

1940s colours and styles

1940s events

- Styles don't just happen, they are usually developed as a response 1940 - World War II in progress.
- 1940 - Germany attacks Britain.
- 1941 - Japan attacks Pearl Harbour, USA.
- 1943 - Synthetic rubber invented.
- 1945 - Germany surrenders, World War II ends.
- 1945 - Microwave oven patented.
- 1946 - Resene started in Wellington.
- 1947 - First transistor radio made.
- 1948 - McDonalds Restaurant opened.



1940s

We have to live with the bugs and the bomb not for the next ten years but the next ten thousand.

—ARTHUR KOESTLER



1940s - Make do and mend, lend a hand on the land - rationing during and after the war.

Amid the uncertainty of war, New Zealand celebrated its centenary at Waitangi in February 1940.

The war took its toll on the availability of products, and people coped with economical food recipes and home dressmaking. Textiles were controlled and used for army and airforce uniforms, only leftovers were available for garments.

With so many men joining the armed forces many women took up their factory jobs to produce clothing, equipment and vehicles for the war in the Pacific, while others cared for children and the home, knitted socks and baked cakes to send to servicemen and women abroad.

Ration books contained coupons for the purchase of eggs, meat, butter, sugar, tea and household linen. Clothing, petrol and staple food items were rationed to conserve resources.

Resene

the paint the professionals use

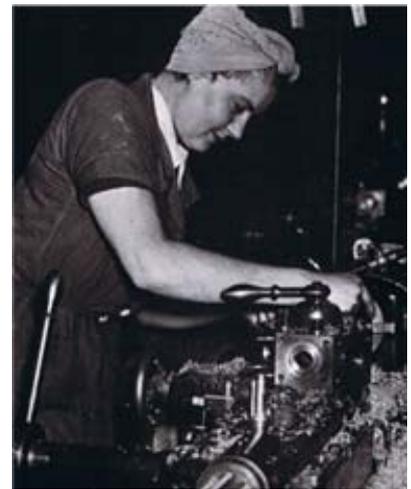
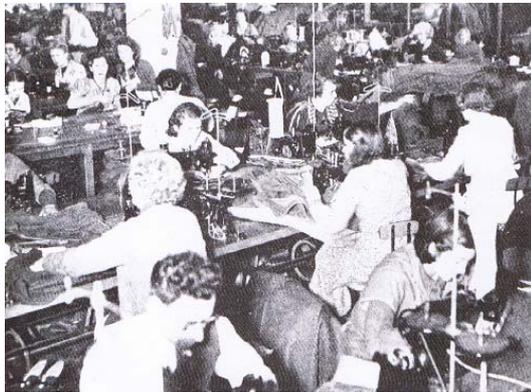
By 1946 nearly everyone was home from the war, and soon after the shops started to fill again and farmers had returned to their land.

Towards the end of the decade glamour was injected into fashion, inspired by the movie stars of the day - Frank Sinatra, Bing Crosby and Judy Garland. People longed to emulate their glamorous lifestyles, and optimism became the order of the day.



off to fight the war...

The first troops left the shores of New Zealand in 1940, and by 1944 nearly 70,000 were overseas. This devastating event affected everyone involved for nearly a decade.



factory processing lines

Women worked in engineering factories making military equipment, while others sewed uniforms in clothing factories.

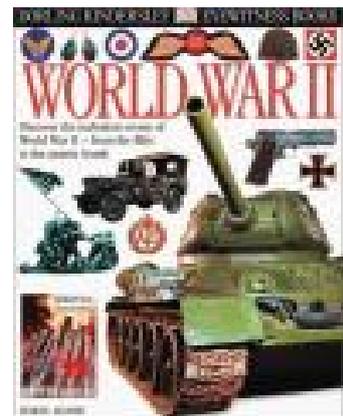
being prepared...

