

Colour as a mass product. Designing of the collection of interior paint colours for the Polish market

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ABSTRACT

The paper concerns the issue of using colour in contemporary Polish residential interiors based on the example of design and sales of paint collections by selected Polish manufacturers. The collections of colours, which usually contain between 40 and 60 shades, constitute a popular offer for the customers who do not employ interior designers and feel no need for more advanced colour selection from mixers. A collection of colours with a rather small number of shades makes it easier for the customers to choose the colour and is an economically beneficial alternative to mixing colours based on the currently used colour systems.

Designing colour collections for two large Polish companies over several years has allowed me to make certain interesting observations concerning the specific colour preferences of the Polish customer, based on both sales results and the colour trends established by the Polish market, which are often different from the trends of Western Europe. The presentation will recognise the changes made to the collections in the years 2011, 2012, and 2013 – which will reflect both the changing colour trends and the local colour traditions or inclinations resulting from climatic, historical, and economic conditions.

KEYWORDS

Colour design, colour in architecture, colour in interiors

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1. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Colours used in interiors, in a particular country, are connected with such factors as local tradition, materials and dyes, as well as colour preferences of its residents which reflect the surrounding flora, climate and landscape, as well as colour symbolism, and various aspects of material culture. In Poland, during the period of the communist regime, economic problems caused that the opportunities of buying elements of interior design were very limited. Paints produced by the state companies available on the market were also of a very narrow range of colours. More demanding consumers who wanted to stand out against all-pervasive mediocrity were forced to turn to house painters who helped them achieve exceptional colours depending on their individual needs by mixing pigments. On the other hand, in public buildings and facilities, a typical combination of colours was used, which caused that staircases in residential buildings, as well as school interiors, public administration buildings and health service facilities looked almost identical. At the same time, the economic and political crisis of the 1980s leading to the political transformation in 1989 caused that most buildings were left non-renovated, and it brought about general dullness of surroundings.

2. COLOUR STANDARDS IN POLAND

Thus, craving for colour was one of the effects that a capitalist system brought in towns. State companies like *Zjednoczenie Przemysłu Farb i Lakierów Polifarb* were divided and taken over, in part, by foreign companies; what was left originated Polish local brands. In the 1990s, the Natural Colour System was introduced in Poland due to the efforts of Janusz Konaszewski and Ryszard Bojar, and it became the most popular standard of colour notation. Then, there were initiated works concerning the creation of the first Polish pallet of colours. The Color Concept Studio of Ryszard Bojar prepared a set of interior and elevation colours inspired by the colours of the Polish landscape. For a year, a team consisting of Ryszard Bojar, Violetta Damięcka, Krystyna Arska, Agnieszka Putowska, Sylwia Dobrowolska examined selected regions of Poland in a manner inspired by *Geography of Colour* by Philippe Lenclos (Lenclos, Lenclos 2008) and it resulted in a selection of several dozen of colours grouped in four categories: yellow (G90Y-Y50R), red (Y60R-R10B), blue (R20B-B10G), green (B50G-G80Y) and off-white (c=00, c=02)[2].

3. COLOUR IDENTITY

The search for the colour identity of the Polish territory was also based on references to folklore tradition that had generated a number of original patterns in many regions. In her doctoral dissertation titled *Colours in rural architectural and landscape complexes*, with special emphasis put on the southern Poland area, (Tarajko, 2005) Justyna Tarajko points out a range of hues and colour sets used in rural houses of the Krakow and Sandomierz areas, as well as of the Podhale and the Powiśle regions. The analysis includes dyes and sets of colours, as well as regular ornaments used both inside and outside buildings. The application of dyes produced from local clay and lime, along with natural colours of wood, created a pallet of colours well harmonized with the surrounding flora and natural scenery. However, when traditional wooden architecture was replaced with a chaotic pseudo-modern one, particularly in places where there were no area development plans, it brought about visual chaos, especially in terms of colours.

