

# COLOUR

Application in Learning And Professional Practice  
Encompassing Environment and Sustainability Focusing  
on Interior Decoration and Design



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RMIT University/ISS Institute Fellowship

Fellowship funded by RMIT University

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REPORT TITLE

**‘Colour – Application in learning and professional practice, encompassing environment and sustainability, focusing on interior decoration and design’.**

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## 1.2 Sponsors

### **RMIT UNIVERSITY**

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Design Institute of Australia – Ralph Chalmers

Dulux Australia – Judy Knapp

James Marks – Radford Furnishings

Cleonicki Rowse – Pantone Colour Consultant

NCS Colour School – Gripsholm Sweden

Professor Jans Jenssen – Lund University

Paris American Academy - Peter Carman, Peter McLeary, Rebecca O'Halloran, Leo Hobaica

Pierre Frey Fabrics Paris France – Patrick Frey

The Paint and Paper Library – London, England – David Oliver

KLC School of Design Chelsea Harbour London - Simon Cavelle, Victoria Blunden, Sue Timney – Fowler, Patrick Baty.

American Intercontinental University London – Leora Brook

## 1.4 Individuals and organisations identifying and verifying skills gaps.

As above.

## 2.0 INTRODUCTION

### 2.1 International Specialised Skills Institute (ISS Institute)

Since 1990, ISS Institute, an independent, national, innovative organisation, has provided opportunities for Australian industry and commerce, learning institutions and public authorities to gain best-in-the-world skills and experience in traditional and leading-edge technology, design, innovation and management.

ISS Institute offers a broad array of services to upgrade Australia's capabilities in areas that lead to commercial and industrial capacity and, in turn, return direct benefits to Australia's metropolitan, rural and regional businesses and communities.

Our core service lines are identifying capabilities (knowledge, skills and insights) to fill skill gaps (skill deficiencies), which are not available in accredited university or TAFE courses; acquiring those capabilities from overseas (Overseas Skills Acquisition Plan - Fellowship Program); then

placing those capabilities into firms, industry and commerce, learning institutions and public authorities through the ISS Research Institute.

### **Skill Deficiency**

This is where a demand for labour has not been recognised and where accredited courses are not available through Australian higher education institutions. This demand is met where skills and knowledge are acquired on-the-job, gleaned from published material, or from working and/or study overseas. This is the key area targeted by ISS Institute.

### **Overseas Skills Acquisition Plan - Fellowship Program**

Importantly, fellows must pass on what they have learnt through a report and ISS Institute education and training activities and events such as workshops, lectures, seminars, forums, demonstrations, showcases and conferences. The activities place these capabilities, plus insights (attitudinal change), into the minds and hands of those that use them - trades and professional people alike - the multiplier effect.

### **ISS Research Institute**

At ISS Institute we have significant human capital resources. We draw upon our staff, industry partners, specialists in their field and Fellows, here and around the world.

Based on our experience and acute insights gained over the past fifteen years, we have demonstrated our capabilities in identifying and filling skill deficiencies and delivering practical solutions.

Our holistic approach takes us to working across occupations and industry sectors and building bridges along the way:

- Filling skill deficiencies and skill shortages,
- Valuing the trades as equal, but different to professional disciplines,
- Using 'design' as a critical factor in all aspects of work.
- Working in collaboration and enhancing communication (trades and professional),
- Learning from the past and other contemporary cultures, then transposing those skills, knowledge and insights, where appropriate, into today's businesses.

The result has been highly effective in the creation of new business, the development of existing business and the return of lost skills and knowledge to our workforce, thus creating jobs.

We have no vested interest other than to see Australian talent flourish and, in turn, business succeed in local and global markets.

Carolynne Bourne AM, ISS Institute's CEO formula is "skills + knowledge + good design + innovation + collaboration = competitive edge • good business".

Individuals gain; industry and business gain; the Australian community gains economically, educationally and culturally.

### **CEO**

Ms Carolynne Bourne AM

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**2..2 SPONSORS**

May 2005

RMIT University

School of Design (TAFE)

School of Design (TAFE)

ISSI Fellowship into

'Colour for Professional Practise'

The RMIT University School of Design (TAFE) fully supports this fellowship initiative, and has an ongoing interest in all areas of research that can value add to the offerings of the School, and to the enriched cultural environment that research of this nature brings to the individual, to industry, and to the teaching programs.

Cluster Manager for Interiors, Visual & Graphics, Victoria Versteegen, and a teaching member from the Interior Decoration and Design program, Lindsey Glover, are travelling overseas in June this year to research several aspects of Colour to contribute to the development of potential new training and initiatives in Colour for the School of Design.

The continuous technical developments impacting on both development around colour pigment ranges, the global approach to colour application including historical colour, and the use of computer technology as a means of colour translation has changed the way we work in relation to colour.

We believe this heralds the need for specialised colour training that will provide essential knowledge and skills for the TAFE graduate and professional development for existing practitioners.

As part of the fellowship it is anticipated that this knowledge will be presented at seminars for both educational and industry partners, and will contribute to the School of Design becoming a School of Excellence in a world wide market place.

I hereby recommend this study and the financial support offered by RMIT towards the outcomes for all stakeholders.

Sincerely



Hendrikus Berkers.

Head of School

School of Design (TAFE).

## **2.3 The Australian Context – *Nature and Current Situation* of the Industry/Occupation.**

The paint, retail, and decoration industry has grown and expanded dramatically over the past 10 years, in the areas of service, product development, and technology. The impact on the built environment & society as a whole is powerfully evident in everyday life. This has been positive for the economy with a wider audience able to consume and interact with new and different colour solutions, thereby increasing business for professional painters, decorators, designers and colour and retail consultants. The impact is visible in both residential and commercial environments, having been largely led by paint companies with the development of various colour product – colour atlases, fan decks, interactive computer generated colour products, such as Dulux 'My Colour', special effect paint brochures and physical sample ranges. The retail market and visual promotion through media has been growing at a rapid rate and the move to technology for self research, for interactive selection, and for colour specification generally, has simultaneously created a new 'playing field' for those involved professionally with Colour .

This has heralded the need for significant changes to the way painters, decorators, designers and retailers are trained in colour, with greater emphasis on colour context and the ability to interact with colour selection and specification through technology. Some of the questions that need to be asked to achieve this more holistic training are outlined below.

How much does colour education influence the way designers and decorators interpret and implement colour solutions, or is it industry and marketing that determine the outcomes?

Who drives /sets colour trends and how are these directed into new and specific product ranges? What / or who, for example, is driving the current changes in colour preferences towards brighter, bolder colours esp. for Paints and Textiles, and what are the likely effects on the environment?

How do communities deal with historical colour in other parts of the world in relation to conservation of the environment?

How can we develop 'best practice' around a training package that embraces colour from psychological, cultural, environmental and sustainable perspectives to enhance colour skills and knowledge for the practicing professional?

## **2.4 Organisations which have impact on the Interior Decoration and Design Industry**

### **Professional Associations**

The Design Institute of Australia.

The Painters and Decorators Association

National Trust Of Australia (Victoria) Melbourne incorporating Heritage Victoria

The Soft Furnishing Industry of Australia (SFIA)

The Colour Society of Australia

## **2.5 Aim of the Fellowship**

This has already been clearly outlined in the initial Application, and reiterated in the revised Skills and Knowledge Gaps. See below and attachment 2.00.

