

Press Releases

New Year, New Colour: Which shade belongs to 2018?

2018 is here and with a new year, a new 'colour of the year' arrives – be that from Pantone, who have selected a bright 'Ultra Violet' or the increasingly influential Interior Design magazine, who opted for a dusky pink. Whilst their predictions are based on different criteria and different markets, it's interesting to see just how different and seemingly incompatible they are.

It seems that trends in colour application interiors have become harder to follow and predict than they were in the past. From a furniture perspective, in the early 2000s Birch and Maple laminate desks with silver powder coated legs seemed to be everywhere. Then a few years later melange fabrics became hugely popular. It did seem to matter that everyone did the same thing, and there was a lot of talk about being 'on-trend'. But now it seems there is far less consensus among designers and a brief look across any trade show can testify.

So why is this? And what can those of us that supply this industry do?

Unless you've been living under a rock for the last decade, the fact that the boundaries between Work and Life have become increasingly blurred won't have escaped you. And one of the many consequences of this is that as individuals we have a greater say in the way our work lives are lived. We expect more choice and more personal input; that's not just a trend limited to millennials, it's something we've seen across the wider demographic of the workforce. Not only this, but we are all better informed on design – whatever the reason, be it Pinterest, Instagram or otherwise – and we have opinions on the design of the objects around us. British Design commentator Wayne Hemmingway puts it well:

“Most people can make their home so comfortable, cool and welcoming very affordably, because the retailers have allowed us to achieve that. The office has to keep up, because what you don't want is a world where people choose to work at home because their office is so terrible. People want the same comfort that they would have at home, a place to store their stuff, personal space, somewhere where you belong to a community and are able to take part in it”. Wayne Hemmingway M Co-founder Red or Dead

And whilst there is a degree of subjectivity about what constitutes appropriate or inappropriate design, colour is up for even hotter debate.

“What's funny about colour is everyone has a point of view about it. You can be right and so wrong. There's a good chance if I wear a lime green T-shirt, some people would like it and others wouldn't..... Colour can be polarizing. It can either be somebody's favourite or alienate them in a second.” Bruce Smith, Steelcase Global Design Director

So the key to a successful workplace seems to give its inhabitants as much choice and control as is corporately possible. Very aware of this shift, designers at Steelcase have recently designed a palette of colours that apply our principles of design, diversity and continuity. One approach is to define palettes of colours that work together well, but also have enough diversity to allow a degree of choice. So designers are making suggestions about what people may like to choose within a framework rather than dictating what they'll have. But the challenge for any interior designer is to balance the multitude of individual preferences with the bigger picture. The space has to work as a whole whilst also catering for user's preferences.