4 COLOUR OUTSIDE

On the other hand, natural colours of brick and stone, as well as colour sets resulting from the combination of those materials, have been largely predominant in urban architecture, particularly in the area of southern Poland. Jurassic limestone has been a building material particularly popular in Małopolska, and it was obtained in the form of limestone bricks used for secular and sacred buildings from the Middle Ages, through the Gothic, Renaissance, and Baroque era, nearly to modern times (Rajchel, 2004). The combination of dark red bricks and warm white lime is a characteristic element of the architecture of the Krakow area landscape. Limestone has also been used in the form of cobblestones, frequently combined with a porphyry material. The precincts of the St. Mary's Basilica in Krakow are a perfect example of this usage. Light yellow dolomite has also been a popular material which greyed under the influence of atmospheric factors. A lot of architectural elements, both inside and outside, have been made with yellow and grey Subcarpathia sandstone, sometimes with a reddish hue. There could also be found dark brown or rust-coloured sandstone, depending on the location of the deposit where it was extracted. At present, in spite of the fact that natural stone is not so popular in architecture anymore, it should be noticed that warm colours of yellowish, reddish and beige hues are still preferred both for interior and external designs, as it has been shown, among others, in research conducted at the Academy of Fine Arts in

Krakow (Zeszyty Naukowe Katedry Przestrzeni i Barwy, 2010).

5. COLOURS FOR INTERIOR DECORATION

A necessity of choosing colours for interior decor causes a lot of problems for people who are not professionals in the field of design and architecture. Therefore, the experience of Polish companies shows that extensive colour charts derived from a standard colour notation system (NCS, Munsell, ACC) are solutions rather for designers and architects than for an average consumer. That is why, in the early 1990s, collections of ready-made colours appeared in the offer of many companies. In many cases, a proposed set of colours was created without designer's participation, being a result of experience of a sale department, and it included pastel colours (without addition of black). of a distinct chromatic hue which looked good in small colour samples - yellow, green and orange. These were the colours which were supposed to help people overcome the dullness of concrete buildings typical of the architecture of the Communist period having such bad connotations. *The Global best selling colours* (The Global best selling colours, 2008) research which was carried out by the Akzo Nobel Decorative Paints company in 2008 proved that, in comparison to the residents of Western European countries, the Poles show a much stronger tendency to use pure colours, warm in particular, but they reject achromatic and cold colours. Moreover, the analysis carried out for marketing purposes by Fabryka Farb i Lakierów Śnieżka showed that, in 2010, the best selling colours for interiors were warm hues of beige, yellow, and orange: 1 – desert flower (NCS 1510 – Y40R), 2 – sunshine (NCS 1040 Y10R), 3 – scorching savannah (NCS 0515 Y40R), 4 – hot summer (0550 Y30R).

6. COLOUR NAMES

Names constitute an important element of a set of ready-made colours; names should be associated with common experience of colours and usually connected with observations of nature, changing seasons or semi-precious stones. Names given to particular colours stimulate imagination and, at the same time, facilitate remembering paint hues. Here are some examples of names of the collections available on the market: *Colours of Nature* (FFiL Śnieżka), *Colours of the Elements* (Bolix), *Seasons* (Nobiles), *Garden of Colours* (Jedynka), *Magic of Refined Colours* (FFiL Śnieżka), *Decoral – Fashion* (Decoral), *Colours of the World* (Dulux). An analysis of different names of colours included in these

collections makes one aware that there are no names of colours in the Polish language connected with architecture or local pigments. At the same time, the real hues corresponding to names like Bunch of Roses, Spring Leaf, Mountain Crocus, Field of Sunflowers or Juicy Apricot are a lot more vivid than the colours of paints bearing those names. This confirms that an average consumer has a taste for pure and bright colours which are not always suitable for interior usage. The conducted study also shows that descriptive names have a clear advantage over the numeric notations resulting from the adopted system.

