

# 1990s colours and styles

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## 1990s war and distress

- Saddam Hussein invades Kuwait launching SCUD missile in 1991
- Operation Desert Storm is announced by US government to attack military targets in Iraq
- Collapse of the Soviet Union after 70 years of Communist rule for 15 Soviet republics
- Apartheid is outlawed in South Africa, Nelson Mandela becomes president in 1994
- Civil war in Rwanda kills 800,000 and 2 million refugees are homeless
- Ebola virus breaks out in Zaire causing horrific deaths - a cure is yet to be found
- Mad cow disease causes ban on British beef and beef products
- People around the world mourn the tragic death of Princess Diana
- NATO bombs Serbia, 800,000 refugees return to Kosovo after peace plan signed and United Nations peacekeeping forces arrive



## 1990s discovery and co-operation

- Hubble space telescope reveals new galaxies of stars and planets
- Sony produces the first "electronic book"
- Virtual reality 3-D video games and computer aided design
- Voice operated remote control for security systems
- Hole in ozone layer discovered over USA
- Global travel and communications - the internet highway takes off
- Focus on health and longevity as result of viruses and disease
- Scientists clone first sheep using a human cell
- Pathfinder lands on Mars and sends images back to earth
- International space station brings together scientists and technical expertise from 15 countries in a co-operative partnership
- Introduction of the Euro - single currency for 12 euro-zone countries



space research, playstation, video phone, Dolly the sheep, the Euro

## less is more

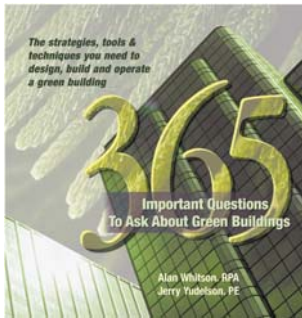
The 1990s arrived with a resounding thump - the world economy had taken a big slump and it was time for a reality check. A new ecologically-aware consumer arose as everyone became concerned about saving the rainforests, fuel consumption, green building materials and recycled goods.

Less became more - apartment living, minimal architecture, unadorned interiors, simple easy-wear fashion, smaller cars, mini phones and laptop computers. Minimalism became a strong influence at the end of the 1990s evidenced by Zen style homewares and an obsession with black and neutral fashion clothing - dressing down became the norm.

Advertisers pushed the boundaries of decency with controversial campaigns - sex sells. There was a heightened awareness of health and environmental issues amongst consumers and supermarkets offered vast choices of non-fat, low sugar or salt, organic and free range products.



Try Resene Cut Glass and Resene Designer White.



## smart buildings smart cars

Consumers became more aware of ecological products and fuel consumption.



## health and longevity

Health and environmental issues grew out of the unrest of war outbreaks and a quest for harmony and longevity was sought.

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**Resene**

the paint the professionals use

some things got bigger, but many got smaller ...

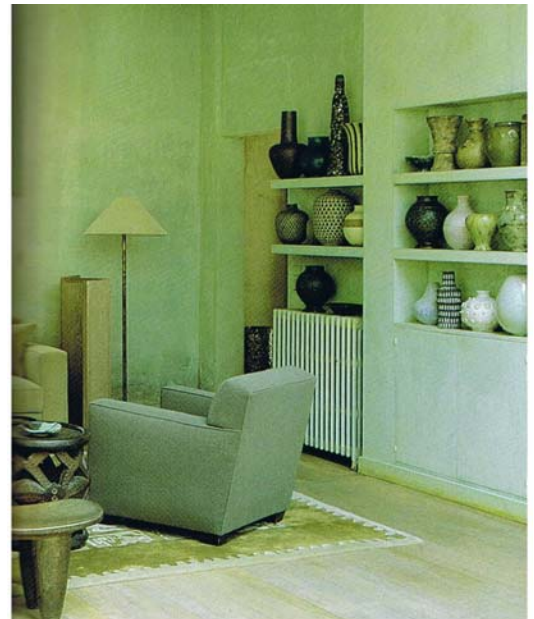


### cocooning refuge safety

Cocooning was the operative word as people retreated to the safety of their homes, seeking refuge from the complexity of life and the rise in crime. In our interiors the mood swing caused a need for the colours of nature - earthy terracotta, pacific blues, sandy creams and chartreuse and lime green.

