

The shades of summer

Esquire's resident design expert
Cyril Zammit on the colours that
will regenerate your summer



PHOTOGRAPHY BY ABDULLAH TOUK

Middle East summers can feel endless but, in many ways, they are regenerative. It is the period of the year in which we tend to feel freer to experiment with wearing new colours and hues, and we tend to veer towards ones that associate with the sun, light and warmth.

I was recently at Art Basel, where I visited 'Color Rush' by Sabine Marcelis at Vitra Design Museum. The Dutch designer has long had an association with colours, notably for her famous 'Candy Cube', a hollow resin cube in translucent marshmallow pink. At Vitra, she carefully sorted iconic design creations according to their colours. A beautiful set up for someone with slight OCD like me. Brown, red, orange and yellow on one side, blue, purple/pink, green, white and metal on the other. It was hung against a black wall.

The idea of colour blocking in art was introduced by another Dutch artist, Piet Mondrian—whose early 20th century work is currently undergoing a cultural revival.

Colour blocking creates a statement. It doesn't accommodate hues or shades, it creates contrasts and differences. Those differences are noted across cultures, where the same colour can mean very different things. In western culture, red is associated with passion and strong, aggressive feelings; whereas in the East it is a symbol of happiness and prosperity. Likewise with purple, where, in India, it

symbolises wealth and nobility; but elsewhere it is a sign of death and mourning. In my former (corporate) life, we once spent five months working with a marketing team to pick the colour of company's logo. We

asked each regional division to survey their market to find the impact that several colours have in the local culture.

The cross-border language that colour can have is often understated. Therefore, in the design world, I have often tried to link design trends with associated colours.

As this summer feels like it will be the first 'normal' one after a long period of instability, design trends will reflect that. One prominent interior trend will be the return of arch-shaped elements, as many experts believe that the friendly curve of an arch is visually soothing and therefore a symbol of security and coziness.

Another recurring trend is the continued blurring of boundaries between inside and outdoors. We are seeing the use of muted and earthy greens being used in both furniture and wall colours, and more plants brought inside the home—which is particularly needed when you can't go outside in the searing heat. It's via little tweaks like this can we all add to that natural element of regeneration. ☺

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