forecasting is all about. Sometimes, people become confused about forecasting and new trends. They hope that consumers need something new to attract them into the marketplace. But that’s no longer the case. It’s not about ‘newness,’ but more about reinvention.”

What still remains true from years past is that consumers will use the marketplace, whether it’s through the Internet or a retail store, for inspiration, Eiseman says. And as they browse a store or web site, they are

looking for something to refresh what they currently have. “Color will do that,” Eiseman says. “It will attract a consumer.”

Color also helps to quell the notion that we are a throw-away society, Eiseman says, that we are not being environmentally conscious, when in fact, we should be. “People truly want to be aware of what’s good in the world around us, to be ‘thoughtful,’” she says. “In doing so, they naturally will revisit what they own and make additions based on those factors.”

Eiseman admits that this is a sensitive area. “There is no question that there is concern about the state of the U.S. economy and rising costs, but people still want to refresh and renew and take pride and ownership of their homes. In these economic times many people cannot afford their dream home, so they will look to make changes elsewhere and housewares is that place.”

Regarding individual color trends for 2009, Eiseman says that it’s difficult to predict the “hot” color or mood of the moment. “That’s a scary direction,” she says, “because we don’t all have the same lifestyle. We are way beyond stages like the 1980s, where there was one hot color. Today’s consumer wants a bigger selection. In addition, we have regional differences. What may look good in Miami may not look good in Portland. Instead, color palettes are more about evolution than revolution.”

For 2009, Eiseman sees a continuation of purple and the purple family. “It has become a really big color, particularly in fashion. In 2007, we began to see more blue/reds, fuchsias, and purples used with black and white and other neutral colors, and I see a continuation with that family, but with vibrancy with the purples.”

Orange and yellow/green will continue to grow and be used in 2009, she says, because the colors play to people being more thoughtful and not throwing things away. “There will be a big continuation of oranges,” Eiseman says, “with a large interjection of yellow into the orange family, and the fuchsia tones. And blue is a great balancer; cool is also not going away.”

An unexpected color combination for 2009, Eiseman says, is based on Japanese Anime, which most popularly refers to animation originating from Japan and to the Occidental way of thinking. “It’s an unusual mixture of colors; it’s not only about bright colors, but an interesting play of design, texture, and color that is

truly unexpected,” she says. “Younger and creative people who love color will not be bothered by it, but many consumers might put these colors together and resist it until it’s been out for a while.” It includes bright yellow, bright pink, bright green, purple, and some black.

Eiseman says that a Wine Country palette will be unveiled during her presentation; one that is casual in its nature. “The palette is clean and traditional with a twist,” she says. “It’s not about matching, but about tweaking your traditional look. It’s about putting contemporary and fun colors with china in your grandmother’s old cabinet. And of course, it will include the color of wine.”

Another palette that will be unveiled is Breathing Easy, a color family that people traditionally love. It’s the blues, greens, and blue/green colors. “The blue family of colors is not going away,” she says. “Blue has even picked up some momentum for 2009. Breathing Easy will be about providing a haven.”

Eiseman will present the eight color palettes for 2009 along with her color trends at noon Monday, March 17, and offer a special retail panel discussion called “Fashioning Forecasts” with Maureen Welton of 18 Karat International at noon Tuesday, March 18. Both presentations will be held in the Grand Ballroom/S100 of the South Building.