

Gold Leaf

The style world turns over a new one and rediscovers element 79

After a generation of silver and platinum dominating the metallic spectrum, the world is awash in a golden glow. Gold is getting its turn again, a comfort to those who loved it all along and an inspiration to those who never gave it much thought.

Gold was the choice of baby boomers when they bought engagement rings and serving trays, but the metallic hue was rejected by tech-savvy, minimalist Gen Xers in favor of cooler, silvery tones. But gold is radiating everywhere today, from apparel to accessories and from intimate evenings in to festive parties out. Gold can be regal. Gold can be campy. It's so old, it's new again.

"When the pendulum swings one way, eventually it has to swing the other direction," says Jamie Thomas, women's editor for the New York-based fashion forecaster *StyleSight*.

Influences behind the turnabout are many, but the economy is a big one, say the trendspotters.

Gold symbolizes wealth, it's true, but that connection is too obvious, says Leatrice Eiseman, executive director of the Pantone Color Institute and author of *Color Messages and Meaning* (Hand Books Press, 2006).

"Gold can also be aspirational," Eiseman says. "In fashion, we're seeing more yellow, and yellow is a sign of hope and optimism. Gold is a gilded form of yellow."

The Pantone Color Institute named "mimosa yellow" as the 2009 Color of the Year.

By Pamela Dittmer McKuen

"It stands to reason that if you're using more yellow, you want a warm metallic to set it off," said Eiseman. "Silver and yellow are not that great a combination."

Another reflection of these uncertain times is that gold appointments are mostly subtle. The bling is toned down. Jewelry is delicate—it might be layered, but the strands and strings are refined. Fabric, paint and gloss are flecked rather than flashy.

Other influences, notes Thomas, include a movement toward dressier fashion, renewed interest in ancient Egypt, pirates of the Caribbean and their bounteous booty and all things 1980s, a time when women wore long gold chains and big hoop earrings.

"There also is a military influence with epaulettes and buttons and all those ornamental details because we've been at war," Thomas says.

Gold's biggest attraction is its versatility. It's equally precious on a catwalk or in a car pool. It reinvents classic looks and launches



Sperry Top-Siders boat shoe in gold

futuristic ones. Take Sperry Top-Sider's boat shoe, a tradition if there ever was one, and its wedge-heel rendition. They're making waves in gold metallic leather. Hublot does its iconic Big Bang sport watch in rose gold with peachy sapphires and an orange rubber wrist band.

On the contemporary side, Adidas Eyewear offers the new Adilibras Shield sunglasses, a sleek wraparound of gold metal and gold-mirrored lenses.

In home décor as well as fashion, gold can be an accent or the main event. It's a cocktail dress or wallpaper. It's the decorative

hardware on your handbag or the tassels on your throw pillow. Chicago interior designer Joyal E. Watkins, Jr., ASID, does it both ways. He has created color schemes with gold and its analogous relatives and used gold leaf in stenciled designs and to highlight crown moldings and doorframes.

"Most of my clients prefer gold framing on their art and personal photographs," Watkins says. "I do think the gold warms the images, especially the black-and-white photos."

"We've seen a lot of gold home ware, like candlesticks and picture frames and tufted chairs and couches with gold framing," said Thomas. "People are tired of fast furniture. The gold gives a greater feeling of authenticity."

At Hydrology, a Chicago-based purveyor of luxury bath fixtures and furniture, vice president of sales and marketing Natalie McAllister presents such wares as a 24-karat gold-plated sink by Hayon and gold-finish diamond-cut faucets by Marcel Wanders.

"Even many of our less stylized products are available in multiple finishes, including gold," McAllister says.

Gold also makes an appearance on the party circuit, where color schemes are statement-makers along with the menus and musicians. Chances are, the next wedding invitation you receive will be trimmed in gold.

"We have definitely seen a resurgence of lush, sophisticated and regal colors such as gold and champagne in everything from wedding dresses to personalized monograms to invitations to cake details," says wedding consultant Jennifer Napier of OneWed.com. "We also are seeing an uptick in gold engagement rings and wedding bands."

Still a bit unsure whether the gold streak is meant for you? Start slowly, with dual tones. Jewelry designers David Yurman and John Hardy, who in seasons past found luxury in sterling silver, have introduced gold-and-silver tandems as well as gold collections.

"Years ago, you never used cool and warm tones together," says Eiseman. "Today we see more eclecticism than ever before." □