

HOME FURNISHINGS

Luxury consumers lean into color: global home staging trends set to shift in 2023

February 9, 2023



A home transformed by Farrow & Ball paint. Image credit: Farrow & Ball

By AMIRAH KEATON

Post-pandemic, home dwellings have seldom held a greater level of importance to buyers, posing an intensified threat of liability to luxury real estate sellers looking to "get it right."

Subscribe to **Luxury Daily**
Plus: Just released
State of Luxury 2019 **Save \$246 ▶**

Thankfully, Luxury International Portfolio lands right in time, painting a picture of the current state of affairs for interiors during an hourlong webinar. A leading expert in color and design, British wall coverings maker Farrow & Ball's international brand ambassador Patrick O'Donnell walks attendees through a series of trends before providing advice to agents as to what is on the horizon for home design in 2023.

"Looking at the collections at Paris Deco, and new launches from fabric and wallpaper houses, pattern is really strong, wallpaper is really strong," said Patrick O'Donnell, international brand ambassador at **Farrow & Ball**, London.

"Color is really key at the moment," Mr. O'Donnell said. "It is a very dominant thing."

The Feb. 8 "Luxury Hour: Global Trends in Color and Evolving Consumer Preferences" digital event was moderated by Mickey Alam Khan, president of **Luxury Portfolio International**, New York.

Deep dive

Prompted by a series of specific audience questions, Mr. O'Donnell first moves into a discussion regarding one individual shade.

"Thoughts on when gray will finally die?" asks one webinar participant.

"I do think we are moving away from the dominance of gray," Mr. O'Donnell says.

"It will always be around, but most people are looking to softer colors and neutrals and off-whites are becoming a bit earthier at the moment, a bit more empathetic."

"The Four Seasons was single-handedly responsible for cream, and those very neutral beige shades that you saw in these homes," LPI's Mr. Khan adds.

"People live in those hotels, have been to those resorts and wanted to replicate the effect at home," he says. "You had this real blandness."

Both insights mark the start of an interesting discussion on the role of region, climate and weather in the interiors equation.

"We have quite long, flat, light winters here and I always find it too chilly," Mr. O'Donnell shares, as justification for avoiding mundane shades such as gray.

"In warmer climates, you'll take much warmer colors," the expert explains. "[Same if] you're by the water, the lighting is different again."

This rule of thumb for color selection in accordance with climate also works according to the compass.

"For rooms that face the northern hemisphere, go deeper," Mr. O'Donnell says.

Described as 'sophisticated, smart and full of style' by Pip Rich at [@Livingetc](#), Hague Blue living rooms are having a moment.

Discover 9 ways to use this deep blue in your living room as recommended by design experts: <https://t.co/QdaVQT7r7n> pic.twitter.com/QEPzMHrYWa

Farrow & Ball (@FarrowandBall) [February 2, 2022](#)

In terms of fully utilizing a space, whether it be with pigmented coloring outside of a Florida residence, or muted tones in a coastal abode, one home feature that is often overlooked enters the conversation, as ceilings are set to make a comeback this year.

"We're seeing a massive shift, sometimes the ceiling alone is the feature in the room," Mr. O'Donnell says.

Often overlooked, underappreciated and simply painted white as an afterthought, the "fifth wall" provides ample opportunity within the home geometric shapes and stripes on the ceiling are also on the rise. The color expert references a personal client case study.

"I did a nursery about two years ago, and the client really wanted one of our wallpapers," Mr. O'Donnell says.

"I said You cannot have one of our wallpapers with a young child, it will get damaged, let's put it on the ceiling," he says. "It was a really nice way to use the wallpaper without [risking] the child scribbling all over it."

Gloss paint sprayed gives a "watery, ethereal look," while, in a bathroom for instance, many clients are hiring artists and specialists for commissioned works on the ceiling.

He notes this can be as simple as starting with the wall color and recommends working one's way up from there for a soft transition.

Discussions move from nurseries and bathrooms to another room of leisure.

"I would just love to know the trend for painting libraries," poses one participant.

In response, he affirms the use of dark blues, especially those shades with a bit of a green base, describing the selection as the color "du jour."

Mr. O'Donnell recommends contrasting from bookcase to walls to trim by either using one color across its range a smokey blue, versus a navy blue, and so on or by making use of one color in different finishes a matte finish versus a finish featuring a more glossy sheen, in which perceived differences in color comes from light reflecting off of the surface in a modernist twist to decorating reading rooms.

"Libraries because of their use, they tend to be quite informal spaces, a space that one can disappear to and relax whether it be to read a book or magazine or newspaper or listening to a podcast," Mr. O'Donnell says.

Introducing 11 new colours. Inspired by moments of joy, these beautiful new shades range from a lively, flame red to a delicate pink.

Visit <https://t.co/nny3y8sAFc> to meet them. pic.twitter.com/zG8u0mhrdY

Farrow & Ball (@FarrowandBall) [September 29, 2022](#)

"They're personal comfort zones," he says. "Darker and deeper feel like a better fit for the environment."

Regardless of rooms, Mr. O'Donnell mentions a few universal no-go's.

"Accent walls feel like you've run out of commitment to a space," he says.

"I really hate them, think they're utterly awful, and feel like people should never do it," he says. "They feel quite patronizing I think we're bolder and more adventurous in our decorating."

Another? The assumption that white solves all problems.

"One thing I would say as a caveat to white one thing that a lot of people do is a poorly lit room thinking the solution is to paint it white," he says.

Instead of either accent walls or drab-looking walls, Mr. O'Donnell notes that the U.S. is Farrow & Ball's biggest market for wallpapers.

The company produces larger patterns, resulting from a block printing process that has proven popular stateside. Decorators should be decisive, though, as the treatment is not often switched out.

One recent evolution of a company wallpaper offering perfectly encapsulates the expert's primary thesis, which falls in favor of bold colors this year.

"We have a classic wallpaper that we've had for years called Lotus,' which is a 19th-century French document, and it sells well in a neutral palette," Mr. O'Donnell says.

"Three or four years ago, we actually launched in metallics, and they sold really really well," he says. "[I would recommend] keeping the bold to rooms you transition through the powder room, you're not in there long, the corridor is a transitional space to other rooms within the property, so I always say go bold in places where you're not staying."

"Unless you have supreme confidence and can take strong colors!"

Industry shift

Home accessories have been projected to take over in 2023.

Tools like mood lighting have found their place among innovations at industry events like the CES ([see story](#)).



General Electric presented a new family of smart lighting options at this year's CES showcase. Image courtesy of General Electric

Mr. O'Donnell notes that ceiling downlights tend to be "eminently unflattering," and suggests opting for table lamps and floor lamps in noncommercial spaces.

Meanwhile, "Furniture wear" is fast gaining fans, with renters and owners alike outfitting sofas and chairs in cozy knits, per reports from trend forecaster WGSN ([see story](#)).

Luxury Daily is published each business day. Thank you for reading us. Your **feedback** is welcome.