

What does it take to choose a “Colour of the Year”?

Every year, we hear about trending colours, and if you do a Google search, there are thousands of results.

CKCA Vice-President Heidi Boudreault from [Denca](#), based in Calgary, spoke with [AkzoNobel's](#) Bob Averett, Global Colour Design Manager, and Rob Haley, Colour Trends Manager, to ask the questions that get to the heart of how colours are chosen and what influences those choices.



CKCA: When we Google “colour of the year,” we get thousands of results. What makes your Color selection different from the others?

AkzoNobel: For one, we work with customers to bring trends in wood to them. In addition, every year, we invite top designer specialists from a variety of industries – including architecture, automotive, fashion runways, and aerospace, to name a few – to our AkzoNobel Global Aesthetics Center in the Netherlands. All of these experts are making colour choices and decisions from a global aspect across various industries – so it’s not just about looking at interior colour, it’s also about looking at it from a global perspective. Out of this meeting in 2019, we determined an overarching theme that our world has become so digitized, and has so much CGI, that the overwhelming question becomes - “what makes us human?”



From that, we honed-in on four main emotions – Play, Care, Meaning and Creativity – and translated these into colour palettes. The 2020 Colour of the Year for AkzoNobel is Tranquil Dawn, but within each of the human emotions, there is also a colour palette. AkzoNobel creates finishes for wood that way. We go through this exercise every year. We invite people who are from different cultures and industries in order to make it as objective as possible.

One thing we particularly want to mention is the major emphasis we put on our Color Studio. Our highly trained technical service team works closely with our Color Studio to ensure our finishes are robust and can be industrialized across the globe.

CKCA: Should we trust the colour forecasts or simply choose what we feel is right for us?

AkzoNobel: Both. Do what feels right. Information comes to the consumer so quickly – you no longer have to travel, you can see everything you want from your computer instantaneously. We have the ability to see the exact same information at the same time. Consumers no longer have to go to places such as Paris, New Orleans, and Toronto to see different products.

We suggest choosing the colour that makes you happy. Our four colour palettes for 2020 have nine colours in each palette – so 36 colours in total. From those, you’ll find a lifestyle colour that works for you. When we do a colour features presentation, we don’t have to be forced into any one colour, we can choose from within the family of colours we’ve created.

CKCA: How does the rapid change in technology with people having immediate access to colour images using internet and smartphones affect colour trends?

AkzoNobel: It absolutely impacts colour trends. We pay attention to colour, lifestyle and culture. We are on Pinterest, Instagram, and other popular social sites, looking at the available information. We see themes repeated and things synchronized, such as the “grey craze” that started in 2010 and is still continuing. We also look at the colour application. On wood, for example, we’re able to create a dry wire

brush look and can see how we can work this in or within the trending colours palette. We look at things knowing that not every trend will suit every lifestyle. There are different colour palettes for different designs.

CKCA: When conducting your research, how do colours of the year get picked with so many diverse demographics ranging in lifestyle and the way people express their diverse personalities using colour?

AkzoNobel: We consider longevity choices. Customers that come in have an idea of what they want to do. They understand what they want, such as furniture, and then AkzoNobel knows what colours are working in the marketplace. The customer relies on AkzoNobel to steer them in the right direction. We know what works in retail and what doesn't. When AkzoNobel works with kitchen cabinet or flooring professionals, we realize it's a once-in-a-life-time purchase or a long-term purchase, given the costs, so colour can't go out of style too quickly. We look at what's in style now and what's going to work in ten years.

CKCA: Where are your finishing products manufactured? What countries?

AkzoNobel: We manufacture globally, including in North America, South America, Europe and Asia.

CKCA: Are you continuing to do more with environmental pressures to make your paint process better?

AkzoNobel: Sustainability is a huge focus for us at AkzoNobel, and we manufacture several water-based wood finishes. In flooring products, for example, water and UV work very well together. Water-based stains will "open up" the wood, allowing a better mechanical bond with a UV sealer or topcoat. It allows our customers to create on-trend products with durability. We are already seeing an increase in demand for water-based coatings. In fact, we have seen a movement recently of customers who don't have to make changes to water-based products but choose to do so.

CKCA: Are water-based products as durable?

AkzoNobel: There has been amazing work done with water-based materials. Our recent water-based stains have been tested and are just as durable as solvent-based. An example is our PurTone product, which is a grain-enhancing stain finish that allows us to provide a "glazed" look without the labour of wiping.