

1950s colours and styles

1950s events and inventions

- 1950 - Diners Club Credit Card.
- 1951 - Digital computer invented.
- 1952 - Structure of DNA discovered; Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II.
- 1953 - Mt Everest conquered; Polio Vaccine developed.
- 1955 - Disneyland opens in USA; Birth of Rock 'n' Roll.
- 1957 - First Sputnik launched into space.
- 1959 - Silicon chip manufactured.

1950s

We are going to have to be rather clever to escape from our own cleverness in the past.

-SIR MARK OLIPHANT

SILICON CHIP

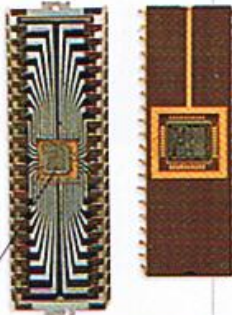
The impact of silicon chips on this century cannot be overstated. Tiny wafers of silicon carry thousands of electrical components and are used everywhere, from computers to cars.

Silicon chip



DINERS' CLUB

The Diners' Club card was set up to make it easier for executives to eat out on a company account. Now credit cards are used everywhere and may soon replace cash.



credit cards and clothes

The 1950s was a period of renewal and optimism when post war austerity was replaced with a consumer boom.

With great leaps in manufacturing and scientific discoveries, and the lift of rationing, consumerism grew rapidly, and people craved for colour and modernity.

Television and jet travel opened up new horizons.

War research benefited fashion and design, new synthetic materials were "modern" and desired by all. New wash and wear fabrics enabled everyone to wear white and pastel colours.



New materials such as plastic laminates, fibreglass and latex foam literally shaped the 1950s. Magic words were Nylon, Crimplene (polyester), Orlon (acrylic), PVC, Melamine and Vinyl.

New paints and adhesives were invented, new labour-saving devices were manufactured and smaller houses required smaller furniture and modular designs. Room dividers and sofa beds were designed for the new open spaces within the home.

Resene

the paint the professionals use

Housewives extolled the virtues of new kitchens with Formica® tables, built in cupboards and new appliances, while keeping young and beautiful to please their husbands!



advertising in the 1950s

Consumerism swept across America like a tidal wave, with Britain following in its wake. Air travel, practical motoring, new foods and drinks. Persil was washing whiter, and Cadburys chocolate was creamier. With the emergence of the teenager a whole new world of fashion evolved - clothing, hairstyles, music, dance and motorbikes. In USA cars were getting longer with their fins bigger. Everything was more glamorous.

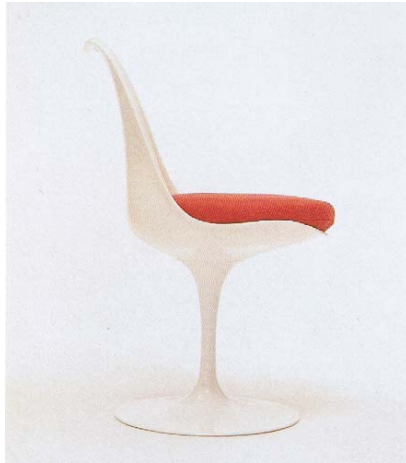


fashion + fabrics

These new synthetic textiles were easy to maintain - wash n wear with no bleaching, starching or ironing required. This enabled people to wear white and pastel colours rather than dark and practical colours.

Women did not go around dressed casually and generally wore full skirts and a blouse, or boxy jackets and slim skirts, with hat and gloves, for street wear. Men wore long trousers, collar and tie and cardigan indoors and a suit and hat when they went out.

Formerly considered a girl's colour, pink became very popular and even infiltrated menswear. Jeans and sweaters were worn by teenagers later in the decade. Imagine colours like Resene Chantilly and Resene De York.



new materials and fast foods

- New manufacturing processes accommodated new furniture designs and materials. Above is an early dining café with both booth seats and counter seats for fast food.
- The Arne Jacobsen chair with plywood body and chromium plated tubular steel frame is as popular today as it was in 1955.
- The tulip chair had a base of coated light metal, moulded seat of polyester with loose cushions and was designed in 1956.



hula hoop bowling skating soda shops movies family games

“Children should be seen and not heard” was a common family saying of the 50’s. Children did not answer back, had rules, duties and chores to teach them values and develop morals. Story books and television shows had something to teach children - heroes and good people who did the right thing. Kids believed in Santa and the Tooth Fairy, and looked up to those in the police force and fire service. Parents had more time to interact and play with children and divorce was most rare.

1950s pastels



To recreate these colours, try (from left): Resene Escape, Resene Wonderland, Resene Tropical Blue, Resene Spring Rain, Resene Ooh La La, Resene Alaska, Resene Lemon Twist, Resene Coral Candy, Resene Rhythm.



Family life in the 1950s - the brick and tile home on a quarter acre section with plenty of room for the kids to play. As a whole, society provided families with more time together as Dad worked 40 hours and Mum ran the household. People believed more in the greater good of society and authority was respected.

