

Mexican style design & colour



history and evolution

First settlements in Mexico have been traced back to 5000 BC. The ancient empires of the Maya and Aztec flourished for centuries before the Spanish invaded Mexico in 1519, lured by the legends of hoards of gold and silver. Mexico gained independence in 1810 after 300 years of Spanish rule.

Today most Mexicans are Mestizo, a mix of Spanish and Native American/Indian, and although Spanish is the official language, Native American languages such as Maya are also widely spoken.

The remains of Mayan and Aztec cities are found all over Mexico, and Mexico City is built on the ruins of the Aztec capital. The stylistic elements, symbolism and icons of ancient Mexico are seen today in architecture, jewellery, ceramics, art and sculpture.



climate and culture

Mexico consists of 31 states, which includes desert, rainforest, volcanoes, jungle, canyons, tablelands, striking coastlines and great mountain ranges. Mexico is so mountainous and arid in parts that only 15% of the land is fit for growing crops.

While the plateau and mountains are warm for most of the year, the coast on the Pacific Ocean has a tropical climate.

Since ancient times the people of Mexico have delighted in the natural world and drawn spiritual inspiration from it. They worshipped the sun, moon and rain as gods.

Mexico is home to more than 25,000 species of plants, from desert cacti to tropical palms along the coastline, and numerous fragranced flowers such as jasmine, honeysuckle and frangipani.



landscape design

Outdoor living and dining has always been a way of life in Mexico - courtyards, open-air living rooms, loggias, pools, fountains and stairways - all cloistered behind high walls where family and friends gather to feast, celebrate or just have cool refuge from the mid-day heat.

Mexican gardens are designed to be lived in rather than impress the neighbours, they are a private oasis in the midst of urban commotion. Contemporary Mexican architecture and design is characterised by minimalist aesthetics - sculptural use of cement combined with a palette of reds, pinks, yellow ochre and radiant blues. Mexican craftsmen and artisans let their imagination run wild in patios and gardens.

Resene

the paint the professionals use

Pathways, stairways, pools and fountains are mosaic masterpieces. Walls are works of art in themselves and decorated with ceramics, religious crosses and symbolism, masks, candles, gourds and climbing vines.

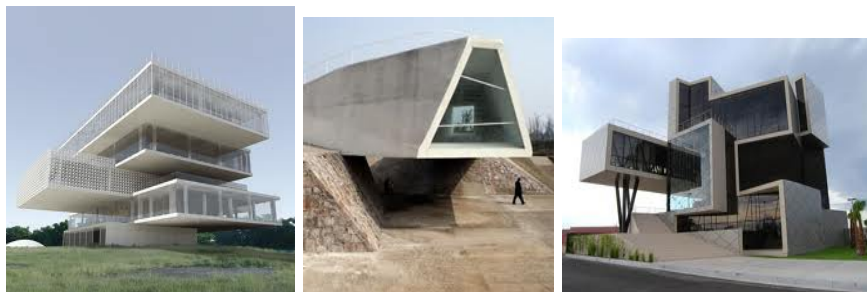


architecture

Architecture is bound up with identity, the design of the buildings acts like a mirror reflecting the values and aspirations of the people - the outward face of society. Adobe mixes with stone, Moorish arches, decorative images of the Virgin of Guadalupe, Indian motifs and colours, Spanish columns, haciendas - an amalgamation of old and new.

In Mexican architecture the defining features are the courtyard, the wall and the use of colour - even today's architects continue to inject bright and colourful accents into modern homes. The 'wall' keeps things out (people, animals, dust) and keeps things in (possessions, secrets, pets, children).

It divides but it doesn't conquer, it is the barrier between public and private space. The wall may be made of adobe (mud and straw), stone, brick or wood, often covered with a layer of cement. Traditionally exterior surfaces are painted with a lime whitewash mixed with colour. This effect can be achieved using Resene Paint Effects Medium.



modern architecture

These are examples of new buildings which have drawn from elements of the past to create a link to Mexican history. The top row show the relationship with traditional

Mexican colours, while the lower buildings are have shed the ornamentation and are more austere monumentality of pre-Hispanic temples and cities.



interior design

An exotic mix of cultural influences and a palette of sun-drenched colours combined with textured finishes, rusted steel, weathered timber and stone. Spatial illusions are created by passageways with lower ceilings leading into rooms with very high walls - the sheer extravagance of light, space and colour.

