

# N O O K



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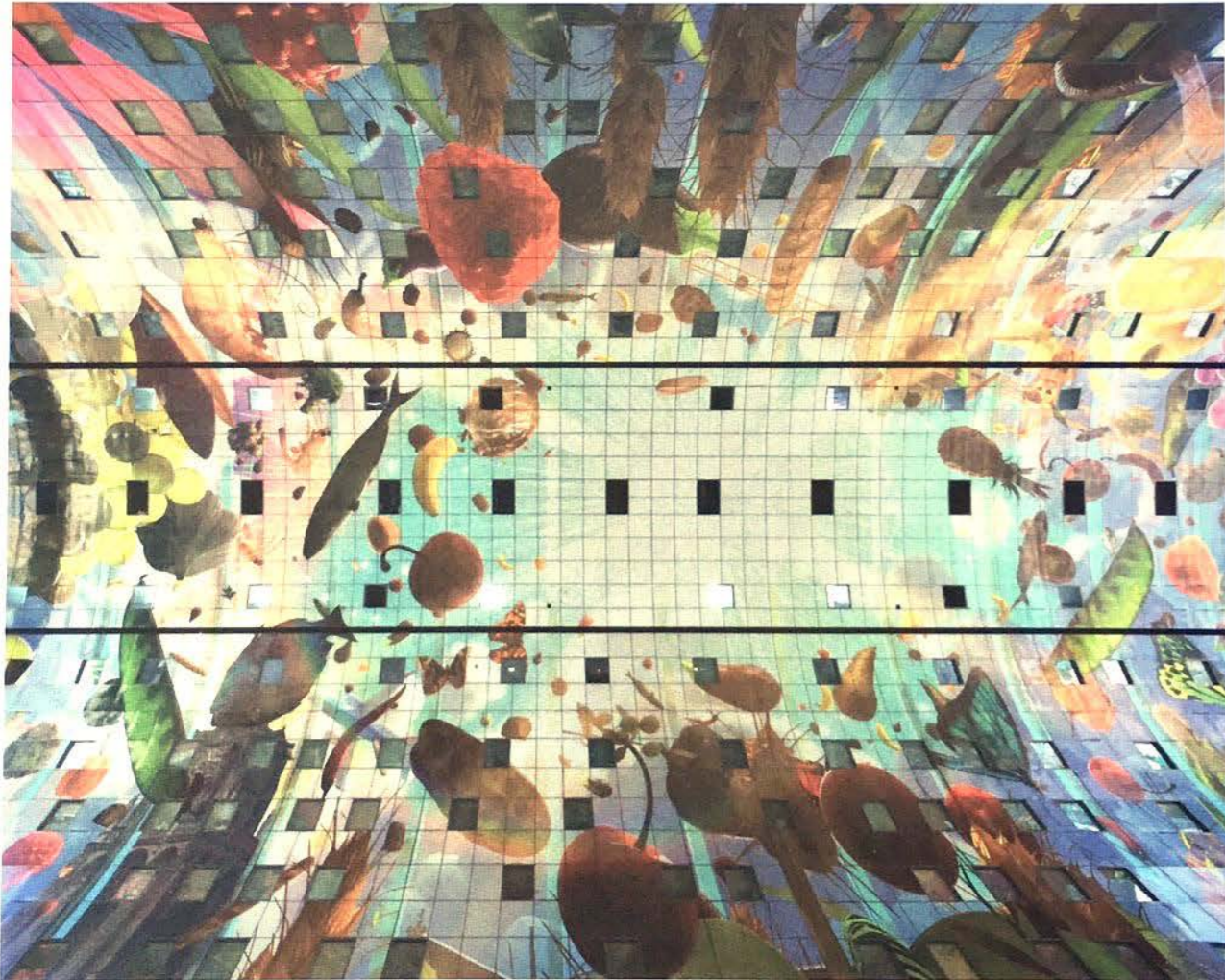
Prinsessehof National Museum  
of Ceramics  
Photo - Ewout Huibers

In the tearoom of the Prinsessehof National Museum of Ceramics,  
giant ceramic insects colour the white wall. i29 Interior Architects  
transformed the closed monumental buildings of the museum into  
an accessible place for inspiration and amazement.