## **2.6 The Skills / Knowledge Gaps**

4 key areas of focus will include the following questions:-

- How much does colour education influence the way designers and decorators interpret and implement colour solutions, or is it industry and marketing that determine the outcomes?



- Who drives /sets colour trends and how are these directed into new and specific product ranges. What / or who, for example, is driving the current changes in colour preferences towards brighter, bolder colours esp. for Paints and Textiles, and what are the likely effects on the environment?
- How can we develop 'best practice' around a training package that embraces colour from psychological, cultural, environmental and sustainable perspectives to enhance colour skills and knowledge for the practicing professional?
- How do communities deal with historical colour in other parts of the world in relation to conservation of the environment?

## **General Areas of investigation**

### ***1 .Psychological***

We will investigate the way societal and individual's learning and memory effect colour reactions. This may have considerable economic impact when applied to commercial situations in particular, by influence on the buyer's perception. We will also be looking at how this knowledge is used to forecast future colour trends - who or what drives this - and the way in which colour trends are taken up by other industries.

#### **Training Requirements**

A focus on the differentiation of 'commercial' colour compared with domestic colour, with specific training on colour symbolism and colour preference, referenced against a background of successful case studies from a range of cultures.

### ***2. Environmental***

Initial investigation reveals an extensive existing body of information on environmental issues and products for specific purposes. However, it is currently dispersed in a segmented and often product driven format, and usually only available from a 'material' or product perspective rather than from the perspective of 'colour' selection.

#### **Training requirements**

Training that embraces environmental factors as part of mainstream colour thinking in educational packages will raise the consciousness of this critical design aspect. In current Australian colour training there is little consideration for how environmental colour could be included as a standard component - **colour referencing** to sustainable and environmentally friendly materials linked through colour terminology particularly in relation to gloss or light reflectance value is possible, but to our knowledge does not occur.

Through discussion and attendance at overseas educational institutions such as the NCS Colour School in Sweden, the aim is to establish a comparative approach in how best to include this aspect into colour training. The use of colour in relation to sustainability and interior product such as textiles, how this might influence final colour selections and outcomes, how recycling of materials might 'fit' within a colour proposal, are key factors that impact on colour use for preservation of the environment .

As a comparison we will also investigate the colour program at Singapore Polytechnic to understand an Eastern philosophy to training in these critical areas in relation to conservation and energy rating factors.

### ***3. Cultural & Historical***

The rapidly changing world and the international flavour of the environment in which we live has changed the way we interact with colour. We need to develop new and more holistic training that takes from both historical and contemporary cultures, and to develop this knowledge and skills for creative outcomes in terms of interiors and products for a more successful Australian marketplace.

Within this multicultural setting it is becoming more necessary for Colour Professionals to deal with a diverse range of clients where underpinning cultural knowledge and awareness is essential

to not only win the job, but to present sensitive and appropriately researched proposals to the client. Recent conversation with Libby Bennison, an Interior Designer specialising in colour consultancy from 'Liberati' Colour, brought this point home emphatically with two of her most recent commercial colour jobs.

Historical colour and the way it is referenced and applied provides a further key area where training and research is currently lacking, often creating repetitive and prescriptive outcomes. Research suggests the need to improve our understanding of original colour formulas and how these may be adapted for more creative solutions which will affect the ongoing aesthetic quality of our built environment.

### **Training Requirements – Global Awareness**

From research undertaken so far into existing colour training, there appears to be a relatively narrow perspective based on the Munsell system of colour. A strict theoretical base is valuable, and Ittens has provided this thus far, but the need to broaden a number of aspects required for a more globally informed opinion in relation to cultural and historical preference is blatantly evident. This need is amplified by the fact that many Australian graduates travel overseas to seek employment and need an expanded appreciation of international colour knowledge.

Australia's historical colour base is derived mainly from a Western or European philosophy. Our Eastern geographical position however means our students need an understanding of both cultures, and our multi cultural disposition is now also demanding a far more 'global' appreciation of colour through training that embraces colour histories and philosophies of a range of cultures to keep Australian colour education at the forefront. Our own Australian identity is part of this.

It is our responsibility as educators to prepare our students and future colour experts with correct and appropriate training that provides maximum skills and knowledge, while addressing both the environment and the global nature of our society, and to do this using technology wherever appropriate.

## **STAGE 2 Fellowship Report**

**‘Colour - Application in learning and professional practice encompassing environment and sustainability focusing on Interior Decoration and Design.’**

### **3.0 THE FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM**

#### **3.3 Program Content**

##### **Places, People and Events**

###### **Lindsey Glover**

NCS Colour Workshop – Gripsholm Sweden June 13<sup>th</sup> – 18<sup>th</sup> 2005

A week long live – in workshop undertaken by Lindsey Glover brought a new perspective and appreciation of colour through a series of exercises and projects.

One of the key learning experiences from this work shop centred around colour perception, which has had significant influence in changing the fellows approach to colour teaching, particularly in aspects related to personal interpretation.

The diverse group of participants - scientists, artists, engineers, decorators and educationalists further emphasized the uniqueness of the colour experience for the individual, with completely different perspectives effecting both the expectations and solutions for colour applications throughout the work shop.

This individual perception is an aspect that is currently undervalued in the current colour training curriculum – the need to evaluate self in relation to the rest of the world through colour, and the ability for designers and decorators, who are helping others to define themselves, to be able to interpret individual colour perception. These are essential ingredients for successful colour consulting and product formation

The participants in this workshop, with their individual exposure to colour through historical & cultural reference, place, time, educational or artistic reference, brought tremendous variation to the interpretation of colour, evidenced throughout the series of exercises which took place over the week.

‘My participation in the NCS Colour School (Sweden) enabled me to view colour from a different perspective - for comparison, reflection and possible application to colour education in Australia.’<sup>1</sup>

‘Our colour knowledge and use is generally material based - there is no Institute in Australia that researches colour as a system rather than as a product - consequently my knowledge of colour relates to how it is made. Sweden has given me a new experience - to perceive the nuance of colour as it is.....’<sup>2</sup>

This challenging concept was presented as a series of exercises (nuance-perception), workshops (colour-light), and a final project (interpretation-application).

##### ***The Exercises***

###### **1. Perception**

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<sup>1</sup> Lindsey Glover – in response to the influence of the NCS workshop on her colour teaching

<sup>2</sup> Lindsey Glover – on new colour knowledge acquired at the NCS work shop Sweden

How a colour will change when a) the colours around it change, and b) the proportional size of those colours also change. This change will also obviously be effected by the surface and texture of a surface – the reflective and refractive elements, matt/ gloss finishes, and the types of light source – natural and artificial. This particular exercise, however, was focused exclusively on the two earlier factors - surrounding colours (typified by an artist's canvas), and the relationship of the proportions of each area of colour to the other.

These are valuable exercises for the artist where colour relationships are viewed close to each other. However, the challenge for us as designers and teachers of colour applications for interior and exterior spaces is to re-interpret this experience so that the student of decoration can actually use the information meaningfully.

Designers and decorators need the ability to envisage what effect this will create on a much larger scale, rather than hazarding a guess as to what will happen to colour in spatial application.