7. COLOUR TRENDS

Collections of ready-made colours are annually updated so that companies could have a chance to announce current colour trends for a given year. However, in this case, the scope of changes is very limited due to the fact that consumers are accustomed to particular colours, and due to their reluctance to be driven by trends while changing interior designs. As it has been shown by the research carried out by the Institute of Industrial Design in Warsaw in 2011, the basic reasons for choosing interior colours are as follows: individual colour preferences of consumers (48%), price (18%), colours of other furnishings (15%), family and friends' advice (8%), designs derived from the interior and architectural magazines (5%), sale special offers (4%), others (2%). Therefore, in spite of the fact that some companies announce colour trends each year, in fact, they are mostly based on the same shades, juxtaposed in different combinations, alternatively supplemented with a few season hues. Having participated many times in groups setting trends in ready-made colours for various Polish brands, I must state that these trends are mainly of marketing character and are based on the experience of large European concerns. New colours are introduced in a very limited range so as to preserve the basic character of the collection and reduce the risk factor to the maximum. New colour trends are often intended for colours produced in mixers, but not for those sold as ready-made ones. It is the effect of the situation where the consumers interested in new trends are those who can afford to buy more expensive brands and seek advice from an interior designer.

8. DESIGNING OF COLOUR COLLECTIONS IN POLAND

In 2011, I started cooperation with the Śnieżka company - a producer of interior paints available on the Polish market and in other countries of Eastern Europe. As their consultant, I was

responsible for redesigning the *Colours of Nature* collection, and I participated in the creation of the Satin brand newly introduced onto the market. The company offers products in the medium price segment, and those products constitute a representative reflection of an average Polish consumer's preferences. *Colours of Nature* is a collection existing on the market since 2004, and in the beginning it consisted of 40 colours; in the successive stages, it was extended to 53 colours in 2014. At first, it was divided into five hues: yellow, orange, red, green and blue (combined with purple), and it only included colours having the dominant content of white (NCS S0505 – 0540), derived from a limited number of colour triangles. In 2007, it turned out that the collection clearly lacked warm neutral colours: off-white, beige and brown. The range of colours was extended and arranged in the following groups: neutral, yellow, red and orange, green, as well as blue and purple. The brand offered only one hue of warm grey. In 2011, because of the increasing popularity of cool and neutral colours, I suggested that a separate line of colours should be added to the collection. However, when research was conducted, it turned out that this type of changes would not be accepted by consumers. In subsequent years, three cool greys appeared gradually on the market, but their sale is mainly connected with consumers coming from big cities. Moreover, four colours of the blue and purple group were phased out. In 2012, the Greinplast company from Rzeszów requested my help in the creation of a new brand of ready-made colours of paints for residential interiors. The company, which addresses its products to architects and construction companies, previously used a wide range of NCS colours, mixed according to the consumers' needs. However, at the request of individual consumers, a decision was made to extend the offer by about 40 ready-made paints. The subject of the project was both designing a series of colours, their names, and suggested combinations, as well as preparing sample applications of the colours in residential interiors on the basis of photos coming from a bank of photographs. The Greinplast company sells its products in southern Poland; therefore, colour preferences of residents of that region were of special importance when choosing the colours. A set of different kinds of construction and finishing materials, as well as paints traditionally used in the architecture of the region, became the base for the choice of colours for the collection. The following materials were chosen (among others): Jurassic limestone, Subcarpathia sandstone, alabaster, marble from the Świętokrzyskie region, and porphyry from the region of Krzeszowice, as well as ceramic brick, and concrete. Colours were analysed on the basis

of NCS, and it led to the creation of a set of about 120 colour samples. The final collection, introduced onto the market in the autumn of 2013, consists of 40 colours divided into five hue lines. Because of the fact that the collection is mainly addressed to a group of architecture and construction professionals, the company decided to introduce sixteen neutral colours: eight warm and eight cool hues. The proposed names are directly related to the architectural materials and pigments. A summary of sales results planned for the autumn 2014 will enable the company to verify the colours of the collections.

9. CONCLUSIONS

A study of the Polish market carried out through a period of the previous four years allows us to draw conclusions concerning both consumer preferences in connection with the range of colours used in interiors, as well as directions of changes to which those preferences succumb. Colour notation based on NCS allows one to determine the scope of the changeability of colour features like whiteness, blackness and chromaticity. The offer available on the paint and coating market, which is becoming better and better, causes that consumers are more aware and demanding, and in the future it may lead to more common usage of a wider pallet of colours (of the NCS for instance) obtained in paint mixers, and thus, to the improvement of the appearance of private flats or public buildings and facilities..

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

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