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Breaking the Colour Mould: There is More to Colour than Meets the Eye

Colour plays a vitally important role in the world in which we live. Colour can sway thinking, change actions, and cause reactions. It can irritate or soothe your eyes, raise your blood pressure, calm your mood or even suppress your appetite.

Sight is the strongest developed sense in most human beings. Therefore it is only natural that 90% of an assessment for trying out a product is based on colour alone.

The same goes for buildings and interior design, the emotion or action that you want to elicit from a person is largely dependent on that first impression that's made the moment they set foot in a space. Whether it's the desire for someone to buy your product in a store, relax in a hospital or learn in a school, the use of colour is a critical element to the success or failure of all these environments.

The Role of the Floor

It might often be overlooked, but the floor offers commercial interior designers with the second largest platform or surface within an interior on which to make a bold design statement. With a little imagination, floors can become much more than something to walk on, they can be a canvas from which to project brand personality, set a mood or even define the building's purpose.

Innovations in technology combined with changing design trends have seen the introduction of a wide variety of synthetic flooring materials brought to market.

Vibrantly coloured, high-gloss epoxy resins, decorative terrazzo containing a variety of aggregate chippings, natural and coloured stone carpet systems as well as decorative flake and quartz based systems are just some of the hard floor options available to commercial clients.

Taking inspiration from natural building materials, new innovations include intricately hand applied systems that offer clients a choice between solid or multi-dimensional marble colour tones to recreate the look of polished stone or a subtle metallic effect for a warm industrial feel.

Not only do these systems take advantage of a wide range of materials and design processes they offer clients a robust performance that matches up to the operational requirements of the space, which can include heavy footfall, dirt and spillage as well as slip and scratch resistance.

Exploring Colour

Warm and appetising, bright and open or cool and relaxing? Choosing a colour palette can have a big impact on the mood and ambiance of any commercial design scheme. Changing the colour scheme of a hotel, restaurant, airport waiting area or shopping mall concourse can completely transform the space itself.

Colours communicate aspects of personality or brand and have the power to produce psychological and physiological effects. Understanding how colour can influence human behaviour and emotion is an essential part of interior design. Taking command over these hues and setting the right mood to strike a balance between comfort and productivity is an important commercial decision.

For example, these are just a few ways in which colour choice can influence the mind-set of a building's users:

Green and **blue** surfaces can create feelings of calm and relaxation. **Green** gives people's eyes some rest and helps reduce anxiety, which is particularly helpful where lighting is not at an optimal level, or in offices where employees spend the day staring at computer screens. **Blue** helps reduce stress by lowering the blood pressure and heart rates and some studies state that people are more productive in blue rooms.

Yellow and **orange** colours, associated with the sun, make a person feel warm and happy. However **yellow**, the colour of caution, can cause eye strain in a workplace by over-stimulating the eyes.

Red can stimulate and excite employees and has been linked with increasing respiration, heart rate and brain activity. As it can get a person really worked up it is best used as only an accent and not as a main colour.

YELLOW

The colour of knowledge and creativity. Yellow offers hope, happiness and fun.

ORANGE

An optimistic, uplifting colour. Orange inspires and motivates positive thoughts.

RED

A positive colour, red is associated with brand leadership, ambition and determination.

PINK

The colour of love, compassion and intimacy. Pink drives romantic ideals.

PURPLE

Represents the imagination. Purple expands awareness and is connected to deeper thoughts.

BLUE

Trust, honesty & loyalty define blue. It is reserved, conservative and reliable.



GREEN

The great balancing colour. Green creates a stable environment between energy and emotion.

FIGURE 1: *The Meaning of Colours*
Data provided <http://www.empower-yourself-with-color-psychology.com/meaning-of-colors.html>

RCL Foods, Durban

Food producer RCL Foods installed a selection of resin floors in its exciting new Durban office. The building's design was tailored to meet RCL Foods specific requirements, including floors that would cleverly meet the site's aesthetic and operational demands.

In the Test Kitchen 311 m² of Flowfresh SR Ultra in a bespoke blue was applied. The vibrant, durable, antibacterial floor was made to match RCL Foods' corporate colour. Peran SL Fruity in a long list of colours, including Tomato, Kiwi, Grapefruit, Tangerine, Spearmint and Plum, was used for the toilets. Seamless and impervious, Peran SL Fruity is easy to clean and will retain its aesthetic and functional properties. 378 m² of the decorative epoxy coating Peran STB was also applied in a sleek, dappled grey colour in the lobby between the lift and car park.