For decorators, working as the key colour selectors and applicators, information that can help in the understanding of colour principles is valuable, but **useful** colour information, that is colour information that can be tested and proven in a range of situations, is invaluable. When students have been shown these different approaches to colour learning there have been some very interesting questions raised. The ability to devise exercises that support this learning will be part of the new approach recommended.

## 2. Nuance

The nuance of colour starts within oneself and requires comparison to give it meaning. 'Self' in this context can be defined as all of an individual's knowledge and response, instinctive and learned, in relation to colour.

For example, the reddest red, the whitest white, the yellowest yellow, is all in the mind...and one person's reddest red is not the same as another person's reddest red.

We evaluate a red colour by comparing it to the red in our mind – the viewed red colour may then be bluish or yellowish by comparison with "the mind's eye" red, and then by comparison with others' interpretation of red.

We compare nuances of colour against each other - finding them lightish / whitish / darkish / blackish - by comparison.

The parameters for comparison are the same for any medium - the material or colour hue, the light source, the eye/mind.

'The eye and the mind achieve distinct perception through comparison and contrast. The value of a chromatic colour may be determined by relation to an achromatic colour – black, white, grey – or to one or more other chromatic colours'.<sup>3</sup>

This has implications for the decorator in regard to what a client may visualize in their mind or eye as a particular colour, and therefore requires a method of verification to ensure this perception has been understood before proceeding with a final recommendation. A range of appropriate methodology for this is outlined in the section on the workshops below.

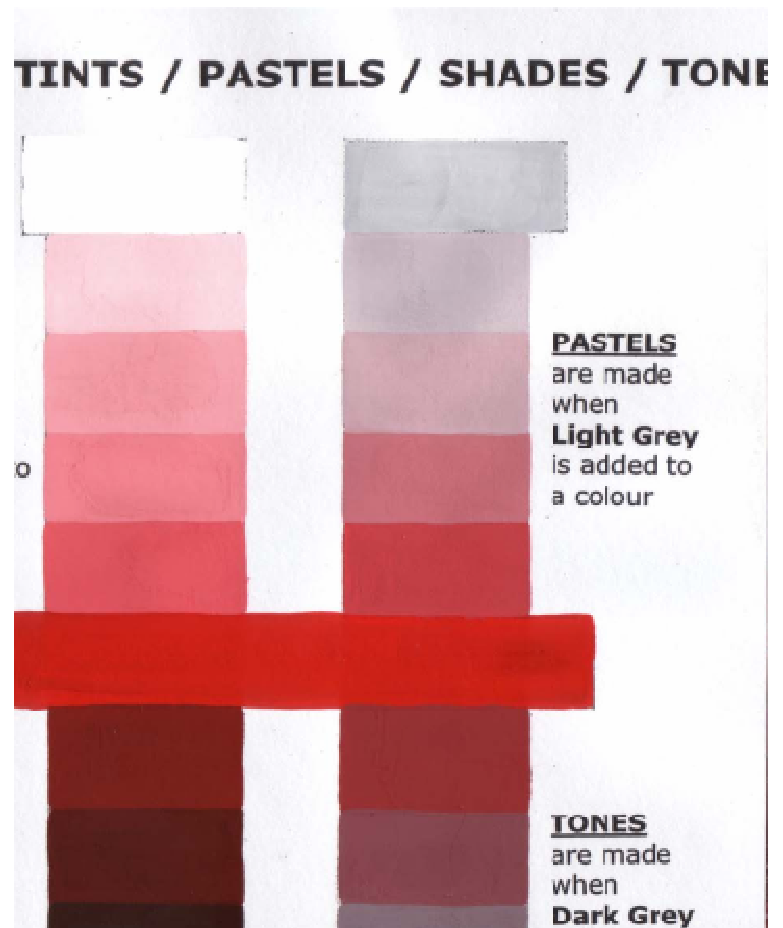
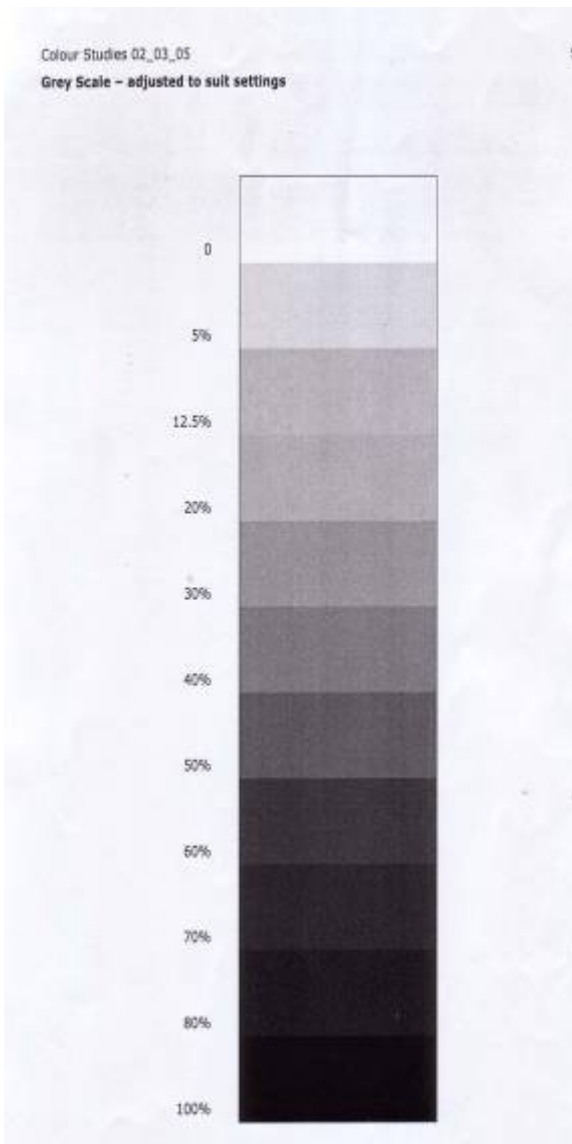
In seeking a universal language for colour, it can be deduced that any verbal comparison will not suffice - the comparative difference can only be demonstrated effectively through the visual, and often tactile, experience. This actual experience, the physical sample, will demonstrate

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<sup>3</sup> Itten, Johannes, The Elements of Colour, ISBN 0-442 – 24038 – 4 (Library) 752 191

these variations clearly when aligned with a tonal value scale from light to dark that explains the tendency of direction as to where a colour sits. Current colour systems and learning provide this basis – it is known as the Grey Scale,<sup>4</sup> or graded Achromatic greys.

### ***Colour gradation based on Grey Scale***



<sup>4</sup> Munsell Colour System – Grey Scale, linked to Tonal Value

## ***The Workshops***

A further aspect that came from the workshop is that of 'comparative assessment' of colour. Most colour assessment requires a comparison one against the other and it raises the question as to whether we should be developing a set of benchmark comparisons to test colour for Australian conditions, which could then be passed on as recommendations to paint suppliers, decorators and designers, and any tradespersons dealing with colour. The basis for this assessment is the effect of light on colour. This process, once learned, can be transported and applied globally.

