



Rotorua Energy Events Centre - Photograph: Simon Devit



Sardinia, Italy - Photograph Leo Slocombe



Huatoki Plaza, New Plymouth - Photograph: Chris Hill

CHARACTER COLOUR

Using colour in architecture and urban design

Although it can be argued that modernist architecture has shied away from colour (thanks mainly to black and white photography in the 20th century portraying most buildings as white) and that white and neutral tones are what define lines and space, world wide we can see the impact of a completely opposite approach and recognise the vital role colour has to play in the creation of safe, vibrant and stimulating spaces.

Good architecture and an imaginative use of colour enhance both a city and the internal environments of structures within. A challenge in urban design is to represent graphically not only the physical form of the city, but the experiential qualities as well¹.

Supported by the scientific theories of colour psychology and tried and tested for centuries (be it a backstage green room to calm nerves, a yellow slide to entice youngster to play, or red in discount retail stores to make you shop fast and spend more), the use of colour will differ greatly from one environment to another.

For architects, colour is one string in their bow to complete a creative vision, from homes to education facilities, public parks and walkways to commercial precincts. It can connect a city to its natural landscape, anchor a structure to the site it occupies and define the unique characteristics of place and people. Beyond this, colour has the ability to tell the stories of local residents, to influence social change and renew urban environments.

In the October 2010 issue of *Mindfood*, colour dominated an article on social renewal and change in Rio de Janeiro's favelas. Widely know for their poverty, crime and bleakness, one artist-led community project showcases the vibrant spirit of the local residents and how colour transforms corners of the precinct into stimulating landscapes and a catalyst for social change.

Read the full article at: <http://www.mindfood.com/at-in-living-colour.seo>

Images and video of the Favela Painting project: <http://www.favelapainting.com/favela-painting>

Any discussion on colour is broad. One thing is for sure, colour will always evoke a reaction and robust debate between those who like and those who don't. No colour will universally be considered appropriate for a particular use and it is local fabric that will dictate how colour should and shouldn't be used. But provided it gets urban dwellers and visitors engaging in their surrounds, staff enjoying their workplace, students learning and patients rehabilitated, it can be argued that colour is achieving primary goals for architects, designers and city planners – connectivity, custodianship and context.

For more information and examples of colour in architecture and urban design, try the following resources:

- Colour as Ideas: The Conceptual Basis for Using Colour in Architecture and Urban Design
www.colour-journal.org/2008/2/3/
- Colour therapy: The contemporary answer to the social concerns is Dégradé
<http://www.architonic.com/ntsht/colour-therapy/7000339>
- Chroma: Design, Architecture and Art in Color, by Barbara Glasner and Petra Schmidt (eds.)
ISBN 978-3-0346-0092-7
<http://www.architonic.com/ntsht/chroma/7000431>
- Colour for Architecture Today, by Terry Farrell
ISBN: 978-0-415-43815-5



Source: Mindfood - Haas&Hahn/Favelapainting.com