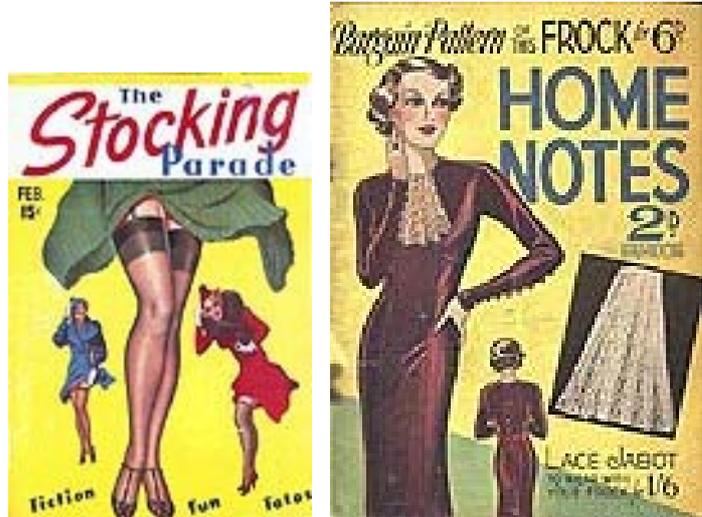
Women took on many of the tasks usually undertaken by men at that time. These ladies became the fire brigade, and below the school children are having a drill for what would happen in the event of an attack on their country - dropping to the ground or going down into a bunker for protection from an air raid.



man things...

As most photography was still in black and white, printed books and posters give colour references to the period. Brown and khaki dominated during the war, but red, white and blue emerged as a patriotic reference.





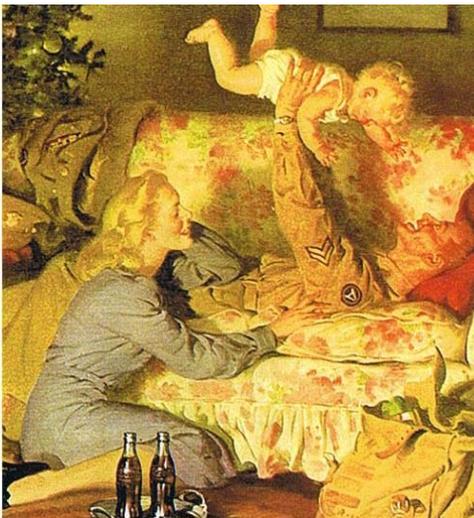
woman things...

Nylon stockings were very scarce in the 1940s and considered a luxury item. Many women sewed and knitted clothes from fabric and wool left over from military uniforms, even young babies were dressed in khaki and grey-blue during this period.



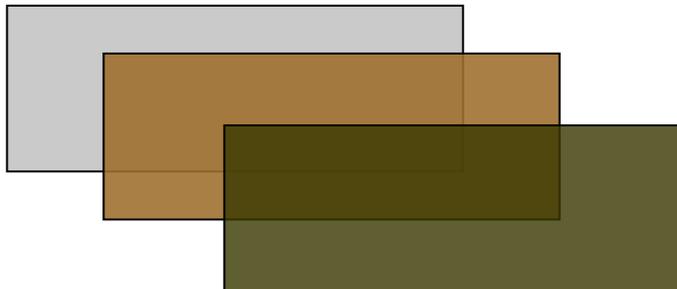
khaki dominated...

You can have any colour you like, as long as it is khaki green... such as Resene colours, Resene Waiouru, Resene Camouflage and Resene Woodrush. People who lived through the war years and colour restrictions may have an aversion to using these colours today in their homes.



This Coca Cola advertisement depicts the situation as it was - Dad home from the war, meeting his child for the first time, his wife dressed in utilitarian coloured fabric as colours and ornamentation were so limited.

Similar Resene colours are Resene Copyrite, Resene Authentic and Resene Raptor.





waste not, want not

School children were provided with a small bottle of milk each day. Food was rationed and most families survived on a very basic menu.



state houses

The New Zealand Government built state houses to accommodate families. The picture to the left is a good example of a weatherboard home with tile roof. The picture above is of a new state housing subdivision in Wellington.

Suburbs of state houses emerged rapidly, predominantly built of weatherboards with tiled roofs. In Otago where bricks were plentiful, the exteriors were clad in brick. Initially they had steep pitched roofs and windows varied according to the function of the rooms. They were solid homes but not extravagant in proportions. Most had an open fireplace to provide heating in the sitting room, one bathroom, 2 - 3 bedrooms, and a compact kitchen/dining area.





the war is over!

Whistles and sirens, bells and horns were sounded as soon as the news had come. Cheering crowds filled the streets the celebrate peace.

celebrate life again, new colours emerged..

- Fashion clothing colours were slow to recover after the war but the furnishing colours strengthened during the last few years of the decade with the use of pink and green and then the introduction of teal blue and red.
- The bikini was launched in Paris in 1945 where it caused a sensation. The designer named it after the Pacific Ocean island, Bikini Atoll, where the US atomic bomb tests had taken place. Because of the war rationing, less fabric was available, and it is reported that this bikini only used 75cm of fabric.
- Men took to wearing coloured shirts when they returned to civilian life.