The desire for greater simplicity and nurturing prompted a paring down of colours to neutral creams, beiges, retro browns and an increase in the use of natural textures such as wood, stone, leather, sisal, bamboo, jute, silk and wool.

There was a trend towards greater quality in our purchases for the home, and modern classics in furniture grew in popularity, such as Eileen Grey, Le Corbusier and Charles and Ray Eames designs.



Orientalism was more widely adopted as we tried to imbue some of the serenity inherent in Eastern religion into our lives. Spas and designer water abounded and the colours of pale aquamarine, watery blues and icy greens emerged as tranquillity was sought. Try Resene Jet Stream.



### home security safety

Security and safety was sought for families after being exposed to the televised pictures of those people in Rwanda and Zaire suffering from disease and famine and the family home needed to be a safe haven.

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**spa bamboo tropical**

Recreate the colours with Resene Citrus and Resene Fiji Green.



**lime spirulina chartreuse**

Recreate the colours with Resene Fuego and Resene Lime.



**water cool tranquil**

Recreate the colours with Resene Scandal and Resene Toto.



**minimal simplicity cool**



relaxed fashion less structure

Recreate the colours with Resene Bastille, Resene White and Resene Tussock.



blurred boundaries retro

The textile pattern on this Prada jacket is based on a Formica® design. Recreate the colours with Resene Red Devil, Resene Digeridoo, Resene Kaitoke Green and Resene Nero.



mobility flexibility

- Rollerblades
- Baby buggies for parents on the run
- Furniture on wheels
- Hot-desking

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### eastern influence

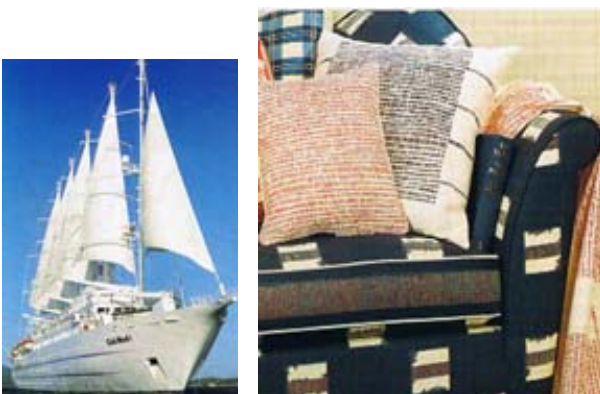
In the middle of the decade the economy was brighter and our eyes turned eastward as Hong Kong was handed over to the Chinese in 1997. Colour palettes expanded to include more exotic rich reds, purples and animal prints

Recreate the colours with **Resene Zibibbo** and **Resene Wicked**.



### ochre burnished

Denim jeans and black shirt became the new "business suit".  
Recreate the colours with **Resene Papier Mache** and **Resene Castro**.



### nautical influence

When Team New Zealand won the America's Cup, there was an acknowledgement in interior design incorporating nautical themes and hues.

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## kitchens and family living

Lighter timbers and more streamlined cabinetry became preferred in kitchens and family rooms



## typical residences

Safe colour combinations of grey and white or brown and cream dominated towards the end of the 1990s. Try Resene Jimmy Dean, Resene Pearl Lusta and Resene Cigar.



## natural neutral beige

Recreate the natural look with Resene Drought and Resene Akaroa.



## cream charcoal parchment

Luxury and comfort of cushions and quilts, contrasted by an un-upholstered timber chair and paper lamp illustrates the paradox of decorating.

# Resene

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### **ecology recycle ergonomic**

People in the 90s were concerned with damage inflicted on the planet by mass industrialisation. If the hole in the ozone layer was permitted to grow, rising temperatures would have major effects and controls were imposed on aerosols and refrigerants that contained CFC's. Fossil fuels and depletion of raw materials became of paramount concern. Solar and electric cars were developed and paper was recycled to save the forests.

As well as using recycled materials in manufacture, designers also created more energy-efficient products that could be repaired, and not dumped into landfills. Excessive packaging was limited and in the computer industry the trend was to upgrade components of a machine, rather than replace the entire machine, as new technology was released.



