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Gray is the new beige

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Home furnishings are taking on shades of gray this season: Deep charcoal adds drama; slate offers a cool hint of blue; subtle touches of silver enliven a bland room.

Say goodbye to beige: From walls and carpeting to sofas and accent pieces, gray is becoming the new neutral. Popular on the fashion runways, the hue is quickly making its way into home decor, according to designers. Self-described "gray fanatic" David Bromstad, season one winner of HGTV's "Design Star," believes the "edgy" hue is more versatile than beige. Gray, he said, can have different tones, like a cooler blue-gray or a warmer brown-gray, or even a purple-gray, which he proclaims as "hot" right now.



Photo Courtesy of HGTV

On HGTV's "Summer Showdown" designers David Bromstad and Jared Walker transformed a bedroom using shades of gray and yellow.

"My favorite is directly in the middle," said the host of HGTV's "Color Splash." "It's not warm, it's not cool, it's mid-tone. It goes with everything," he said.

It also can be paired with a number of colors, Bromstad said, noting it's currently used a lot with purples and pinks, turquoise and yellow. The color scheme in the designer's own eclectically decorated home is white, gray, acid yellow, black and red.



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PHOTO COURTESY OF WEST ELM

The Parachute Duvet Cover and Shams from West Elm in soothing Feather Gray are fabricated of airy cotton voile, which is ruched for a relaxed, yet sophisticated look and texture. Twill-tape ties along the bottom add a detailed finish; \$19 to \$129.

Grays, which tend to have more of a contemporary feel, also can be mixed with each other, said Manhattan designer Charles Pavarini III. Pair a more neutral gray with a silvery metallic accent to give an interior a "spark," or with charcoal to add contrast to the space, he said.

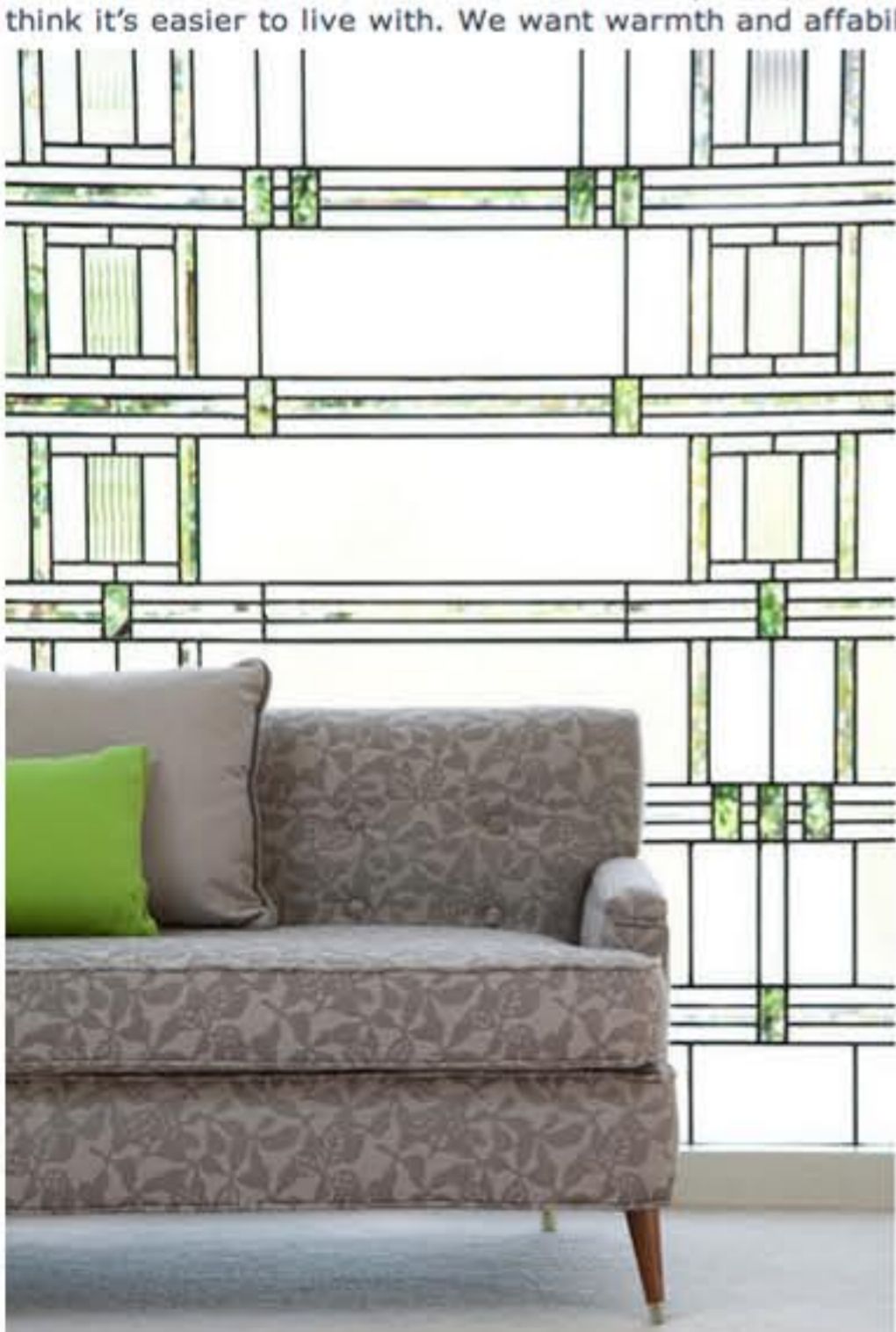
"A smoky gray is good for a dramatic punctuation of color," Pavarini said, explaining, "If you do your walls in a pale gray and add a charcoal piece of furniture, it will pop."

Pavarini also is a proponent of using gray with beige tones, something he refers to as "greige. At last year's Kips Bay Decorator Show House in Manhattan, Pavarini created a lounge that sparkled with different shades of gray. The Zolatone finish he used on the walls consisted of gray, silver metallic and bronze.

"What the bronze does," he explained, "is neutralize the gray so it becomes warmer."

The room, which recently contributed to the designer winning awards from the International Furnishings and Design Association and International Interior Design Association, also featured furnishings with gray and beige tones.

"True-colored gray is a little cool and sometimes gives the connotation of a bit of severity to it," Pavarini noted. "If it's an off-colored gray, I think it's easier to live with. We want warmth and affability, which is why we mix other colors with gray," he observed.



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In addition to walls, gray can be found in furnishings like this sofa made from Chella Textiles' Topographie upholstery fabric in Thistle; \$156 per yard.



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