What affects the real quality of colour in spatial application (and is not addressed in education) - is that of light - not "theoretical" light<sup>5</sup> - but the varied quality of natural light affecting regional colour conditions that will ultimately impact and contribute to a total colour environment (interior/exterior, uv damage, energy efficiency, to colour in material). For a country the size of Australia the regional differences are significant. These comments tie in closely with the findings that Victoria has documented in the relevant section of this report under the heading – The Source of Colour – Colour and Light<sup>6</sup> and with conversations held with a range of colour experts in both Paris and London.

Will "Mid Brunswick Green" look the same in Broome Western Australia as it does in Hobart Tasmania for example? We all know that colour looks different in changing light conditions - but how different is it around Australia - or for that matter - around the world? An appreciation of just how significant this difference is must become a vital part of our colour teaching and learning, especially considering the number of international students in Australia studying Interior Design and Decoration, Interior Design and Architecture, who then return to their countries of origin to work.

What about glare and shadow ? What of the colour within the light itself? (yellowish-green light in England / blueish-green light here). These questions link closely to the findings Victoria Versteeg made in London and Paris in discussion with a number of colour educationists and practitioners.

All of this has a bearing on how colour is perceived both internally by the individual, and externally by the society or community - much of it based on local knowledge and none of it recorded to a sufficient level for training the new colour student. We believe there is a need to produce an Online colour research library<sup>7</sup> or similar facility that records a number of these colour issues from the Australian perspective, and which can be accessed by all colour practitioners, retailers and product manufacturers.

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<sup>5</sup> Theory of Colour and Light -

<sup>6</sup> See section on page 15 of this report

<sup>7</sup> Online Colour Research Library – a proposal to establish this resource at RMIT by TAFE School of Design in conjunction with the TAFE Carlton library

## The Final Projects

These projects - exploring colour nuance - were as unusual and interesting as the course participants

1. The nuance of skin tone - registering the tonal differences of our skin colour
2. Colour intensity - the difference in colour intensity of children's story book illustrations - past and present. The difference between the painterly approach to book illustrations of the past – compared to the approach of blocked single colour in Walt Disney style cartoon story books of today.<sup>8</sup>

### *Colour intensity and complexity – past richness compared with present simplicity*



3. Observational differences - recording, every 4 hours, the differences in 4 peoples observation of the same colours on a building exterior - over a 12 hour period.
4. Really seeing. How many nuances of colour can be viewed (and recorded), for example, in a glass of café latte?
5. Do nuances have feelings? Were nuances of colour considered male or female - posh or tarty - young or old? Colours reflect our reactions and responses, our moods etc. through our cultural and learned parameters. 'Colour perception is the psychophysiological reality as distinguished from the physicochemical reality of colour. Psychophysiological colour reality is what I call colour effect'<sup>9</sup>

<sup>8</sup> An example of the 'painterly' approach can be found in 'Cinderella' early version (see scanned images)

<sup>9</sup> Johannes Itten on Colour Response – The Elements of Colour – Chapter 2.

All human beings identify with a range of colour messages that link to our memory and our learning. The significance of language is apparent here, but may be inappropriate for discussing colour from a global perspective. On the other hand, language is an important tool for which to intellectualise colour – to add the richness and sophistication to any discussion that talks about the ‘feelings’ that colour can educe.

‘A person does not merely see what literally is before him. On the contrary, he participates in the art of seeing and adds much on his own’.<sup>10</sup> Language inference and colour theory essentially combine when writing a thesis, for example, or in the more practical applied use for reinforcement of an idea when discussing colour relevance with a client – the associated words emphasizing the feeling sought.

This extended referencing via the spoken word or written language to supplicate colour meaning should be considered as an integral part of an effective colour education.

6. Colour groups from other sources (this is very much how Tricia Guild<sup>11</sup> works with colour)– selecting colours from seasonal fruit, or other natural colour sources, and matching these to found pictorial interiors to help train the eye to match colours across a range of products.

7. Colour memory - study a colour for a few seconds - put it away and remix it from memory. This is a further way of ‘training the eye’ for colour matching skills.

Some of these projects make viable teaching tools. Lindsey Glover has already successfully delivered two of these colour evaluation outcomes in Colour Studies 2 in the Interior Decoration and Design program at RMIT through a new approach to thinking about, discussing and applying colour. (Exercises 2, 6, and 7 specifically).



‘no colour system by itself can develop one’s sensitivity for colour’.<sup>12</sup>

### **KEY ISSUE**

**Colour is one of the highest impact areas on the visual and built environment.**

The decorator, designer, architect and colour advisor will generally refer back to personal colour experiences throughout their working life, initially drawing on basic colour response and instinct, learned cultural response, but also with reference to colour theory and the learning experiences undertaken in formal training courses within their recognized disciplines. There is an apparent need to improve the opportunity for the learner to experience broader concepts of colour appreciation and application at this stage in order to develop greater sensitivity and awareness,

<sup>10</sup> Faber Birren, Creative Colour, ISBN 0-442 – 20786 – 7 (Library) 752 8619

<sup>11</sup> Tricia Guild – English colour expert & designer - founder of Designers Guild fabrics, paints and wallpapers

<sup>12</sup> Josef Albers, Interaction of Colour, ISBN 0 – 300 – 01846 – 0 (Library) 701 8 A332



a stronger interest in investigative research, and an ability to evaluate colour solutions more confidently before entering the workforce.

From a national training perspective this view of colour delivery will raise implications for time allocation within curriculum and competency units as colour has comparatively one of the smallest allocation of hours for delivery compared to other course areas. Some of these programs include *Interior Decoration and Design, Visual Merchandising, Building Design and Technology, Architecture, and Interior Design.*

### ***General Colour in Swedish Interiors***

It was difficult to evaluate colour philosophy in Sweden except through product in retail environments & in the historic response to colour enquiries and research.

Informal visits to a range of retail outlets revealed a limited approach to decoration in general, with great emphasis placed on respect for past and traditional design directions. These are typified by the colours, patterns and designs of Marimekko<sup>13</sup> and Josef Frank<sup>14</sup> from Svenskt Ten,<sup>15</sup> whose designs appeared in every shop. At the time of Lindsey's visit these designers were being celebrated for fifty years of good design, which is typified by the powerful and simple use of shape and colour through iconic motif and grand scale.

Lindsey thus concluded from her research and observation that this ongoing respect for the Swedish designers and designs of the past, translates into a somewhat narrower interpretation of decoration compared with the approach in Australia. This was verified again and again by the array of highly coloured and patterned individual items and products that feature in interiors in Sweden generally. These constitute the main decorative aspects in an interior. They represent beautifully designed, iconic items that are visually appealing and also very expensive, a 'must have' for everyone.

This is in contrast to Australia where we tend to 'buy the whole picture', where design is still young and innovative and very much about tomorrow rather than the past. We tend to live in a 'retail' based society that is often largely driven by international trends and markets, whose product ranges may be somewhat pre determined. While a few small businesses have really taken up an Australian formula, (Aalto Colour<sup>16</sup> for example), educators and trainers need to nurture all the unique design potential that Australia has to offer in every type of product in which colour plays a significant role.