On the farm children rode horses, fished for eels and helped feed household animals - hens, dogs or milk the house cow. In the evening, families played cards and board games together after dinner or listened to the radio before television came along.

In 1956 petrol cost approximately 45 cents per gallon (4.5 litres) and an ice-cream cost less than 5 cents.

black and blue woollen swimsuits reigned

The adjacent picture is of a fashion parade in the mid 1950s when many women made their own clothes and those of their children. The colours were likely to have been fairly pastel with some summer brights. Spots, stripes, gingham checks and floral designs were popular for fabrics.



Resene

the paint the professionals use

In contrast swimwear was often woollen bathing suits which were either black or navy in colour. The boys here are pictured with their woollen togs, some with a white belt.



New Zealand motor dealers could not supply enough vehicles for buyers in the early 50's, and from 1951 to 1965 it was waiting lists, overseas funds and contact in the trade to get motor vehicles. The Ford Consul and Zephyr were popular along with Vanguards, Humbers, Hillmans and then larger models like Chryslers, Plymouths, Chevrolets and Dodges.

The red and white Zephyr 6 convertible with white wall tyres was the dream of many teenage boys in the late 1950s.



farming and agriculture

Britain considered New Zealand as the South Pacific Farm, which enabled us to reap the rewards of an economy based on sheep and dairy cattle. Ex-servicemen were housed in camps and small homes on mixed farms of dairying, crops and sheep raising. Aerial topdressing was introduced to fertilise crops, and harvesting and canning machinery were purchased from USA to preserve fruit and vegetables. The Bell Block produced butter and cheese for the British market and wool was baled and shipped abroad.



summer holidays at the beach

Family holidays in the 1950s were often summer at the beach or river camping, or in a caravan. Tents were made of heavy canvas and their colours either white or brown walls with a green roof.

Teenagers hung out at milk bars in their leather jackets, and were named Milk Bar Cowboys. The rebellious teenager was new and emerged towards the end of the decade rebelling and swinging to the beat of rock and roll.

school days sports days guide camps play days



international focus - local colour influences

New Zealand became an international focus in the 1950s starting with the Empire Games in Auckland which were remembered as “friendly games”. For the first time a NZ woman, Yvette Williams, was an Olympic Champion.

In 1953 Edmund Hillary conquered Mt Everest, which was reported around the globe. Soon after Murray Halberg broke the 4 minute mile in running.

In 1954 Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II visited New Zealand, bringing with her a fashion wardrobe of pastel colours which influenced fashion trends as well as interiors.

Co-ordination of product and fashion enabled consumer products from Tupperware to furniture to be coloured in these signature pastel colours.





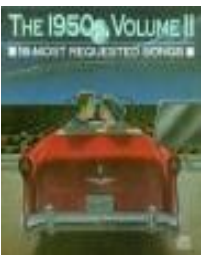
travel and cultural exchanges

Travel got faster which enabled people to experience new cultures and lifestyles. Queen Street in the 1950s saw the running of trams, which were later replaced by trolley buses. Auckland Harbour Bridge was opened in 1959 connecting the north shore to Auckland city.

The Wellington/Lyttelton ferry commenced service in 1953 which made travel between the north and south island easier. The MS Maori had berths for over 950 passengers and 80 vehicles.



Trans-Tasman flights commenced with TEAL, and later BOAC brought the comet to New Zealand offering flights from continent to continent. With the international exchange of cultures comes an exchange of colours, and towards the end of 1950 the pastel colours strengthened in hue, and the Hawaiian shirt was tops.



late 1950s colours

Stronger colours of the late 50's were influenced by movie stars, pop music, dance and teenager culture. New words to enter the vocab were cops, biker, chick, threads (clothing), kill (to impress), cool (great) and squares (parents). Colours to try: Resene Bright Red, Resene Resolution Blue, Resene Monte Carlo and Resene Royal Heath.



from fashion to interiors

These colours transferred through to interiors - homewares, furniture, fabrics, paint colours, timber stains and laminates. The blonde wood of the cocktail cabinet above was a popular finish for timber furniture this decade, although the new materials such as vinyl and laminate became popular because of the choice of colours they offered.



Formica® and chrome furniture television in homes

Formica provided colour options for furniture other than timber - red, grey, green, yellow and blue, easier to keep looking new than timber. With television new products were communicated to the world, talented artists were commissioned to create adverts that heralded the new and amazing products - the consumer had never had it so good.



light filled spaces and streamlined furniture

Interiors became more streamlined, furniture more simple and big windows allowed lots of natural light into the open plan spaces of the late 1950s homes both in New Zealand and abroad, especially in the warmer climates where heating was not such an issue.

Resene

the paint the professionals use



black and white and red

Black, white and red were popular for everything from furniture to trolley buses, posters, telephones, tiles, shoes and much more.

