

Pittsburgh Post-Gazette®

Pantone's 2021 colors send home a message of strength and joy



Big Chill has a bright yellow stove with gray steel accents. (Big Chill)

Temper your optimism might be the message being sent by the Pantone Color Institute in choosing cool, calm Ultimate Gray and Illuminating, an ebullient yellow, as its colors for 2021. Considering the calamities of 2020, maybe we needed two colors instead of the usual one for 2021.

“The message is fortitude and gratitude, strength and hopefulness, and resilience and positivity,” said Laurie Pressman, a Pantone vice president who was very involved in choosing the colors of the year. She said these colors “serve as an expression of mood and attitude. These colors reflect what people are looking for.”

While gray is sometimes seen as depressing, institutional and dull, Pantone has seen a shift.

“We began to see a societal shift in the perception of grays following the 2008 financial crash and when we were looking for greater stability,” Ms. Pressman said.

Think rocks, driftwood, stones and south Jersey beaches. Yellow, meanwhile, has always been a welcoming, friendly color depicting sunshine and joy. The colors work as part of a design palette that plays well with contemporary and modern looks, Ms. Pressman said.

“Gray fits just as easily with Scandinavian style as it does with mid-century vintage.”

Both styles have been popular for decades and appeal especially to millennials.

“Ultimate Gray is a mid-tone gray, so it is not heavier and ponderous like the dark charcoal gray we see in storm clouds,” said Ms. Pressman.

Pantone had noticed this color combination popping up in design and fashion throughout 2020.

“What is new is that instead of the expected strong gray statement with a yellow accent, we are seeing yellow showing up in a more dominant way with gray acting as the accent,” she said. “This was especially the case in kitchens, where we saw yellow cabinetry instead of the paint on the wall.”

Both colors can be found on appliances and kitchen gadgets.



A Big Chill retro gray wall oven with yellow knobs features both 2021 colors of the year.credit (Big Chill)

“When it comes to this move to a home office, the combination brings together a firm foundation in the gray with a yellow shade that heightens awareness and enhances intuition, lighting the way to the intellectual curiosity, originality and resourcefulness of an open mind,” Ms. Pressman said.