### ***Meeting at Lund University, Lund, Sweden Interview with Jan Jenssen, Professor of Architecture***

Professor Jenssen at Lund University gave little insight into colour learning and application other than to say that the 'small amount of colour taught to the architectural students was enough to pique their interest, but there was no further formal colour study in their curriculum.'<sup>17</sup>

This finding links closely with the findings that Victoria found in her research in Paris, where an interview with one architect related a philosophy of colour based on form and structure rather than hue and intensity. It is an area that Victoria and Lindsey are keen to pursue in Australia to increase colour awareness amongst related industry practitioners.

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<sup>13</sup> Finnish Textile Design Company founded in 1949 by Armi Ratia

<sup>14</sup> Josef Frank - Austrian Architect / Designer – 1885 1967, contributor to Swedish modernism

<sup>15</sup> Swedish Furniture store created by Josef Frank – ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Aalto Colour – Melbourne based paint company in Richmond Victoria specialising in customized colour

<sup>17</sup> Quotation - Professor of Architecture Jan Jenssen, at Lund University in Sweden

This is further borne out by discussion with a number of architects here in Australia, one of which took place quite accidentally at a social gathering early in 2006. This architect, whose name is to remain anonymous, admitted that he had always thought he 'knew colour pretty well', until he repeated the use of a particular shade of white in two distinctly different environments and found that in the second instance it looked completely wrong – 'dirty and dull' were his words. Not only this, but that he also needed to repaint four times to get the 'right white'!

It would appear from these conversations and other observations that there is a need for decorators, designers, painters and architects, to experience a colour education with some shared perspectives.

A shared learning language around colour will provide a mutual understanding and respect for each disciplinary approach and should also provide an enriched balance for project outcomes.

These recommendations are discussed later in the report.

## **Places, People and Events**

### **Victoria Versteeg**

#### **Interviews and meetings**

Victoria's trip involved a range of interviews and meetings with a number of teaching and visiting academics at educational institutions, and also with individual designers and practitioners in Paris and London. These two cities were targeted as excellent examples for providing insight into relevant and comparable colour and design outcomes from an educational perspective, and for their international focus of European design. This relevance has helped to provide a benchmark for an Australian perspective.

What was originally sought from the overseas travel has proven to be invaluable in terms of directions for Australian TAFE educational training. While this study has focused on the TAFE perspective, many aspects may also be relevant for other levels of educational application such as Interior Design and Architecture, and can inform a range of design disciplines that rely on similar colour awareness – graphic arts and fashion, visual merchandising, and product design. It is hoped that through the planned workshops a range of disciplines may benefit.

Some differences were noted as important points for further discussion in the future, and as benchmarks for design education and colour application here in Australia.

One of the biggest surprises was the fact that very little colour education in the institutions Victoria visited is being delivered via technology, even in the more expensive private colleges. We appear to be leading in this area.

There has been an increase in the amount of digital artwork now being produced, and this suggests that technology can play an important role in colour matching and colour referencing. However, it would be incorrect to consider digital colour in relation to cultural and psychological influences any differently from pigment or product colour, as the same messages are delivered.

## **Paris American Academy**

In Paris the conversation began at the Paris American Academy under the auspices of the Director of that college, Peter Carman.

This conversation then developed into both formal and informal meetings with a range of colour experts and designers, some from the US, others from England & Scotland, and still others from Paris itself.

Victoria was invited to be part of a folio assessment for a final year student at the Paris American Academy, sharing this experience with an architect from Scotland, and was fortunate enough to participate in a lecture (delivered entirely in French and translated by Peter Carman) on an historical fashion designer (since deceased) whose fashion house was known as Madame Gres.

This was a fascinating insight into the value that the French place on style and tradition, where a typically French approach to a limited colour range was seen as an opportunity to reinforce a cultural uniqueness, rather than as a limiting factor. The patient handwork that Madame Picaud demonstrated around a certain technique clearly illustrated the French notion that any amount of effort was worthwhile if it retained the 'French' identity. At a later interview with Patrick Frey from Pierre Frey Fabrics, this same sense of pride and respect for 'all things French' was one of the key drivers in his production of his textile ranges.

Specific questions put to the Paris American Academy are in the Appendix at the back of this document. Answers and discussion from the feedback has been interpreted throughout the various sections of the report under the respective headings.

Further reading has been undertaken since the return from overseas and this has reinforced a number of the suppositions and proposed ideas presented earlier in Stage 1 of the report.

### ***Meeting – Scottish Architect Peter McCleary***

One of the most interesting meetings that took place occurred with a Scottish architect who was visiting the Paris American Academy at the same time and whom Victoria lunched with to discuss Colour. Peter McCleary's view of colour is very different from that of the designer and decorator, and much of his response was based on the '*intellectual structure*' of colour, as he referred to it.

This structure has four main elements to it:-

1. *The Physics of Colour* – that is, colour without human intervention – factors such as light, movement, metamerism, light reflection, refraction, absorbency, relationships and colour theory.
2. *The Poetics of Colour* – the rhythms, compositions, cultural differences and the way colour speaks when used by different groups in different ways.
3. *The Aesthetics of Colour* – proportion, symmetry, balance, beauty and harmony achieved by colour application
4. *The Essence of Colour* – the basic underlying influences, the deeper language and fundamental types of building such as the cave, the hut, the tent, and the kind of colour message these suggested such as cool, warm, contrast, harmony, compression, flexion, tension.

Peter then went on to talk about his own reflections on colour which linked closely to the architects he had read as a student – Adolf Loos,<sup>18</sup> & Semper<sup>19</sup> from Zurich, as well Louis Khan. Much of this part of the conversation related to examples that were surrounding the café on Place de la Bastille in Paris, with Peter referring to the ‘visual weight’ of parts of the buildings, and how this can be managed through the choice of material, which in turn has its own unique colour properties. Qualities such as the balance between ‘support and load’ ‘breaking up the mass through colouring, perforations, & light reflection’.

Peter asked this challenging question to demonstrate his point on colour in material.

‘What is the true colour of glass? Reflection and how you represent it – transparency – you can see through it, translucency – you cannot see through it but it reflects light’...<sup>20</sup>

‘Materials have their own unique colour message, and it is through the manipulation of materials that the architect is able to reflect his individuality.’<sup>21</sup> This relates closely to the teachings of the late Louis Kahn, and also in many ways to the beliefs of William Morris<sup>22</sup> and John Ruskin for whom the question of ‘colouring’ buildings with applied pigments hardly even arose.

Ruskin pointed out that ‘virtually all colours could be achieved in architecture through the use of various stones, and implicitly colour was seen as an inherent aspect of the materials of construction.’<sup>23</sup>

Morris’ concern with the patina of age and his objection to the hard and often bright colouring of manufactured brick reflected his concern about the effects of mechanisation on the former ‘craft’ process of construction.

These points are again most relevant for the current teaching and learning environment from a whole new perspective – that of energy conscious design and efficiency. The implied colour of a material is as valid to the contemporary designer and decorator as ever, and needs to be considered in the broader learning context for all those who practise the ‘art of colour’ application for the built environment – both externally and internally.

We now appreciate much more about the need to maximize natural light, and the implications this has for interior colour application. This may well explain the move away from the dark brick feature walls and the sombre browns in our interiors of the 80’s, to the use of white in all its nuances in an effort to ‘capture light’ into our living and working environments.