Mexican tiles have become known for their vivid hues and captivating geometric and floral patterns. Silver and gold have been part of Mexico's craft tradition since ancient times, gold leaf decoration is often a focal point of an artwork today.



interior spaces

The strong colours of the exteriors are carried through to the interiors - cactus green, cochineal pink, sunflower yellow, spicy orange, rusty brown, indigo blue and sea green. The walls are often plastered so the paint finish is textured or lime-washed to reflect an aged appearance. Resene has a number of suitable products to achieve texture and special effects.

The ceilings often have rustic timber beams fully exposed, and floors are finished with terracotta or ceramic tiles. Heavy timber doors and furniture may be carved or painted with patterns and motifs, seating is often upholstered in leather.



interior styling

This is achieved through the careful selection of decorating accessories and the mixture of materials and textures. It is about displays, utilising shelves, tables, mantelpieces and the walls to create areas of focal interest.

Again colour is vital, Hispanic hand-painted wall tiles, wooden masks and animals brightly painted, multi-coloured textiles and baskets, highly decorative ceramics and artworks.



arts + crafts

Other styling objects include aged wooden furniture with black iron hinges and handles, hand tooled leather furniture, ceramics and artworks depicting symbols of Mexican folk art and religion.



textiles

Cotton and wool textiles were traditionally hand woven and coloured from fruits, flowers, insects, leaves and bark - all serving as dyes. Folk Art stores in Mexico and throughout the world continue to offer traditional Mexican textiles to discerning shoppers.

Both homewares and clothing are often intricately embellished with embroidery in bright colours and patterns.



cooking

It is important to understand the culture and preferences when it comes to kitchens and items used/stored for food preparation and cooking. Mexican cooking delicacies from every region now share the menu with taco, enchilada and tamale in restaurants around the globe.

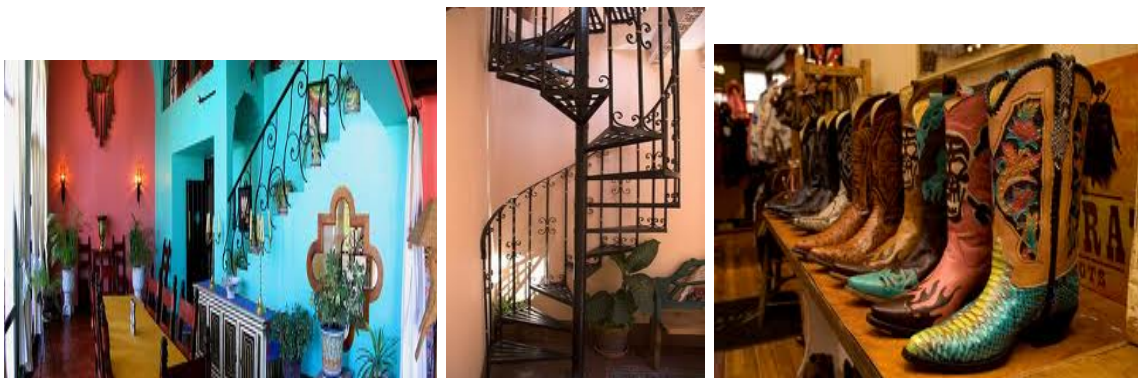
The Mexican kitchen is a creative site, repository of magic and lore. Fresh food is collected from the markets and stored or in woven baskets, clay pots, wooden bowls, ceramic platters or tin canisters.

Many kitchens are tiled, both on floors and walls. The outdoor kitchen to the right is very popular.



