

# Irrepressible Optimism

## New behaviors to influence future palettes

by Donovan Freeland

Each year forecasters and professional associations like the Color Marketing Group parse through the landscape to identify emerging themes in culture, society and the geo-political landscape. These influences are interpreted in color, pattern and design. The process is equal parts anthropology, psychology, and inspiration. In this way, color trending is a unique barometer of our collective psyche. **V**

**A**t this time of year we at Colwell, (a leading manufacturer of color merchandising) sit not-so-patiently for paint and décor companies reveal to their color forecasts. Though thousands of colors pass through our manufacturing locations every week in paint companies' fan decks and color cards, there is something magical when a hue rises to the surface, selected by many companies independently as the 'color of the moment.' Only then, perhaps, do we see the wondrous possibilities that shade has to offer.

The recession brought a dose of reality to which many of us had not previously been exposed. As we slogged through quarter after quarter of bad economic news, we began to reexamine our lifestyles and something kind of miraculous happened—we found a new, and arguably better version of ourselves.

Lavish steakhouse dinners gave way to gathering family and friends together in our homes to prepare meals together with vegetables picked fresh from our gardens. Lacquered and shiny moved toward rustic, elemental and repurposed. Our obsession with the emerging technoculture has rebounded to an infatuation with both indigenous and old-world cultures and nostalgia for simpler times.

According to the Department of Commerce's Bureau of Economic Analysis, we have seen 48 months of economic expansion as of the end of July 2013. The American Coatings Association's Paint Consumer Research Program showed consumer paint sales rebounding mightily in 2012 after sales hit record lows in 2009. Now four years in to the recovery, we see that abiding American optimism creeping back into consumers' use of color in their homes.

Best-selling author Seth Godin, expresses our resiliency perfectly: "Optimism is the most important human trait,

because it allows us to evolve our ideas, to improve our situation, and to hope for a better tomorrow." Emerging from this crisis that has certainly taken its toll and yet has given so much. We are once again hopeful. Perhaps, it is a more knowing optimism. More honest. But in some ways more joyful. And finally more colorful!

For designers and decorators this means the return of

clients who are ready and waiting for a punch of brilliant cerulean, cool magenta, flamenco pink or sunny goldenrod in their décor. Citrusy greens and feminine reds infuse vitality and pair perfectly with the grays and ethereal neutrals we have come to love in recent years.

Economic indicators aside, I believe that it is this return to color that is the most clear harbinger of our readiness to reclaim our lives and move forward to our better tomorrow as Godin suggests. From generation to generation,

Optimism may, indeed, be our most renewable American resource. **V**

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