As Peter McCleary stated in Paris “Material colour has its own levels of light reflectance, refractivity, and therefore it’s own colour language”.<sup>24</sup> Peter spoke of the weight of the material, identified through it’s colour, and how an architect can manipulate visual balance and create ‘structures that float between the earth and the sky’<sup>25</sup> – his aim as an architect for his work.

The implications from this interview provoke another level of colour understanding which may already be well addressed by architectural graduates, but from which designers, decorators and product manufacturers can benefit and utilise to improve their colour knowledge and

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<sup>18</sup> Adolf Loos – 1870 -1933 Viennese modernist architect outspoken against decoration in ‘Ornament & Crime’- 1908.

<sup>19</sup> Gottfried Semper - 1803- 1879 German architect and theorist who supported ‘pattern & ornament’ in architecture

<sup>20</sup> Peter McCleary – Architect - Interview with Victoria Versteeg– Paris June 2006 on the colour of materials.

<sup>21</sup> Peter McCleary - Architect– ibid

<sup>22</sup> William Morris – English Architect and designer of interior product

<sup>23</sup> Excerpt from ‘Colour in the historic environment’ – Michael Lancaster – ‘Context 1’ 1999

<sup>24</sup> Statement from Peter McCleary, Architect, Paris American Academy, June 2005

<sup>25</sup> Quote from Peter McCleary, Architect, Paris, June 2005

application in product outcomes. Key aspects of colour learning can be improved with the additional awareness of 'inherent' colour in materials forming a pertinent part of recognised colour training.

'Practical exercises demonstrate through colour deception (illusion) the relativity and instability of colour. And experience teaches that in visual perception there is a discrepancy between physical fact and psychic effect'.<sup>26</sup>

Contemporary design and decoration has moved in recent times to the increased use of lighter coloured materials - stones such as limestone and reconstituted stone aggregates for internal flooring, walls and bench surfaces.

The use of glass for splashbacks in kitchens, and the ever increasing use of light reflective materials such as stainless steel for appliances and feature fittings is also evidence of our efforts to improve natural light into our living areas. These materials all have 'inherent colour' to coordinate with, and provide an interesting area for learning 'new' (and therefore applying as improved design) colour combinations.

One other key interview undertaken by Victoria was with the great Patrick Frey of Pierre Frey Fabrics. Patrick provided some wonderful insight into the way he handled and approached colour, much of which has been annotated later in the report under Recommendations and through the proposed workshops.

Patrick Frey provided some wonderful commentary on his perception of colour and how this was implemented into his design for textiles. Some of his comments are included later in reference on how to develop an eye for colour.

From Paris Victoria travelled to London where she stayed for 8 nights in a small apartment in South Kensington.

The colour change was immediately apparent – different colours of sky, foliage, buildings and material colour.

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<sup>26</sup> Interaction of Colour by Josef Albers. ISBN 0-300-01846-0

**Comparative Regional Colour**  
**Paris and London**



The colours  
of Paris  
France

The colours  
of  
London  
England

London was an exciting and fulfilling experience, with many valuable interviews and meetings that contributed to the findings of this report.

### **Interview 1 – David Oliver**

**PAINT & PAPER LIBRARY, 5 ELYSTAN STREET, LONDON SW3.**

The first interview was with an Australian who had been living in London for the past 11 years and who had established a most successful Paint and Paper business. This young designer - David Oliver- had much to say about his own appreciation of colour, where it started from, and how it had evolved, and the ways in which he personally responded to colour and it's application.

David Oliver believes his understanding of colour came from his art training in Sydney – “it starts with black and white and goes on from there”.<sup>27</sup>

It was very interesting to hear David also refer to the fact that ‘mixing and choosing colour is similar to cooking - “It’s the secret ingredient that separates one individual’s work from another.”<sup>28</sup> This same statement had been made by Patrick Frey only a few days earlier in Paris, and held a considerable message for those planning and practising in careers in colour or colour related design. David Oliver’s vision of colour has developed from a unique way of seeing colour based on both his formal training and his personal artistic interpretation.

*See Appendix for complete set of questions and answers at the back of this report.*

‘What counts here – first and last – is not so-called knowledge of so-called facts, but vision – seeing’.<sup>29</sup>

### **Interview 2 - Meeting at KLC School of Design, Chelsea Harbour, London.**

A further set of questions that were put to a number of colour specialists at the KLC College in London is attached. It was here that discussion took place with Patrick Baty, a heritage and historical colour expert with his own paint company in the UK, and with the very talented Sue Timney-Fowler, a descendant from the founders of the famous textile company Colefax and Fowler, who now runs her own design agency in London. Both Patrick and Sue provided valuable information that has been largely addressed in the Recommendations and Solutions sections of the report.

***See appendix for complete set of questions put to the meeting at the KLC School of Design.***

## **3.4 Outcomes of the Fellowship program**

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<sup>27</sup> David Oliver on colour knowledge, ‘Paint & Paper Library’, 5 Elystan Street, London June 2005

<sup>28</sup> David Oliver on colour expertise, *ibid.*

<sup>29</sup> Interaction of Colour by Josef Albers. ISBN 0-300-01846-0 (Library) 701 8 A332

### ***Relationship to the skill gaps***

Findings from both the workshop that Lindsey undertook in Sweden, and the interviews and discussions that Victoria pursued in both Paris and London, have lead us to realise that our current teaching and learning encourages boundaries and rules about colour rather than promoting an investigative approach that supports personal interpretation and uniqueness.

‘A colour impression is not only a mechanism of seeing, but also a sensation or feeling that simultaneously activates our thoughts and our cognitive mechanism’.<sup>30</sup>

We believe there is a need to revisit the existing teaching curriculum and training and incorporate greater time allocation for individual development in relation to colour – this will subsequently result in more professionally confident approach to colour outcomes and product.

It appears from our research that colour choices in Australia, although sometimes brave and distinctive, often depend on a ‘recipied’ approach to the interpretation for the client. We are traditionally bound to a limited number of colour and paint ranges that can largely dictate the final options we propose.

We need the opportunity to increase our imagination and confidence around colour, to expand the potential for colour solutions to produce more personalised design and decoration into our living environments.

One of the key ways of achieving this is through our training programs at the TAFE level in particular, where solution based and industry based learning is at the forefront.

One of the key ways of developing this approach to colour application is to consider the context from a more holistic viewpoint:- the basics, (fundamentals of colour theory), the generic application, (project based colour), and a new extended investigation in the form of an advanced level of study, (Colour 3 - individual response and perception). These levels equate clearly with the needs of the growing sophistication of the design and decoration industry, and with the retail market place around product.

Some key underpinning knowledge which must be considered in this approach is not only the personal environment from which our perceptual reference is drawn, but also the ability to apply this awareness to a variety of solutions for individuals and groups of individuals in a range of settings.

The future plan requires development of training processes that encourage all practising and trained professionals to evaluate and assess colour solutions from a much broader perspective. Training institutions and providers can offer this platform and should be the key areas to allow study that can accommodate these opportunities.

To this end we plan to run a series of workshops for practising professionals and students of colour to address some of the current gaps.

