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## Current Color Phase: Neutrals Ascendant, but Share Limelight

From *D+D*, October 2010

The world of color has undergone a makeover of late, with yellows, grays and aubergine paving the way, says Elaine Williamson, principal of Elaine Williamson Designs, Dallas.



*Primary colors such as blue retain their appeal, although these colors often serve an accent role rather than as the baseline color.*

*Photos by Elaine Williamson Designs*

### Color + Design Sketchbook

"Together, these colors add a level of calm to the feel of a room, while still adding eye-catching jolts of exquisite color," Williamson says. "The gray, a rather neutral color, works well as a base color on upholstered furniture, especially when coupled with another classic—espresso-stained wood. This stain color, which exudes an air of sleek sophistication, is an enduring classic that has realized a surge in popularity both in the design world and retail.

"The yellow, best utilized in small bursts, serves as an impactful infusion of excitement in the room. For instance, a yellow throw pillow on a gray sofa mixed with aubergine can make a stellar statement."

In a discussion with *Durability + Design*, Williamson offered observations on recent evolutionary trends in color. The following are excerpts from this conversation.

**Durability + Design:** What is the latest color craze; have neutrals made a comeback?

**Williamson:** Using neutrals as foundational fabrics is definitely my suggestion for homeowners, and provides for greater flexibility in the future. When you do this, you are then able to use color-saturated fabrics in your pillows, décor accessories and rug choices, and can transition these elemental items as seasons, tastes and trends change. However, that is not to say that we do not use saturated foundational colors in our firm, as we do when the project calls for it. It just certainly depends on the room and the overall design concept for which we are hired. But, generally speaking in today's more cost-conscious market, neutrals are the way to go.



**D+D:** Does this mean primary colors are a "design don't?" If not, how are they being used, and which primary colors remain popular?

**Williamson:** I believe that there aren't any colors that are a "don't" in design. For example, we just completed a very modern home in Texas in which the homeowner only allowed in three colors: blue, white and black. I have noticed in the shelter magazines blue seems to be their feature cover color of late. As previously mentioned, primary colors are currently best used to accent a room rather than being used as the baseline. Any color, if used correctly, should never be considered out of style.

**D+D:** Are faux finishes still a popular choice for walls? Please elaborate on finish types, effects,



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**Williamson:** Texas is certainly known for its heavily faux-finished walls because the oversized castle-like style homes demand a certain depth of character on the walls to hold their own with the oversized architecture. However, we are guiding our clients away from these finishes as they don't read as timeless. These finishes, if not done correctly, can certainly be overbearing and actually take away from the rest of the home, furnishings included. We are specifying several artistic finishes, which might be an elegant harlequin pattern on walls, bold striping both horizontal and vertical and beautiful finishes on custom-designed furniture pieces.



*It's only natural: Neutral tones in foundational fabrics provides for latitude in the use of saturated colors in decorating choices (above left and above).*

**D+D:** Could you review how you have seen this translated into designs in recent projects?



*Inspiration, motivation: Color and design in this home gym created the perception of a larger space while transforming the uninviting into the chic and inspiring.*

**Williamson:** We recently designed a home gym in which the space was small and awkward. It was painted stark white and the homeowner, an avid fitness enthusiast, was not enjoying working out in her space. We chose to increase the visual square footage by horizontally striping the walls, in a creamy butter, off white and silver with chocolate FLOR tiles. We added espresso-colored wall cabinets which hold all her videos, and lower cabinets which hold her step-aerobic equipment. The look was very chic and inspiring. We are also working on a children's playroom in which we left all walls and cabinetry neutral but striped an odd-shaped ceiling with five different colors. The flooring is orange and very playful. The window treatments will also have lots of color and the "gaming" area will have a step up-platform with sitting against a tufted wall (for comfort) and lots of fun colored throw pillows.

**D+D:** How can color be used to enhance small-space design?

**Williamson:** In designing a small space, it is of utmost important to pull people into the space visually. Color should never be used in such a fashion that will stop you in your tracks visually, thereby making the rest of the room unnoticeable. For example, find the farthest wall in the space and paint that wall a striking color, whether it be a natural tone or saturated color.

**About Elaine Williamson**



*Elaine Williamson*

Luxury interiors expert Elaine Williamson is the principal of Elaine Williamson Designs, a full-service, award-winning firm specializing in high-end custom interior design for luxury residences, high-rise properties, and commercial establishments. With more than 20 years of experience and clients across the U.S., Williamson is known for creating distinctive, highly personalized settings that are elegant with maximum visual appeal, yet entirely functional, comfortable and livable. She has received a number of Excellence Awards from the Home Builders Association of Dallas, and Elaine Williamson Designs was named "Best of Business" by *Frisco Style* magazine.

Williamson can be reached online at [www.ElaineWilliamsonDesigns.com](http://www.ElaineWilliamsonDesigns.com) and followed on Twitter at "ElaineWDesigns."

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