

Fashion's 'It' Colors

How Runway Dresses, Cars—
Even Washer-Dryers—Turned
Shades of Blue, Brown

By SALLY BEATTY

DESIGNER Tracy Reese was flipping through a home-décor magazine last November when she was struck by an unusual sight: a bedroom awash in tones of blue and brown.

"It was such an odd choice, it made it seem super-special," says Ms. Reese, who determined then and there to include the uncommon pairing in her upcoming fashion collection for fall. "Sometimes blue can seem cold. But the brown warms it up," she adds.

When New York's twice-a-year Fashion Week kicks off today, designers from across the fashion spectrum will be pushing deep blues and rich browns as the "it" colors for fall. On Sunday, Ms. Reese is set to present romantic dresses and fitted jackets in "Prussian blue" and "cappuccino." On Wednesday, Lela Rose will show fitted brown jackets and "peacock blue" skirts. And on Thursday, Peter Som will show "Vermeer blue" dresses and "chocolate brown" coats and skirts.

How much of the fashion industry simultaneously decides on the same color message is a mysterious process, baffling to those outside the trade. Ask designers where their color choices come from and most will cite individual artistic inspirations.

Designer Nanette Lepore, for example, says the peacock blues she is set to present in her collection Tuesday were inspired by her vacations on Italy's Amalfi coast. "It's in my psyche," she says. Peter Som says Johannes Vermeer, whose painting "Girl with a Pearl Earring" was the subject of a novel and then a 2003 movie, inspired his blue dresses for fall.

But behind the scenes, the process of choosing seasonal colors is more calculated than it appears. One of the key players in the game is Pantone Inc., the big color-standards company. Today, it plans to unveil its closely watched forecast, a 40-page spiral-bound book ranking the top 10 fashion colors for fall 2005. No. 1 on the list: Moroccan Blue. No. 2: Glazed Ginger.

Blue and brown's journey to the top began about five years ago, when the colors were two of several dozen that Pantone was monitoring for its design clients. Pantone, based in Carlstadt, N.J., scours magazines, advertising, movies and other facets of pop culture for color cues; it surveys art exhibits and socio-economic trends, and even considers the

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Clockwise from top: Blue dress from Tracy Reese; blue-and-brown print dress from Tamsen; full blue skirt and light-brown jacket from Lela Rose; multicolored dress with full skirt from Betsey Johnson.

How Colors Run

Before the fashion world embraced blue and brown for Fall 2005, hints of the combination were lurking in designers' collective unconscious.



Designer Tracy Reese says seeing this bed in Elle Décor magazine (detail above) helped inspire her Fall 2005 collection.



New KitchenAid Accolade mixer in Willow Blue (\$139.99, available Fall 2005)



At the 2005 Golden Globe Awards: brunette Charlize Theron (left), wearing Christian Dior in blue; Marcia Cross from 'Desperate Housewives' in chocolate velvet by Richard Tyler.



Oceanside Glasstile, a Carlsbad, Calif., company founded in 1992, uses recycled glass and raw sand to make shimmering, blue-brown mosaic tiles.



Kenmore's new Elite HE4t washers and dryers in Pacific Blue, Champagne and Sedona.



Gourmet silk-screened chocolates from MarieBelle New York, founded in 2000, pictured with the company's signature box.

2000/MILLENNIUM

Cerulean Blue
15-4020 TPX

FALL/2001

Fuchsia Rose
17-2031 TPX

SPRING/2002

Sunburn
16-1429 TPX

FALL/2002

Tibetan Red
19-1934 TPX

Hues on First

Color can reflect or lift the nation's mood, and (retailers hope) put consumers in a mood to spend. Twice a year, Pantone Inc. issues a widely-followed report forecasting the hot color for the season, with proprietary number codes. In turn, that influences designers of everything from electronics and housewares to cars and fashion.

Turquoise jewelry from Ralph Lauren's runway show last spring helped make turquoise a hot color in stores now.



WireImage

SPRING/2003
Aqua Sky
14-4811 TPX

FALL/2003
Polignac
16-1712 TPX

SPRING/2004
Tiger Lily
17-1456 TPX

FALL/2004
Fennel Seed
17-0929 TPX

SPRING/2005
Blue Turquoise
15-5217 TPX