### **The Physicality of Colour - Colour and Light**

A number of excellent books have been produced around colour, and one that displays the kind of originality and diversity that we have found most relevant to the interior decorator and designer is a book by Donald Kaufman and Taffy Dahl called ‘Color and Light’. This text, combined with a superb set of photographs from homes and environments from around the

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<sup>30</sup> Colour Environment and Human Response by Frank H. Mahnke. ISBN 0-471-28667-2 (Library) 729 M215



world, suggest that colour works best when in context with its natural environment, where the derivation of colours is linked closely to the physical, historical, artistic, social and cultural values of that particular region.

It is also closely dependant on the quality and intensity of light and the relative colour hue. To quote from this text “ Colour is light made visible.....Only with day break will objects reveal their true colours.....”<sup>31</sup>

“Different hemispheric regions receive different degrees of light that produce different nuances of colour.” The intensity and clarity of light from the sun’s rays will vary and change according to the time of year. This is related to the density of the gaseous atmosphere that surrounds the earth, and the angle of the sun’s rays as it penetrates this gas. ‘Light, in order to be seen, must strike something.....’<sup>32</sup>

“When light eventually hits the ground, it comes back altered – the result of many chromatic shadings on its journey from the stratosphere.....”<sup>33</sup>

We can establish a series of typical scenarios within interior space by evaluating the light source, the orientation of a room, the natural surroundings. We plan to demonstrate this through the use of electronic technology – initially to capture the essence of a place and its inherent colours, (perhaps by using ‘google’ earth or similar web searching techniques)and then to analyse the influencing factors that effect the way colour behaves, as seen through the use of digital photography.

This idea was reinforced in the interview with Patrick Frey in regard to the use of the camera to ‘capture’ and ‘focus’ the eye on a particular set of colours – one way of training the eye to separate and select, identify and match colours with each other. Patrick believes this is an excellent way of developing ‘an eye for colour’.

This is not simply an exercise in selecting colour that reflects the owner’s personality, but one that reaches further to also marry those individual tastes and sense of style with their immediate surroundings – an important part of which is the natural light endemic to a particular region or place, and to owned internal world.

‘All of the colour stimuli that we receive from the external world are connected with our internal world: our psyche. At the same time we may consider that colour is not just dependent on the external world, but may also originate through the power of imagination of our inner world’.<sup>34</sup>

The harsh bright sunlight of Australia can be tiring on the eyes – we need to learn how to filter this and produce interior spaces that ‘manage’ light through the application of colour. This need not be contrary to the incorporation of natural light – indeed it can enhance the tone and quality of the natural environment. It needs to be demonstrated through an understanding of how light interacts with colour, and the resulting choices we can make, based on the broad criteria we have outlined.

Again I refer to the book ‘Colour and Light’ to quote...‘Curiously, the most critical decision was not the actual colour – often the particular hue comes last – but how saturated it should be.

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<sup>31</sup> Colour and Light, Kaufmann and Dahl, Published by Clarkson N. Potter, New York 1999, pge.9

<sup>32</sup> Colour and Light, Kauffmann and Dahl, ibid pge.9

<sup>33</sup> Colour and Light, Kauffmann and Dahl, ibid pge 11

<sup>34</sup> ‘Colour, Environment and Human Response by Frank H Mahnke Chapter:What is Colour? An Introduction From a Psychological Viewpoint. Page 7

The intensity of the colour had to correspond to the intensity of light just outside the window.' 'A room is much more pleasant to be in if it relates to the exterior light'.

To quote further - 'The less contrast of light and dark between hues, the more they tend to dissolve into one another'. 'Recreating this luminosity in a room is as simple as keeping colour values close'.

These comments bring to mind the conversation held with Leora Brooke at the American Intercontinental University in London. Leora is a colour teacher at this privately run university, and was keen to discuss the way she delivers and assesses colour. One of the key comments from this interview was her

desire to impart to students a strong awareness of this 'dissolving of boundaries' through experimentation with colour saturation.

This was established through a series of colour swatches laid up side by side, where students strove to move the eye from one colour to the next with minimum 'jumps', eliminating the division lines between, creating a subtle movement and flow. If we liken this to an interior we can visualize the effect this may produce – homogenous and soothing, producing an excellent flow from one space to the next. Leora believed that the subtleties and nuances of colour can be learned more effectively this way. See attached Program Outline.

She also agrees that it is very challenging to develop the ability to choose unique colours that are not dictated by a given product range, but rather from the perspective of 'finding' colours through experimentation and evaluation of one's own responses. These 'found' colours may form the basis for a new colour scheme, a set of paint colours, a fabric or wallpaper design.

At present, most of this experimentation is produced manually, but the future suggests that this process needs to happen digitally, to reduce the time required to achieve this.

The spectrum of colours available within the computer monitor are presented in a way that is easy to manipulate and adjust. The limitation here is that the final print out of colour is difficult to manage, and the strong reference to the pigment based colour that is necessary to achieve the practical applied outcomes for the decorating industry make this a challenging medium.

This is not very different however from many other colour based industries, where computer colour and product or print colour, must be matched across a range of mediums, and must also be able to be cross referenced, and delivered electronically. We believe it is essential that colour can be understood across a range of products and disciplines, and that Australian educational bodies engage with latest technologies for colour application for the future development of the skills and knowledge economy.

There is a concern for the future of colour in Australia if our training is limited by a predetermined 'colour' market place, relying heavily on existing product and economically driven solutions through standard paint ranges.

We would like to see all those involved in the study and application of colour experimenting with colour effects and developing unique solutions that may require a greater level of innovation in terms of response to colour and light, colour and perception, and colour interpretation for specific outcomes. This process will hopefully encourage the confidence to develop new colours, and new colour products, and a sustainable industry that reflects creativity as part of innovative thinking.

## 4.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

### Opportunity 1

#### **Increasing knowledge in specialised areas of colour training for heritage, conservation and restoration in order to more effectively restore conserve etc .**

There is an identified need to increase knowledge and skills in this area to enrich our Australian heritage environments, specifically through sensitivity to the colour aspects, and through training that TAFE deliverers have the capability to deliver. We believe that greater imagination and the resulting embracing of exciting colour proposals for heritage buildings needs promotion through the decoration and design industry. We need capacity to reach out into local councils and influence decisions that effect our built environment.

Part of this capacity can arise from our developed expertise through training and partly from an increased activity with the other design disciplines that deal in these areas such as Architecture, Interior Design, and Building Design and Technology, and the related trades that these disciplines support.

This fact was reinforced most convincingly by a range of interviews included as appendices in this report, and particularly in discussion with one historical colour expert in London, Patrick Baty from 'Paint and Paper.'

Patrick Baty has found he has had to employ architects to work as paint and paper representatives in his successful Paint and Paper business as they are the only group sufficiently interested and knowledgeable to deal with these aspects of the decoration industry. We believe a similar situation exists in Australia although architecture graduates are generally not found working in Paint and Paper consultancy roles. There is, however, a recognized shortage of 'heritage' experts, particularly from the decoration perspective, and this shortage is impacting on decisions made at local and national government statutory levels.

While there are dedicated bodies and departments at both Holmesglen TAFE and at RMIT around heritage architecture and buildings, building techniques, restoration etc. we believe that currently there is no single body looking specifically at the colour aspect in innovative ways. The very fact that these bodies deal with tradition seems to maintain a focus on the past rather than the present and the future.