There can be exceptions to this, as although **red** is recommended as predominantly a complementary colour, it can be used as the main tone for areas where the designer does not want people to linger. This could be useful in the corridor or lounges of offices where an employer doesn't want staff to spend long periods of time or in restaurants or stores that want a high turnover of customers and foot traffic.

In general, cool colours such as **green** and **blue** are best for workplaces where people need to be calm and relaxed, such as law offices, psychiatrists' clinics, counselling rooms and public areas. Even for production areas, a combination of **blue** and **green** gives a feeling of space and peacefulness.

White is suited for areas like hospitals or laboratories, where it is important to create an environment that promotes sterility and cleanliness. However, since it is not a very tranquil colour it can unnerve people and lead to an "institutional" feel. This is not conducive to many spaces, for example childrens' wards

in hospitals need to appear sterile but they also need to relax the young patients, so the designer will want to use other, cooler tones in the design.

Resin based flooring systems are available in a wide range of standard colour options and unlike other types of material can be colour matched or made to order using any shade off the RAL colour palette. This is a big plus for corporate clients or chains looking to achieve design scheme consistency across locations.

Seamless resin floor finishes can also be used to complement existing design schemes. This is particularly useful in localised floor repair or floor refurbishment situations.

Decorative & Functional Patterns

The floor doesn't have to be a solid colour or void of any type of pattern or design. In fact, a variety of options are available to install pattern on the surface of the floor, particularly when using resin based materials.

SuperSpar, Secunda

A brand new SuperSpar store in Secunda installed a bespoke floor that would impress customers with bright colours and decorative patterns underfoot. To achieve this, 2,800 m² of the seamless resin terrazzo system Mondéco Earth was applied in a wide range of attractive colours, including Snow, Pebble, Moonstone, Sea Green, Spring Green and Coral.

Using this palette, a crisp white surface was applied in the main shopping area with organically curving shapes of different sizes and outlines in red, blue, green, cream and turquoise interspersed across the floor. A decorative, dappled effect was created by incorporating granite and flint additives within the resin terrazzo material.



Complicated geometric or banded designs can be set out using aluminium or brass trims and the resin material poured into the design framework – similar to painting by numbers. Once ground, sealed and polished the stunning design reveals itself on the surface of the floor. This process can also be used to embed corporate logos or signage into the surface of the floor, which is often a unique touch in corporate offices or hotel lobbies.

Other options include the use of floor graphics, where any design, imagery or lettering is printed onto a large fabric mesh, placed over the floor area in question and sealed with a clear, translucent resin, which can then be trafficked and cleaned in the same ways as other resin floor systems.

Finally, another interesting way in which to create pattern or design on the floor is through the use of colour zoning or blocking, where different systems or systems in different colours or using different aggregate mixes are installed side-by-side to create a fusion of textures, colours and patterns.

Colour zoning or blocking can also serve a functional purpose in commercial venues, designating different practical spaces, walkways, waiting areas, relaxation zones and the like.

Creating Illusions

The eye naturally follows the floor up to the wall and then eventually to the ceiling. When these elements are all the same colours, or tones, you will see a continuous line.

By keeping the three surfaces in the same colour family the space will visually open up as they recede creating the illusion of more space. A room with one floor colour, another wall colour, and yet another ceiling colour will appear disjointed and can make the space appear smaller than it is.

Lighting is also an important part of creating the illusion of an expansive, open and bright space. A small space with poor lighting can make users or occupants feel claustrophobic. A properly lit venue ought to have three sources of light that bounce off the walls and give the room a visual breadth.



The Blue Planet, Denmark

The Blue Planet is the largest aquarium in Northern Europe and is fast becoming Denmark's architectural landmark. Designed to flow in the shape of a giant whirlpool with curved walls, innovatively integrated water features and shimmering floors.

Here, a unique polyurethane resin material has been installed throughout the spectator areas of the venue's impressive underwater installations in a creative technique designed to create a smooth floor that reflects the swirling lights of the water.

This effect is most dramatically created in the main entrance room, which is lit up with flickering sunspots that falls in waves onto the flat resin surface, adding to the visitor's impression of having been transported beneath the ocean.

In a space with a smaller floor area for table lamps or floor lamps, track lighting can help to light a room. Another good trick is to use mirrors, but these need not be restricted to the wall space.

A wide range of seamless resin flooring materials incorporate decorative aggregates, including recycled mirror glass chippings. These chippings reflect light from the floor space to create the illusion of a brighter, wider and deeper space – all without the need for any additional energy usage.

This guide has been produced to give an overview of floor design considerations when looking to inspire creativity and design psychology within commercial, entertainment or leisure destinations and venues as well as public spaces.

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