Colour

# ‘A good colour plan tells a story’

Text Claudia Lagermann  
 Images Ossip van Duivenbode (Market Hall)



## Which colour trends and developments do you see at the moment?

“I honestly have to say that I keep my eye on colour development, but I feel increasingly less engaged with it because it evolves so rapidly. Nowadays, several colour trends are established each year, and these in turn are developed within mood themes. Various manufacturers and specialists think up names for the colours or call it ‘the colour of the year’. If you get caught up in that, you can modify your colour plan every single year. If you don’t do that, the trend colours you used previously can relate differently to each other than they did a few years ago when they were first applied. If you want to be trendy, I would advise you to use the fashionable colours in parts of your interior - think of walls with paint or wallpaper and accessories - so that you can easily change them when the trend becomes old-fashioned without requiring enormous costs. If you want to invest in qualitative furniture, say a design sofa, you can better opt for a colour and design that is less prone to trends.”

## How do you develop a sustainable colour plan that resists the test of time?

“In his book *The architecture of happiness*, the Swiss philosopher Alain de Botton wrote that every interior has a story. When you make a conscious use of materials and colour in a building, you can tell a story that is authentic. You have to take a wide range of things into account when doing this. The choice of contrast between light and dark is, for example, very important. Where do you use light colours and where do you use dark colours? Which colours do you allow to blend with each other and which do you strictly separate? How do you allow colours to echo in the rhythm? You can also

Developing a colour concept for an interior could, according to colour specialist Leo Faasen, be compared to composing a piece of music. “It is important that you search for order and the proper rhythm, but also that you impose a personal identity with colour. A well-conceived colour plan can last for decades.”

include something that will have a place in the room or will be hung on the walls in your colour analysis. Think of a stained glass window or a work of art. The colours featured there can be translated into the interior. Pick out an orange detail from a work of art and use it in a curtain, cushion or a lampshade. In this way you can make the story personal, you create an extra dimension and you reinforce the feeling of coming home. This cohesion allows the colour plan to have a longer life.”

## EVEN LEGO THINKS ABOUT COLOUR VALUES AND CONTRAST CHOICE

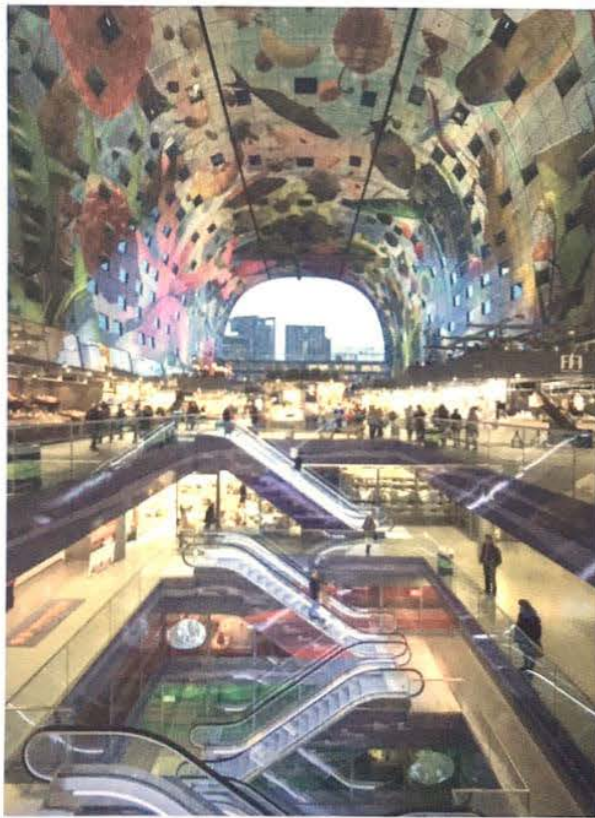
### Doesn't the use of many colours make a room feel hectic?