SOFAS
2000

The sofa could be extended in length by an extra five cushions

Marshmallow sofa 1956
George Nelson was design director of Herman Miller Furniture from 1946 to 1966, where one of his concerns was the production of creative but inexpensive furniture. One solution was the Marshmallow sofa, which utilized bar-stool cushions, joined by a steel framework. However, it proved to be too odd for its time – the idea of sitting on separate cushions was too unsettling for the sofa-buying public. Furthermore, the cushions had to be hand-fitted individually on metal disks, which made the Marshmallow unsuitable for mass production – as few as 200 were made.

Specifications
Country: US
Material: Steel, chrome-plated metal.

The frame is made from painted steel and chrome-plated metal

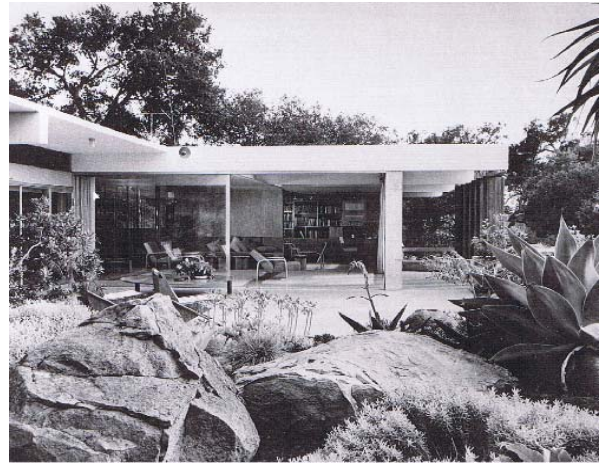
Safari 1968
In 1966, a number of Italy's leading designers and architects formed the group Archizoom Associati. Based on the principles of anti-design, Archizoom used references to kitsch and pop culture to make ironic statements about modernism. The group described its fantasy sofa, Safari, as "a beautiful piece that you simply don't deserve!"

Specifications
Country: Italy
Materials: Fiberglass and synthetic leopard skin

The Marshmallow Sofa of 1956 shows slightly stronger colours than the pastels that the 1950s is remembered for. To recreate this colour mix try Resene Torea Bay, Resene Harlequin, Resene Equator, Resene Terracotta Pink and Resene Green Fields.

Resene

the paint the professionals use

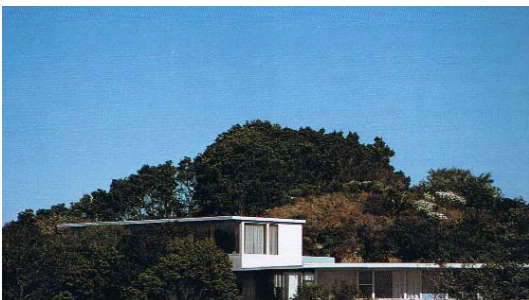


modern architecture for cultural social geographical conditions

At the same time architects were searching for new ideas and new materials for building construction. In New Zealand ideas from early Maori building styles and rural farm buildings were transferred into modern homes - low-pitched roofs and wide eaves, walls of windows, open plan living spaces. Exterior cladding of creosote boards and interiors of plywood sheet were considered the vernacular architecture suited to our geographical environment.

By the late 1950s the bungalow/cottage of timber weatherboards and corrugated iron roof had been replaced with brick -vener walls and tiled roofs - the "brick and tile" was popular because bricks were seen as stronger and requiring less maintenance. Timber even disappeared from porches and verandas, and was replaced with concrete slabs and steps with wrought iron balustrades.

Finishes like Resene Crowshead were common.



long and low

The long profile of the house (left hand picture) built in 1958 still makes a modern statement today. The architect, Ernst Plischke, designed the house to follow the path of the sun. It is set on three levels on the hillside in Wellington and has floor to ceiling glass in several rooms, which provide natural light and uninterrupted views to the exterior courtyard.

The second house (right hand picture) was designed by Frank Lloyd Wright in USA and is constructed of concrete slab and rock walls with full height glazing to allow the sun in to heat the concrete and rock walls and provide heating to the interiors. In the summer the overhanging eaves block out the hot sun keeping the interior cool.



NZ family homes from the 1950s

These are fairly typical of suburban family homes built in the 1950s with painted weatherboard walls and iron roofs, and later brick walls and tiled roofs. The sections were large with the house front facing the road.

key colours of the 1950s

- Pale blue, pale green, pink, lemon, mauve.
- Red, black and white.
- Sea greens and blues, teal and mid-blue.
- Cartoon colours (Walt Disney).
- Tropical colours - orange, yellow, pink, blue, green.
- Blonde timber stains or varnishes.
- Black timber stain (creosote exteriors).

key design elements of the 1950s

- Labour-saving appliances and devices.
- Easy to maintain surfaces (lamine, paint).
- Curved chrome and moulded furniture.
- Vinyl and plastic textiles and upholstery.
- Full height windows and natural sunlight.
- Overhanging eaves, lower profile roofs.
- Vernacular designs for lifestyle and culture.
- Brick and tile family homes on large section.