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## Why Pantone Released Two 2016 Colors of the Year

Pantone picks a pair of baby-hued pastels, Rose Quartz and Serenity



By

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It's twins!

Color authority Pantone has for the first time anointed two colors of the year for 2016. Dubbed Rose Quartz and Serenity, they are shades of pale pink and baby blue.

The company's announcement, expected today, is an annual event that is closely watched by the design and fashion industry as the tipoff to a trend that usually spreads through home décor, fashion and design for several years. It tends to unleash a cascade of announcements from retailers revealing their own products in the colors.

This particular pastel pairing calls to mind a balloon bouquet announcing a pair of babies, but Pantone says that isn't the aim. These shades, they say, were chosen to convey rosy warmth and tranquility. As for baby stuff, they don't want to go there. "Rose quartz is not baby pink," says Leatrice Eiseman who, as executive director of Pantone's Color Institute, oversees the company's annual choice of Color of the Year. "It doesn't have that wimpy feel."

Still, Rose Quartz could face some challenges if it were forced to go it alone. "That's a bit too sugary for men," says Ray Kelvin, founder and chief designer of British fashion retailer Ted Baker. He is using the blue for menswear because it offers "freshness," he says. He notes that a similar rose shade, which Ted Baker calls "nude pink," has been a



A Carolina Herrera design for spring. PHOTO: JP YIM/GETTY IMAGES

best-seller for the brand's womenswear lately.

Pantone, owned by Washington, D.C.-based Danaher Corp., has a system that helps manufacturers define color precisely. Every year, the company polls décor and fashion designers, as well as manufacturers and retailers, on what colors they plan to use, led by Ms. Eiseman, to pick the color of the coming year. Pantone tips off some marketing partners so that they can create products, such as Sephora cosmetics and Keurig coffee makers, that use the colors. It even churns out its own popular mugs in the shades. This year's mug will have both colors—one on each side, like yin and yang.

Ms. Eiseman says the two colors are so often seen

together that they are a natural pairing. She and some other Pantone executives floated the idea of doing two colors around the office, and decided there was no reason not to go with a color duo.

“From a business perspective, it's two colors, so it's an opportunity to make extra combinations,” says Ms. Eiseman. “It makes for a perfect combination in the home” for tablecloths, glassware and ceramics. She predicts paisleys and plaids will make use of the combo.

Previous Pantone Colors of the Year have tended to be bold, such as the purple-pink Radiant Orchid chosen for 2014, or the bright orange Tangerine Tango chosen for 2012.



KitchenAid's stand mixer in Guava Glaze PHOTO: KITCHENAID



From Thomas Pink, the Gibson classic fit shirt and Thomas Pink Warren Check Tie. PHOTO: THOMAS PINK

Only two of the 16 colors chosen since 2000 could qualify as pastels—2003's Aqua Sky and 2000's Cerulean. Pantone's choices have commerce in mind—the company susses out colors that will resonate with consumers—so the choice suggests a sharp turnabout in consumer sentiment.

“We wanted compassion, which today a lot of people are looking for,” Ms. Eiseman says. Pantone's news release describes the colors as “inducing

feelings of stability, constancy, comfort and relaxation,” and argues that they “create balance in a chaotic world.”

The choice also reflects a surprising pastel trend that has been on fashion runways in recent seasons. Pastels can seem to convey weakness and they don't pop visually the way bolder colors do, yet pastel pinks and blues appeared in many collections for spring. Thom Browne mixed saccharine shades of blue and pink in his collection for spring.

Carolina Herrera walked through her studio a day before showing her spring 2016 collection in New York in September and gestured toward her mood board, which was full of pink fabric swatches and photos of pink flowers. She hadn't been clued in on Pantone's thinking, but her collection the next day was awash in the shade. “I'm in my





A decade of Pantone's colors of the year *PANTONE*

rose period," she said that afternoon in her studio.

Designer Leanne Marshall was tipped off by Pantone recently. Ms. Marshall, who is known for winning Season 5 of

Project Runway, used the rose/blue combo in her spring ready-to-wear collection, shown at New York Fashion Week. She says she was inspired by a sense of apocalypse. "I think it's a collective unconscious type thing," she says, explaining that many people zero in on pastels to escape. Her spring collection was inspired by her concept of a typhoon that would wipe away life's chaos, leaving a tranquil aftermath represented by pink and pale blue pastels.

Forecasting colors is a tricky business. It can take several years for a new color to take hold broadly. A color may feel new, and then seem to be ubiquitous a year or two later, ultimately falling out of favor. Anyone alive in the 1970s is likely to remember the avocado shade that swept the kitchen-appliance business.



A pillow from Roar + Rabbit, exclusively for West Elm. PHOTO: ROAR + RABBIT, EXCLUSIVELY FOR WEST ELM

Some colors—such as many shades of blue—are

perennially popular in home goods and apparel. Blues are flattering to any skin color, and bright shades like cobalt or turquoise are vivid against neutrals. Other colors can serve as enticing irritants: Bold orange looks appeared in dozens of spring collections as attention-getting contrasts.

When it comes to pink, American men are beginning to take cues from their British counterparts, who have never shared their fear of the shade. Indeed, Thomas Pink—

known for daring color choices—is using Rose Quartz in men’s shirts and ties.

“I think it’s a little bit about duality and (men) being confident in themselves,” says Florence Torrens, creative director of Thomas Pink. “It says you’re an open person, and it gives you an air of authority.”

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