“Study books tell you: white is calm and colour is hectic. I understand that from the viewpoint of symbolism, but I simply don’t understand why white interiors have become so glorified in recent years. This is particularly true when you think back to the refined colourful past of, say, the art nouveau and art deco periods. The Market Hall in Rotterdam is a fine example of a colourful public space that works well. This is not only because the area itself is large, but also because the colours are correct. Compare it with a bag of Smarties: if there’s a lot of colour, it brings order. This is all to do with colour-value dimensions, lightness and saturation. You also see this in LEGO: if you remove the yellow block, everything looks much more restrained. Red, green and blue are close together in colour intensity, only the yellow one stands out. This is used as a contrast colour. You need that, because you use the difference to

interrupt the spatial design or to make it more dynamic. If you are not yet sure which colours you want to use in the interior, you can always think in 'contrasts' in grey tones. By imposing order, you can achieve cohesion and variation, which you can later translate into colour tones."

### To what extent do you have to take light into account?

"Colour is never constant. You shift it with lighting and by the way in which light enters a space. For this reason you could, for example, decide to paint a wall which is bathed in natural light in a somewhat more intense shade of your chosen colour. The chosen colour will have a slightly different appearance because of the light. When you move farther from the window - where there is little or no natural light - you can then make use of the colour you originally chose. That will appear fractionally darker, and the result is that the two colours will finely complement and blend into one another."



MVRDV, Market Hall, Rotterdam. The central escalators of the Market Hall contain an integrated exhibition of the archaeological artefacts found on the building site. Foto: Ossip van Duivenbode



Torre Agbar, Barcelona. Foto: saiko3p (123RF)

### What can sometimes go wrong when dealing with contrast in colour?

"Something you often overlook is the ceiling. Most people leave it white while the rest of the room is adjusted to reflect the total colour scheme. I sometimes call it a shoebox without a lid. The idea behind this choice is that it makes the space seem larger, but actually it results in a restless contrast. When using colour on ceilings, a greyish tone derived from light blue often works very well. You could create an indoors-outdoors feeling with it. But you could also opt to use the colour of the walls or a tint derived from it on the ceiling. Incidentally, something else people often forget are the skirting boards. In many interiors you see a white skirting board that stands out sharply against the coloured wall. If they are used against a dark wall, they immediately attract attention, even though they have no aesthetic function at all. This can be easily solved with colour or you can handle the skirting boards in the same material or colour of your floor covering. In smaller rooms this has the additional advantage of optically increasing the size of the room."

### What do you have to take into account when developing a colour plan for a public space?

"It's nice that people feel comfortable in such areas too. And can quickly find their way. Colour can help. Multi-storey car parks are often a maze, and it can prove quite a challenge to find either the exit or your own car. You can't solve that with an extravagant use of colour. It may perhaps look very functional when the car park is empty, but once it fills up with cars, you lose sight of the structure and therefore any overall perspective. What works better is a clear colour scheme, such as light grey tones for the lanes and an

anthracite colour for the parking bays, which in turn results in 'less visible oil stains' when cars leak fluids. Areas that need to draw attention, such as entrances and exits or the location of the payment machines can be given a striking accent colour, so it's clear at first glance where you need to go."

### A WHITE CEILING IN A COLOURED SPACE IS LIKE A SHOEBOX WITHOUT A LID

#### So a good colour scheme helps create order in the chaos...

"Exactly. Offices are a good example of that. Many companies have a great canteen where the colours match each other very well indeed, but if you then take a look at the work places, you regularly find they have furniture that doesn't match in design, dimensions and use of colour. You can bring some unity here by not only tackling the colours of the walls, but also by rearranging the various pieces of furniture in the working areas. For example, group all dark cabinets together in one room and all the light-coloured ones in another and adjust the colours of the walls to the furniture and the users. In this way, everything immediately looks a lot better."

