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WITH BOSSY COLOR'S **Annie Elliot**

Ditch the white walls and try robin's egg blue



Annie Elliot, a Washington, D.C.-based interior decorator, shares designing wisdom (and wit) on her website, bossycolor.com. USA TODAY's **Christine Neff** spoke with Elliott about the colors that are trending now (greige, anyone?) and how to make them work for you.

WHERE DID THE NAME BOSSY COLOR COME FROM?

I was about a year into my design business, and I told my brother that I thought it was time to do a website. Without missing a beat, he said, "What's the address going to be: www.bossycolor dot-com?" It was so hilarious, I had to use it.



HOW IMPORTANT IS ROOM COLOR TO A GOOD DESIGN?

It's critical. The right wall color can make or break a room. A powerful color will make a statement, of course, but even neutrals need to be chosen carefully. Say we're selecting a gray, which is my favorite neutral right now. Do we want a cool gray with blue undertones? A greenish, earthy gray? A sophisticated warm gray with brown undertones? Greige? I laugh when a client says, "Let's just paint this room white." Well, which white? I bring out my fan decks and start talking about warm versus cool, and people either get really excited or glaze over. Either way, I'm there to help.

WHAT COMBINATIONS AND COLORS ARE TRENDING?

Finally we're trending toward vibrant, rich colors such as robin's egg blue (which is richer than the light aqua of summer), grassy green, dark yellow, and deep pink. Lavender and aubergine are popping up more also. Pair them with grays and crisp whites to keep them fresh. Staying neutral on walls and adding shots of color with furniture, rugs, and lamps is a great look. We're still seeing a lot of green, chartreuse, and red accents, all of which look terrific with gray and white.

If you're bold enough to use one of these vibrant colors on your walls, consider painting the built-in bookcases black. It's such a sophisticated look, and black looks fantastic against these rich wall colors.

Don't be a slave to color

trends, though. Think about what colors you love, and there's bound to be a shade or tint that looks modern. Take green, for example. In the 1990s, sage was the rage, but then green became more yellow, moving to kiwi and avocado. And now we're moving to bluer, grassier greens.

DO CERTAIN COLORS WORK BEST IN PARTICULAR LIVING SPACES?

Dining rooms always are a great place to try bold colors, so if you love the rich colors we're seeing now, try one there. It adds glamour to an already special room. I think warm grays are super sophisticated in living rooms—so much more current than beige.

Use blue in dining rooms. Medium warm blues, even peacock blues, have been my choice for dining rooms recently. They look terrific with red-based oriental rugs, if you happen to be working with one.

Don't be afraid to use those richer colors in bedrooms, either. A pale green bedroom is pretty, but a chocolate brown one is heavenly.

WHAT SHOULD A HOMEOWNER DO WHEN CONSIDERING CHANGING A ROOM COLOR?

First, think about what you're working with. Are you committed to working with your grandmother's rug? A certain painting? Try to think about them in a new context; you can manipulate them with wall color.

You may have crazy blue and green drapes that dominate the room when the

walls are off-white. But if you pair them with a color that stands up to them such as orange, the drapes will become one element in the room rather than the focal point.

Second, test! There is no substitute for buying a can of paint and getting the color onto your wall. Create a faux canvas by painting a huge swath of white primer first, and then paint your samples on top of that.

BOLD PAINT COLORS OFTEN CAN BE INTIMIDATING. WHAT WOULD YOU SAY TO A CLIENT WHO MAY BE RESISTANT TO A BRIGHT CHANGE?

It's only paint. Seriously, paint is the easiest, most cost-effective way to have a big impact on a room. Take a deep breath, test the color you've had a crush on, and then go for it. No guts, no glory.

Also, remember the ceiling. That's a great place to incorporate a bold color without a big commitment. One of my daughters wanted to paint her bedroom blue. A deep blue would have made the small room feel like a cave, but light gray-blue was too cold for this north-facing space. The solution: light aqua walls and an orange ceiling.

Bold wall colors aren't for everyone: If bright colors make your teeth hurt, a softer color can still affect a big change. Choose a color from the top notches on your paint sample card and give it a try. The worst that will happen is that a week later you have another painting party. So what? It's decorating, not politics. It should be fun. ■