

Color Drenching Is the Latest Must-Try Paint Trend, According to Interior Designers

This cost-effective, vibrant technique lets homeowners put their favorite shades (and personalities!) on display.

By **Wendy Rose Gould** | Published on May 11, 2023

Creamy white walls, earthy taupes, and organic beige tones have long stood the test of time in our homes. These organic palettes aren't going anywhere soon, but a new trend—color drenching—is pressing pause on pale hues and embracing unapologetic saturation, instead.

"This trend involves painting every surface—walls, ceiling, baseboards, trim, doors—and saturating a space with a single color," says interior designer Audrey Scheck of Audrey Scheck Design. "This creates an immersive experience that has a wow factor all on its own."

Best of all, color drenching puts you in the driver's seat. You can opt for a hue that's inky and rich—like emerald green, orange, or magenta—or you can try a color with a bit less punch, such as soft blue or creamy yellow. You can even control the saturation by choosing how much and where to apply the color. Whatever route you take, the technique of applying the same hue throughout your space instantly adds depth, dimension, and visual interest.

The Appeal of Color Drenching

Interior designers have observed a notable uptick in more contemporary, maximalist aesthetics, and color drenching falls right in line with this trajectory. "After years of minimalist design dominating the landscape, people are craving personality and energy in their homes and want to experience vivid, stimulating environments," says Scheck. "There's a certain vibrancy and playfulness that this trend brings to any space instantly, injecting a room with character."

She points to other maximalist trends that lean into this all-in approach, such as mural installations, bold wallpaper, and "clustercore." Interior designer Brittney Ferguson agrees, adding that color drenching is actually a more cost effective way to get that maximalist look. "I think we are seeing this colorful trend gain momentum because it is a super inexpensive way to make a huge statement," she says. "It looks custom, thought out, and expensive. Wallpapering a dining room in a bright grasscloth could cost over \$15,000—but you can get a similar feel with color drenching."

How to Try the Color Drenching Trend in Your Own Home

Want to give color drenching a try? Here are a few expert-approved ways to get started.

Pick a Room That Deserves a Little Fun

You can dive right into this trend by tackling a living room, bedroom, or kitchen, but sometimes it's easier to start small. Color drenching a typically overlooked room—such as a laundry room, home office, or playroom—is an excellent way to have some fun with this trend without overcommitting.

"I've definitely seen examples of people color drenching powder rooms, laundry rooms, and smaller spaces," says Nicole Gibbons, a self-described "color-obsessed" interior designer and the founder of Clare. "People seem to be more comfortable using color drenching this way if they aren't quite ready to take the leap for a living room or bedroom."

Choose a Color That Really Speaks to You

There's no point in choosing a color that doesn't make you say "wow!" every time you enter the room. With that said, pick a hue that resonates with you and makes you feel good. "Select a color that you truly love, and be sure to compare it against any furniture and décor that will exist in that space," says Scheck.

Test the Color

Narrow down your selections to a few top contenders, then test the color before you paint. Gibbons recommends using peel and stick swatches, which you can easily move around and apply to different walls; this allows you to visualize how the shade translates across various lighting conditions. You can also create actual paint swatches if that's easier.

"By testing the color in different shades of light, you get a true feel of the color in your home and can be more confident in your decision," Gibbons says. "Be sure to live with the swatch for a few days at least to ensure that you're going to love what the color looks like."

Try Color Drenching in Small Doses

This trend isn't for the faint of heart, so if you're feeling a bit intimidated, that's okay. Starting with a small room is a great way to dip into the color-drenched waters. You can also toy with the trend by incorporating the same bold hue in a few key spots around the room.

"Start by painting just the walls and ceiling with your chosen color—and then take it up a notch by infusing the remainder of the room with it if you're happy with your color selection," Scheck says. , You could also try painting the walls and trim the same hue, then working in accent colors via drapery and furniture, says Bethany Adams of Bethany Adams Interiors.

Incorporate Different Shades of the Same Color

You can go a few different routes when it comes to color drenching. One option is to use the same color throughout the space, including the floors, ceiling, trim, and even furniture. This has a beautiful and surprisingly soothing effect. Another approach is to incorporate different shades within the same color family, which creates a rich, layered look. "Even with three or more hues, you'll never feel overwhelmed by color. Think a cobalt blue sofa with baby blue walls and a navy ottoman and draperies," Adams says.

If you go this route, try to follow the 60-30-10 rule, says Kristin Marino, an interior designer and founder of KozyKasa. Paint 60 percent of the room the dominant color, 30 percent the secondary color, and then 10 percent a contrasting accent color. This provides a sense of balance and contrast, Marino says. "It's also helpful for people new to color drenching, as it introduces the idea without being too overwhelming," she adds.

Play With Paint Finishes

If you do choose the same color for the entire room, consider playing with paint finishes to create more depth and dimension. For example, Ferguson says to paint cabinets, doors, crown molding, and baseboards in a satin or semi gloss finish and the walls in a flat finish. "Light will reflect off the glossier finish and give the room depth," she says.

To further enhance the monochromatic effect, choose furniture and décor in the same tone or color family as your chosen paint. The natural texture these pieces lend will create more dimension, as well.

Avoid Too Many Patterns

The point of color drenching is to make a single hue—or color family—the star of the show. In its own right, it's bold. With that in mind, Adams recommends simplifying everything else in the room and avoiding noisy patterns. "Color drenching works best without a lot of pattern to break up the fields of color," she says. "Resist the urge to pile a sofa with patterned pillows and you'll be surprised at how much more relaxing your living room will seem."