#### Colour - or a colour plan - is something abstract. How do you make it tangible for clients?

"If you choose a colour palette based on a substantiating story, you have to take your clients or users through that story step by step and gradually introduce more visual support. I often take nature as my starting point. It has everything that can form the basis for a colour composition: order, cohesion, harmony and variation. The good thing about nature is that it is also something specific and you can show this in a photo in order to explain where the feeling comes from. For example, a wood in green, yellow and red tints or a beach in beige, blue and orange tones. In this way, you bring the story and thus the colour concept to life and show how colour combinations that seem less obvious can coexist perfectly."

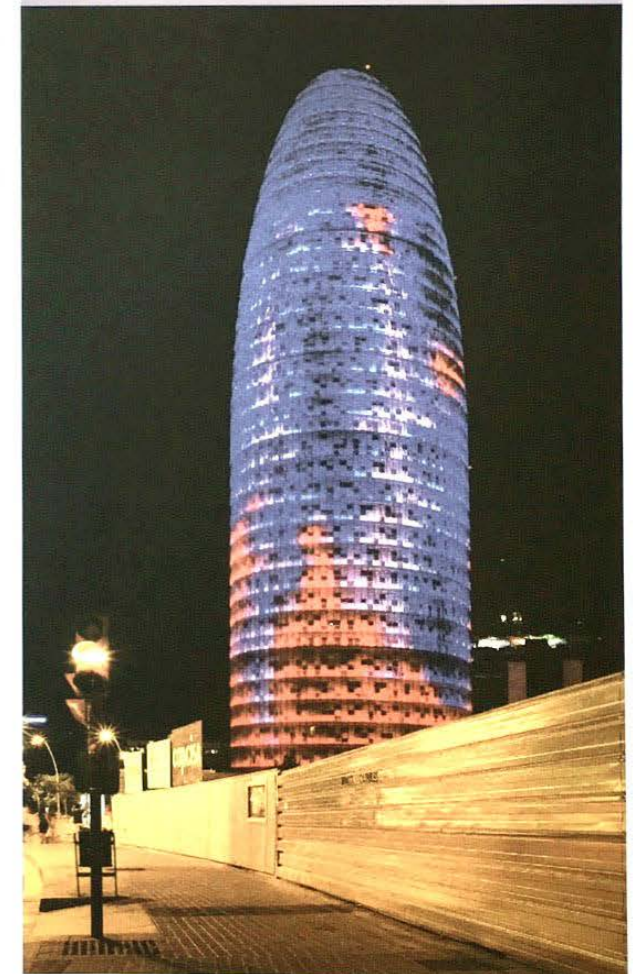
#### If we turn to successful colour concepts, which public building appeals most to you?

"Torre Agbar in Barcelona. The outer skin of this tower is composed entirely of panels of coloured glass with

aluminium awnings that reflect the sunlight. This causes a constant change in colour during the day, and at night the tower has an altogether different colour operation because then the lighting comes from inside. When you look at it, a whole lot takes place in its seeming simplicity. That's what makes it so special."

#### — LEO FAASEN

Leo Faasen has, as colour specialist, been active in the colour world for more than 35 years. He has learned all facets of colour: from paint technology with which he controls the technical quality of colour to interior design in which he applies these qualities. As owner of Fasiani BV, Faasen assists anyone who wants to bring colour to his or her environment. This can be done in various ways: from colour advice to drawing up an Emotional Schedule of Requirements and from developing colour concepts to knowledge transfer. [www.fasiani.nl](http://www.fasiani.nl)



Torre Agbar, Barcelona. Foto: nito500 (123RF)