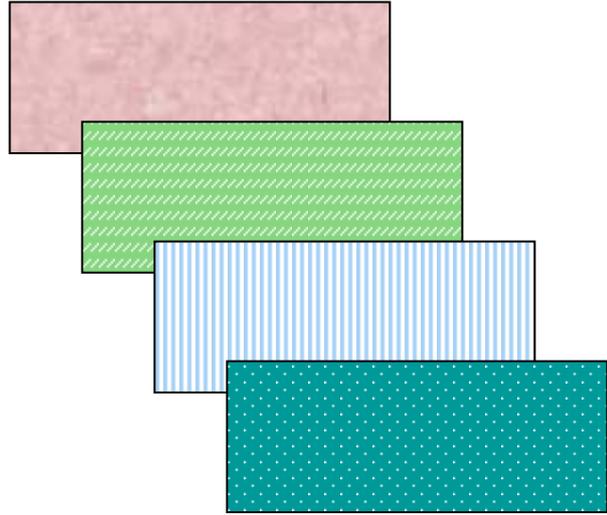
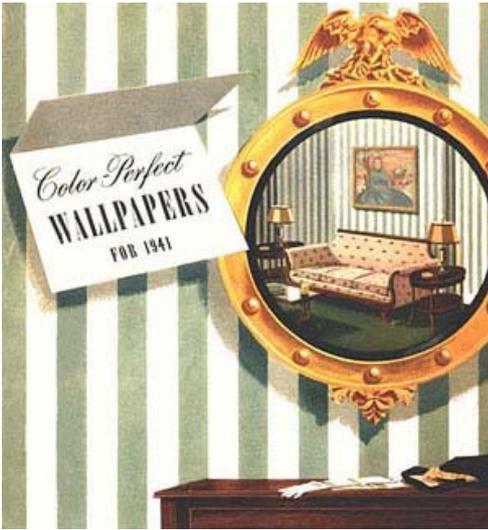
cooking with gas

A gas cooker range from the 1940s. Available in greyed blue, biscuit beige and dark grey. Similar Resene colours are found in the Karen Walker Range such as Resene Weathered Blue, Resene Jetsam Brown and Resene Cliff Face Grey.

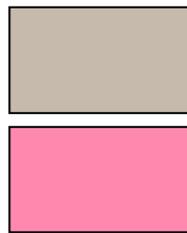


Resene

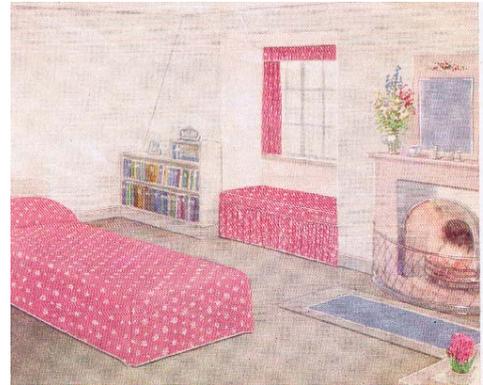
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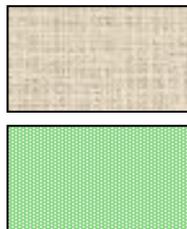
Interior design of the latter 1940s. Colours were slightly subdued, with the pinks, greens and blues slightly infused with grey undertones.



attic bedroom



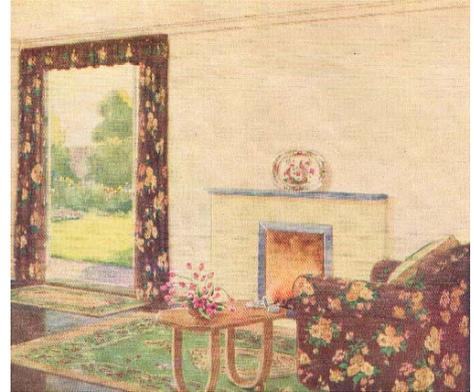
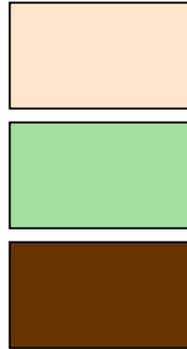
A girl's bedroom - the pink textile with small sprays of white flowers selected for the drapery and bedspread. The colours available in carpets at the time were fawn, blue and grey. The fawn one has been used in this room. Try Resene Charm and Resene Drought.



fitted furniture

Here is a fascinating end to a room coloured in pale green. By building cupboards and drawers right across the room, a deep sill is formed to make the dressing table. Fitted furniture left the rest of the room clear of space-taking furniture. Try Resene Oxley and Resene Drought.

