



Interiors



Eleanor Flegg with the best in design and decoration for your home



A dining room painted in Dulux Denim Drift, the company's colour of the year

They say that denim goes with everything – and that holds true for interiors too. Try wall-to-wall blue

According to the Irish Mammy School of Decoration, you should never use blue as a wall colour. It makes a room look cold. You

should never use green either, because it makes the inhabitants look queasy. And, whatever you do, don't put those two colours together. Blue and green should never be seen – without a colour in between!

Because blue and green sit next to each other on the colour wheel (just like red and purple), it means that they can clash horribly. Remember some of those Aer Lingus cabin crew uniforms? I was often warned never to wear either of these colour combinations. Of course, I didn't listen. Blue and green can look amazing – think of green leaves against a blue sky.

Slightly clashing colours add a frisson of excitement to an interiors scheme too. And yes, you can go badly wrong. But a little bit of wrongness is like adding chilli to the sauce. It livens things up. There plenty of examples

of rule-breaking in Dulux's Colour Futures selection for 2017.

Colour Futures is a palette of trends in paint and, as always, I'm beguiled by the paint companies' use of language to sell paint: "We yearn for colour that has history and meaning, that works without effort." What a pretty turn of phrase! Then I remember that I painted my home office in a weird shade of lilac because the name of the colour appealed to me (Moonlight Shadow, as far as I can remember). Now I'm living with the consequences. Annual paint trends are good fun, but you wouldn't want to take them too seriously.

My favourite of the themes in this year's Dulux Colour Futures is called New Romanticism. There's a lot of blue and green in that one. The colours seem a little edgy together – like a sparky relationship – but they look

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pretty good paired up. One of the reasons the combination works is that the blue in question is the kind of blue that goes with everything. It's Dulux's colour of the year — Denim Drift — a pale grey-blue that you'd associate with an old pair of jeans. Denim goes with everything too. That's the guiding principle behind the colour palette. The look is based on building up layers and layers of different shades of blue, from Cobalt Night (almost navy) through Marine Waters and Indigo Shade, to Woad Walk and Cornflower Bunch, to the (almost lilac) Blue Incense.

It doesn't look cold at all. According to Marianne Shillingford, creative director of Dulux, the reason blue was problematic in the past was because of the way that it looked under artificial light. "Old-fashioned lighting



never did anything for blue," she says. "It turned blue to green and those horrible low-energy light bulbs made blues look horrendous." In contrast, the light from warm white LEDs, which have now become standard, does wonderful things with colour. "Technology has unlocked the potential of cool colours."

What blue does superbly is create depth. To show how this can work, Dulux has provided 'before' and 'after' shots that show the same room in neutrals before it's painted in layers of blue. The white-painted rooms seem flat and dull compared with the blue ones.

Another thing that gave blue a bad name was our habit of painting ceilings white. "A white ceiling looks dreadful with blue," Shillingford says. "It makes the

room look like a surgery. White makes any cool colour look clinical and it massacres blue. It's good on the skirting, though."

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Wood, in contrast, looks gorgeous with blue. Orange sits opposite blue on the colour wheel, so they bring out the best in each other. While a blue and orange paint combination is probably more than most of us can handle, there are subtle tones of orange in natural wood. Against a blue background, they'll sing.

"Blue is a commanding colour," says Rebecca Roe, interior designer with Hedgeroe Interiors. "If it looks cold, you've got the wrong shade. I'd stay away from pale, icy blues for that reason and I don't like baby blue; it comes across as childish." She tends to build up layers of blue in soft furnishings rather than on the walls. "Irish people love smoky blues. We're trying to wean our customers onto a wider palette," Roe explains. "We use a lot of different blues. Denim is one, but we mix it with everything from smoky duck-egg blue to navy, then bring it together with a pop of burnt orange, raspberry or lime."

In a recent project, she designed a living room around the Rhoscolyn

cobalt rug (around €1,392) from the William Yeoward Indigo Collection, available from Hedgeroe, offset by one of their cushions (from €60). She's also recently combined a navy velvet sofa with midnight-blue cabinets. You'll also find accessories that co-ordinate with the Denim Drift palette in online stores, like Cuckooland, where the BabyFace rug in varsity denim stripe design costs €140, with cushions from around €20.

If you're planning to paint, the Denim Drift collection is broken down into its component colours on dulux.ie. Unlike some Dulux ranges, it isn't an off-the-shelf product, but you can have any of the colours mixed for you at any decent paint shop. A standard 5-litre tin of matt emulsion costs €64.99; a sample pot costs €2.99, or you could splash out on the slightly pricier Dulux Diamond Eggshell (€72 for a 5-litre tin), which won Best Interior Design Product 2016 at the **RIAF's** Architects' Choice Awards.

See hedgeroe.net and cuckooland.com.



Clockwise from left: Cushions from Cuckooland in a Denim Drift palette; blue-layered bunk beds; a cool, clean kitchen; a truly blue study; and (below) Dulux creative director Marianne Shillingford