

Paint the town *red*

Fashion brings fiery hues back to the forefront of architectural and interior design.

While not every hue seen on the runway makes ripples in other design industries, popular fashion colours do have a strong tendency to trickle down into architecture and interior design – and this has certainly been the case with the recent resurgence of red.

Red has long been considered a classic colour in the design of buildings, furniture and décor, but the recent prevalence of red in haute couture collections and celebrity fashion statements has sparked renewed interest in the hue. Designers and homeowners alike are drawn to red's boldness and versatility, seeking to infuse spaces with a sense of glamour, drama and modernity. Whether featured as a statement wall, on furniture, in artwork or accents, a lick of red adds an instant touch of sophistication and flair to the spaces where it's used, echoing the eye-catching impact it has in high-fashion ensembles.

In colour psychology, red elicits a broad spectrum of emotions. Often fiery and bold, the hue evokes passion, energy and urgency. When you ask someone what images red conjures up for them, they might picture roses, blood or scenes of revolution. The hue can signify heat, anger, danger, aggression, intensity, sacrifice, courage, love or joy. Red has also been shown to stimulate the appetite, making it a popular choice in the design of restaurants, dining spaces and food branding.

right: Rich red upholstery and carpeting – a glamorous choice frequently seen in theatre design – is further enhanced by deep purple red walls in Resene Rustic Red. This combo creates a dramatic, sophisticated ambience in the Sir Howard Morrison Centre in Rotorua. This project was recognised with a Resene Total Colour Commercial Interior Public + Retail Colour Maestro Award for exceptional colour use. Design by Shand Shelton, www.shandshelton.co.nz, and First Light Studio, www.firstlightstudio.co.nz. Build by Hawkins, www.hawkins.co.nz. Painting by Holmac New Zealand Ltd, www.holmacnzltd.co.nz. Image by Matt Hunt.



far left: Whitewashed timber flooring provides a clean and crisp contrast to walls in clear bright reds, enhancing their vibrancy, while blush pink accents give the palette a delicate and romantic touch. Walls and archway painted in Resene Aroha, floor finished in Resene Colorwood Breathe Easy and stool base in Resene Inspire. Mirror from Mocka, rug from Baya, sconce from Kmart, jewellery box from H&M Home. Project by Amber Armitage, image by Wendy Fenwick.



above: Red ranges in tone from brilliant scarlet and orange-hued vermilion through to blue-edged crimson and varies in depth from pale red pink through to dark burgundy. Each variation offers its own opportunities for changing the mood of a space. Using larger quantities of red over expansive surfaces, such as walls, will intensify the hue's effect. Wall painted in Resene Whizz Bang, pendant lamp in Resene Tequila Sunrise and vase in Resene Quarter Merino. Chairs from Danske Møbler. Project by Amber Armitage, image by Wendy Fenwick.

left: For Māori, the colour red represents many things – including Te Whei Ao (the realm of Coming into Being) and Papatūānuku (the Earth Mother, sustainer of all living things). Resene Lusty and Resene Red Oxide were chosen for Te Pou Theatre at Corban Estate Arts Centre in Auckland by artist Mokonui-a-rangi Smith, who designed and painted the whakapakoko poupou (wall panel artwork). Balcony walls painted in Resene Blue Night and ceiling and bulkheads in Resene Black. Project design by Burgess Treep & Knight Architects, www.burgessandtreep.com. Build by Chain Construction, www.chainconstruction.co.nz. Painting by Johnson Contractors, www.johnsoncontractors.co.nz. Image by Emilio Garcia.



- Resene Quarter Merino
- Resene Colorwood Breathe Easy
- Resene Creme De La Creme
- Resene Inspire
- Resene Tequila Sunrise
- Resene Karaka
- Resene Blue Night
- Resene Black



above: Higher sheen finishes can make bold reds even more eye-catching because the gloss level reflects more light back at the viewer. This host desk in Resene Lustacryl semi-gloss waterborne enamel tinted to Resene Nelson Red acts as a beacon to greet guests when they enter Bivacco, a restaurant in Auckland. Walls painted in Resene Creme De La Creme and ceiling in Resene Karaka. Design by Izzard Design, www.izzard.co.nz. Build by Envoy Construction, www.envoyconstruction.co.nz. Image by Jono Parker, www.jonoparker.com.

below: Fashion has propelled red back to the forefront of contemporary aesthetics, reshaping the way our built spaces are conceived and adorned. Exterior timber cladding stained in Resene Woodsman Whero. Design by Cook Sargisson Pirie & Williams Architects, www.cooksargisson.co.nz. Build by Ziegler Builders Ltd.



The colour red has a rich history of cultural significance that's entrenched in artistic innovation and emotional resonance. The hue's enduring allure and dynamic symbolism across millennia and civilisations has cemented its place as a colour of profound importance and influence throughout human history. Its use stretches all the way back to prehistoric times when early humans discovered ways to extract red pigment from natural sources like iron oxide, hematite and ochre. These pigments, blended with other elements, served as the foundation for the red paints used in some of the world's earliest cave paintings – so it's likely the first colour humans ever decorated with.

In ancient civilisations, red pigment made from cinnabar (mercury sulfide) adorned the walls of luxurious villas, representing wealth and status. Ancient Egyptians and Mayans are said to have coloured their faces red for ceremonies while Roman generals had their bodies coloured with red to celebrate victories. Red has long been an important colour in many indigenous cultures and Eastern nations, too. It was used to colour early pottery in China and later for the gates and walls of palaces as a symbol of good fortune, happiness, celebration, life and vitality.

Cochineal and kermes insects, which yield a brilliant crimson when crushed, have been used for thousands of years to dye fibres and foods. Once Europeans discovered their existence, it revolutionised European art during the Renaissance – leading to the creation of iconic artworks – and was used to colour brilliant red costumes for nobles, wealthy families and Catholic Cardinals.

In 1645, the English New Model Army adopted their red military uniform – which was still worn as a dress uniform until the outbreak of the First World War in August 1914. Ordinary soldiers wore red coats dyed with duller madder while officers wore scarlet coats dyed with the more brilliant (and expensive) cochineal. This led to British soldiers being known as 'red coats'. The Industrial Revolution brought about synthetic dyes and red pigments like cadmium red, transforming the availability and vibrancy of the colour. Red continues to feature in military dress, including band and mess uniforms – including in New Zealand and Australia – which is part of the reason why many settlers in Commonwealth nations associate the colour with conflict. Since the hue contrasts sharply with most natural surroundings, it is highly effective at grabbing attention – leading to widespread use of red on signage and the colour's association with warning and prohibition.

It's easy to understand why colours that are gentle on the senses such as neutrals, pale blues and soft greens, make the leap from what we wear on our bodies to how we decorate the buildings where we live, work and play; these sorts of hues are easy and relaxing to spend time around. But when a vibrant colour that evokes a strong emotional response begins influencing architecture and interior design trends, it can be intimidating to use. However, you'll find that today's popular red paint colours like Resene Pioneer Red, Resene Thunderbird, Resene Roadster, Resene Aroha and Resene Incarnadine harmonise well with a surprising variety of different hues to create striking contrast or complementary palettes and that a little red can go a long way, as evidenced in the 'unexpected red theory' that has been recently making the rounds on social media. The theory proposes that even just a small amount of red used in virtually any space improves its overall visual appeal.

While there are surely exceptions to that rule, the underlying message that red has a unique ability to dynamically transform spaces should not be forgotten when considering what accent colours to use on your upcoming projects. **BW**