The cupboard fitment becomes part of the wall and is painted to match. To harmonise with the green walls there is a blue and green patterned fawn fabric for bedspread and curtains, and a fawn carpet.



typical sitting room with fireplace

Who would not fall in love with this brown linen fabric with its softly shaded bouquets of flowers? The linen was strong and hardwearing fabric, which cost 3 shillings and nine pence per yard at the time (40 cents/metre). The fawn walls blend with the green and fawn carpet square. Try Resene Van Cleef, Resene Negroni and Resene Oxley.



In the 1940s we saw the first multi-unit housing developments being built in New Zealand as architects introduced the Moderne style of design. They were built of reinforced concrete specially designed to resist earthquake damage and spread of flame in the event of a fire. They were devoid of ornamentation and usually quite rectangular in shape.



The motor vehicle industry is always a great colour reference of its decade. During the war years the NZ manufacturers produced trucks, jeeps and defence vehicles, the majority painted khaki for camouflage purposes.

In 1944 only 66 new cars were sold, and by 1949 the number was up to 10,036 reflecting the recovery from the war. Fords, Chryslers, Hillmans, Humbers, Austins and Studebakers were some of the brands assembled in factories here.

The sports car was not produced until the end of the decade. Red is a colour often popular after a war, reflecting optimism and confidence after turbulent times. It also appears in fashion and interiors.



Furniture designed by Charles Eames with gently curved, moulded seats. The black table and chair were constructed from black stained timber on chrome frames. Eames used techniques from the car industry to manufacture some of his furniture. Eames also experimented with moulded hard rubber between plastic for seating but this did not go into production.



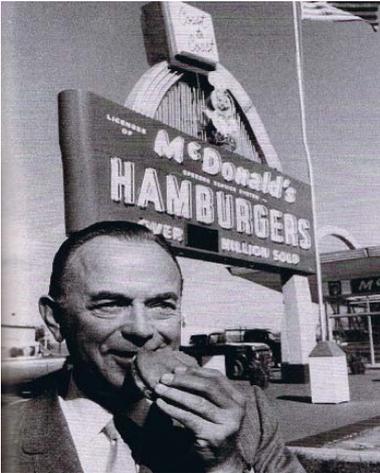
inventions from the 1940s

Natural rubber became brittle in the cold and melted in the heat. Synthetic rubber was developed in 1945 and accounts for 60% of the world's rubber production today.

During the war scientists invented the magnetron tube for radar systems, which was later used in microwave ovens. Industries began using these not only for food but also for drying or processing cork, ceramics, paper, leather, tobacco and textiles.

The first transistor radio was produced, the forerunner of many small portable appliances on sale today.

faster lifestyles, faster food



The first McDonalds restaurant was opened in California in 1948 by brothers Dick and Mac McDonald.

Families were looking for value and fast service and the first burgers sold for 15 cents each.

Ray Kroc bought out the McDonald brothers in 1955 and established the McDonalds Corporation which now franchises the restaurant all over the world.

1940 began with restraint of colour, and ended on a brighter note

Artists like Jackson Pollock worked with muted colour palettes at the beginning of the decade which reflected the sombre mood of the time.



By the end of the decade we saw brighter colours and a lot more glamour as we recovered from the war and its effect on everyone's lifestyle.

key colours of the 1940s

The palette at the beginning of the decade was very utilitarian and limited the khaki, grey-blue and brown.



Post war soft greens and pinks emerged, often teamed with fawn or grey in home interiors.

Red, white and blue were seen in fashion, and later in furniture and cars.

By the end of the decade red and teal were introduced as optimism returned and a little more glamour was enjoyed.

Colours to try: Resene Marionette, Resene Ashanti, Resene Copyrite, Resene Destiny, Resene Pink Flare, Resene Abbey, Resene Regent Grey, Resene Waiouru, Resene True Blue and Resene Alter Ego.



key design elements of the 1940s

simple and unadorned

linoleum and floor rugs

terrazzo benchtops or fireplaces

small kitchen, one bathroom

restraint of colour and decoration

limited resources and materials

state houses and apartments

linear shaped buildings

weatherboards and concrete

references

- Assembly
- Decade by Decade
- Events Changed the World
- Living Colours
- New Zealand Architecture
- Weekly News
- 20th Century Furniture Design

Resene

the paint the professionals use