### **global communications**

The internet and information technology advances of the 1990s had a huge impact on the way we live, work, study and communicate. From a computer in the home-office one could access information from universities, museums, libraries and industries around the world at the push of a button.

Large offices were no longer required, people began to work from home or out of their vehicle with a laptop and cellphone. Hot-desks where anyone could plug in computers and phones grew in popularity. Salespeople on the road who only needed an hour or two a day in the office found they no longer had a designated space or desk.

Distance learning increased in popularity, students could access "virtual classrooms" and study at home, or part-time while working as well. Assignments could be produced on computers and emailed to the tutor for assessment.

With emails and cellphones it became easy to communicate with anyone in the world, cost effectively and instantly. This global access sped up the exchange of ideas and designs and cultures became infused into fashion and cuisine.





global village global textiles



fusion of cultures materials



### sheen shine metallic

As the decade drew to a close, the dotcoms began to crumble and the millennium bug threatened. People were feeling the need to slow down and escape from the fast pace of life. This desire for more simplicity resulted in paring down of colours to pale creams, neutral beige and calming grey.

These colours were highlighted with sheens and metallics as the new century approached and we anticipated life in the next millennium.

Pearlised textiles, glazed tiles, polished concrete, stainless steel kitchens became common.



### sheer voile translucent

Translucency emerged as a decorating trend - see through and veiled - the layered effect - questioning the boundaries...



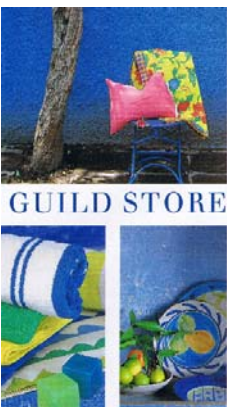
### glossy reflective

As the new millennium drew near it was a time to reflect on the past and think about the future. This bathroom reinforces "less is more" with an emphasis on relaxed living for the multi-generational family it was designed for. Translucent and laminated glass echo the cool watery tones of the milky aqua tiles.



### innovative architecture

Homes designed by Pete Bossley (above) and Pip Cheshire (right)... showcase new directions, new horizons.



### interactive design + colour



Interactive displays at the Antarctic Encounter, designed by Logan Brewer, offer viewers a journey to one of the harshest environments on earth. The Encounter operates at 7 degrees below zero, and recreates the spectacular light conditions in Antarctica.

The same year we see similar colours appearing in Tricia Guild's collection of homewares. Recreate the colours with Resene Torea Bay, Resene Scooter and Resene Tree Frog.

## key colour influences

- War in the middle east -> sandy beige, chalky white, pale olive
- New diseases, viral infection, illness -> white, pale aqua or blue
- Global communications -> bright orange, red, yellow, green, blue
- Grunge (protest against consumerism) -> black, black and black
- Retro modernism (outlook in a time of crisis) -> dark brown, pea green
- Technology -> silver, pewter, bronze, copper, aluminium, platinum
- Space research -> mineral and crystalised effects in paint finishes
- Oriental countries -> rich reds, purples, gold and black
- Zen style -> black, white, brown, beige, grey
- New millennium -> reflective and metallic colours and materials

## key colours of the 1990s

- Whites and cool tints - Resene Soapstone, Resene Cut Glass, Resene Designer White, Resene Jet Stream
- Cream and beige - Resene Spanish White, Resene Pearl Lusta, Resene Drought, Resene Akaroa.
- Retro and global - Resene Red Devil, Resene Digeridoo, Resene Papier Mache, Resene Curious Blue, Resene Tangerine.
- Ecology greens - Resene Fiji Green, Resene Fuego, Resene Lima, Resene Tree Frog, Resene Kaitoke Green
- Metallics and effects - Resene Alloy, Resene Basalt, Resene Sputnik, Resene Proton, Resene Spark

## references

- Colourwaves - research and compilation of this ColourWise News
- New Zealand Home & Building 1990-1999 (AGM Publishing)
- The Look of the Century (Michael Tambini)
- Events That Changed the World (Peter Murray)
- 40 Years of Colour by Pantone (Leatrice Eisman)
- *Our acknowledgement of the designers and photographers who contributed to articles featured in the NZ Home & Building magazines published by AGM during the 1990s.*