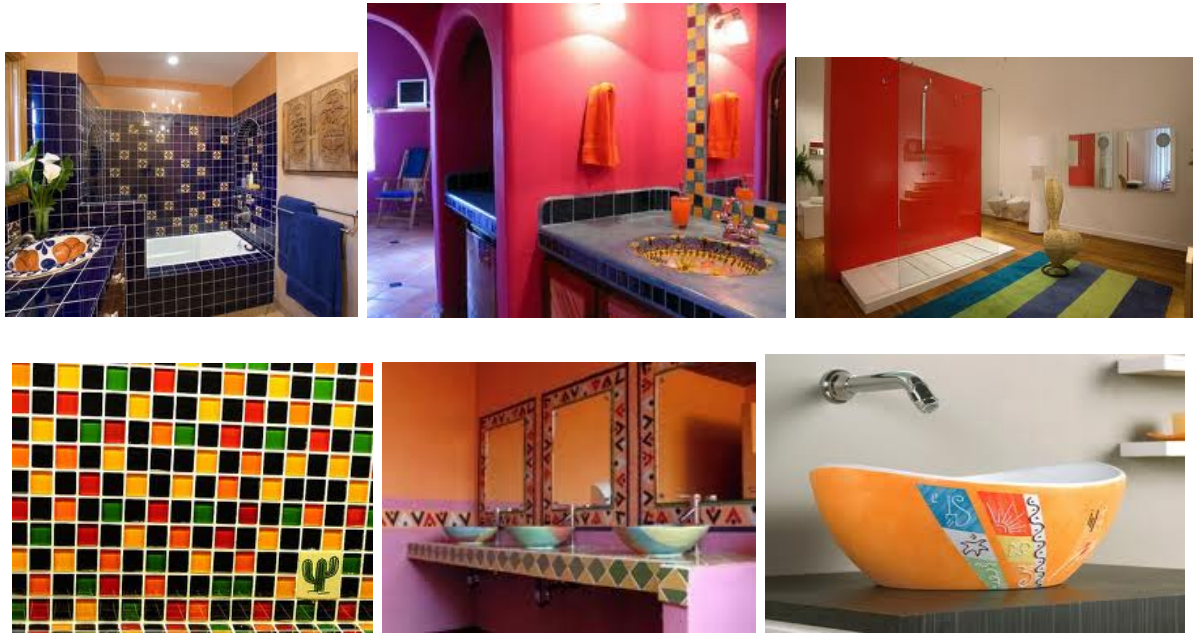
sleeping

Bedrooms are a place of rest, but also a room that can be successfully themed in Mexican style with the selection of colour, textiles, accessories and furniture. Pine furniture is rustic and often embellished with black iron hinges, drawer pulls and decoration. Bed linen sets the scene with woven fabrics in stripes or Aztec designs. Decorative mirrors or wall hangings add a touch of interest, and painted wooden dolls, masks, animals and beads add excitement.



displays

Their use in furnishing rooms creates drama, style and conversation. Note the link between the two rooms and the Mexican jewellery, leatherwork, fashion and furniture.



bathing

The wonderful range of ceramic tiles and vessels make bathrooms exciting and colourful spaces. Tile work is seen in public buildings as well as homes - exteriors, stairways, patios and kitchens as well as most bathrooms. Blue and white tiles originally predominated, but now many colours and patterns are applied to the bright, decorative tiles, some still painted by hand today by Mexican artisans.



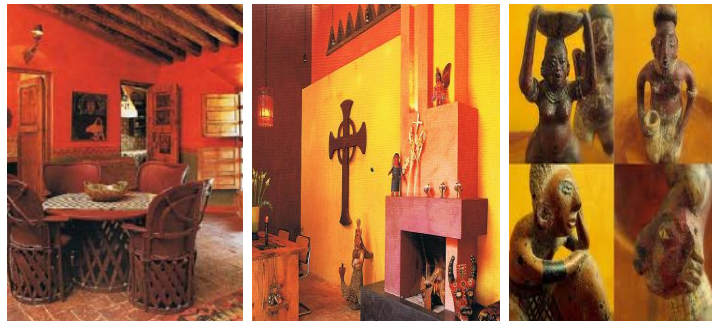
colour

Mexico is a site of artistic and spiritual renewal for visitors from every corner of the world. The vibrant colours at the markets of ceramics, lacquer ware, baskets, textiles, metal, glass, wood and jewellery are intoxicating and uplifting.

Brightly painted exterior walls, vibrant coloured front doors, colourful tiled paths and stairways greet visitors before they even enter a home or building. Playful colour-drenched rooms echo the artisans handcrafts, enriched with painted ceramics and hand-woven fabrics. The full colour palette is unleashed in Mexico - clothing, food, flowers and charms.



Mexican architects and designers are not afraid to use strong colour on exterior surfaces. Note the stairwell below, the pink lime-washed wall and each stair riser is painted a different colour. A sense of entry is achieved with colour in both of the other illustrations, blocks of pink and yellow, or green, red, yellow and blue.



The colours of these two rooms are a little more mellow with the use of various reds, oranges and yellow oxides combined with brown. They are warm and inviting, traditional and modern at the same time. Terracotta tiles, aged timber beams, leather furniture, painted wooden animals, pottery sculptures and Mexican artworks on display to create this very distinctive theme.



Colour Summary

Chilly Red, Cochineal Pink, Sunflower Yellow, Indigo, Strong Blue, Terracotta Orange, Cactus Green, Turquoise.

Resene References

Resene Jalapeno, Resene Rouge, Resene Lemoncello, Resene Adventure
Resene Cobalt, Resene Tango, Resene Dell, Resene Calypso

compiled by Colourwaves - Jill Carroll

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