Thus the need to deliver colour oriented training through an added opportunity to 'play with colour' for specific applications. This requires a third level of colour learning which is significantly more practical and focused than that offered in an architecture degree for example – the type of training that TAFE can deliver via an Advanced Diploma qualification.

The outcomes from these proposed studies, and from the workshops outlined at the end of the report can also benefit graduates and post graduates in terms of colour knowledge and the use of applied colour in other walks of life, and should stimulate industry by providing refreshed colour product development.

Other institutions that will benefit from the findings of the report include the ISS Institute, RAI, the DIA, ICOMOS, Heritage Victoria, through their individual members and participation in community projects.

If we do not engage with these specialised areas of colour and decoration from the practical perspective, we risk losing our freshness and ability to experiment, discuss, and implement colour from new and contemporary perspectives on matters of historical interest and significance.

## **Opportunity 2**

### **Improved training for decoration & design for increased client and social satisfaction :-**

This area of colour requires specialised outcomes that involve individual colour perception to be developed to a high level to enable decorators to confidently interpret and personalize colour, and to separate this uniquely from the technological explosion that is bringing sophisticated colour to everyone. This refers back to Lindsey Glover's experience at The NCS Colour School where the individual's perception of colour is given credence and viability. Colour imagery from everywhere is available – we are saturated with influences on our sensations, and this is often more confusing than helpful in determining a personal approach to one's own living environment.

The Interior Decoration industry requires a broad knowledge and application of colour - more than in any other industry. Decorators need to understand the specification of colour not only as it relates to all manner of materials but also its performance under various conditions, alongside the more abstract area of colour that relates to feeling and the psychology behind colour meaning. Colour for the decorator is complex and multi layered - it is the one area of decorating information that the client/inexperienced person cannot purchase over the counter. Solutions offered in a magazine or book cannot guarantee the purchaser will truly "know" the intended outcomes of subsequent decisions made from that information, or whether they are truly correct for their own situation.

Decorators are hired because of their "experience". This embraces a confident understanding of colour perception (and every client expects that understanding to cover all colours, in any situation). Unfortunately, the decoration student - having left their training, needs to relearn colour for themselves as it relates to the individual client/perception/application. Without a higher level of understanding and ability to interpret the client needs effectively, the service they are able to provide will be restricted to accessing the nearest colour card, and in reality - the client can do this for themselves.

We believe there needs to be a third level to colour education (Colour 3), for the decorating industry to address two key aspects that are not currently covered in education at the Colour Studies 2 level. These are :- 1) A holistic approach, recognition and appreciation of the individual as a whole through perception and response to colour, and 2) Colour and light – contextualised by relevance to specific conditions and criteria such as region, historic reference, setting.

The linking of these two aspects of colour will provide a much needed, more sophisticated level of colour understanding based on additional knowledge and experiential cognition that is vital to all those involved with the evaluation and application of colour. It will provide the confidence to perceive and apply good colour solutions which will always be an integral part of great decoration and design, by providing greater insight into the psychological aspects of colour from the individual's perspective.

## **Opportunity 3**

### **New product ranges for both historical and contemporary interiors**

Of particular interest in terms of Australian product is in the area of interior and exterior paint applications, specifically in relation to alternative heritage and historical colour palettes. From

the overseas study it is clear that we are limited, even restricted, to a minimum no of possible colours for this area of decoration, and that this is driven by economics.

While we appreciate this situation, it is also apparent that there is a need to 'customize' the existing paint ranges in a way that allows greater individual expression, and encourages community awareness for a more unified approach to streetscape and holistic colour schemes that set a particular area apart. In London this was clearly demonstrated by the colours of homes in Portobello Road in Knightsbridge.

This part of the study will require further feasibility research with council regulators, and with architects and designers involved in this part of the industry. Ideally it will also require collaboration with a major or minor paint company for product research and development. We already have some unique product ranges in the country, but none that present with a national standard for specific light conditions relevant for different regions and areas. We see this as a seriously competitive market approach to a new range of paints that address colour values, hues and translucency or light - 'reflectiveness', for energy efficiency as well as relativity to natural light sources. Some suggestions around the name for this type of paint range have been considered.

## **The Problem**

### **Skills gaps**

### **Colour training and colour learning – planned and accidental colour knowledge must be assimilated for effective colour solutions**

Colour 1 can be seen as 'foundation colour' - the theory or science of colour - it is applicable to everyone who works with any form of colour in education and in industry.

Colour 2 – the Colour Tools. This second level of colour looks at limited colour information involving physical material and colour perception. The basic tools for applying colour are acquired here - learning the language & terminology of colour, understanding colour harmony and contrast, plus other basic colour concepts and their potential applications.

Any field of learning, with colour listed as a component, will provide this second level aligned to the specific needs of the particular industry discipline - Building Design & Technology, Visual Merchandising, Graphic Arts etc., in order to get the relevant message across.

In the current training scenario colour learning ends here for most and additional information becomes the passion and pursuit of the individual. We need only look at the number of books and websites devoted to colour to know that many individuals pursue colour information in many varied directions, depending on the area of interest and need.

It is one area of our lives that can effect health and happiness, and a sense of control over our environment – we seek reinforcement of our interaction with the world through the way we colour it.

'You can manipulate the colours that surround you so that they work together with your body's own healing mechanism.'<sup>35</sup>

## **Key Issue**

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For the Australian decorator and designer to lead in this major field of design there is the need to develop a broader and more confident forum to debate colour application based on shared knowledge and understanding across disciplines working into the built environment. This need encompasses increased sensitivity to specific areas of colour application - heritage listed environments, specialised care and living environments, contemporary and unique commercial and personal spaces. We also need to respond appropriately with environmentally aware and technically improved colour products to a wide range of scenarios. We believe therefore that a further area of formal study is needed in the form of Colour 3.

‘Colour is not the property of objects, spaces or surfaces; it is the sensation caused by certain qualities of light that the eye recognizes and the brain interprets. Therefore, light and colour are inseparable, and, in the design of the human habitat, equal attention must be devoted to their psychological, physiological, visual, aesthetic and technical aspects’<sup>36</sup>

As a further development from this expanded knowledge we believe new product for interior applications such as wall coverings (early Australian designer Florence Broadhurst is popular again right now), paint ranges, accessories and fabrics can continue to thrive and increase, and that these outcomes can be equally applied to both commercial and residential environments.

## **The Solution**

### **The Big Picture**

The recommendations from this report are varied. Academically there is an identified need to provide training at a post diploma level to achieve specialised skills for practical vocational outcomes. Within the spectrum of colour training these needs can be defined around historical and heritage solutions, sustainability issues for interiors, potential for creative development in the area of interior product, and the need for research and application into aged care and specialised care facilities. We shall consider a range of identified opportunities that we believe will impact on our future built and interior environment.

Hand in hand with this report is the fellows’ involvement into the development of new National Training Packages for the Interior Decoration and Design industry, with specific focus on a higher level qualification in the form of an Advanced Diploma in Interior Decoration / Advanced Diploma in Interior Design. In the writing of the new competencies it has reinforced the identified need for ‘further learning’ into specific areas where colour is of key significance.

One of these recognized areas is in the area of Conservation and Restoration, where there is little or no training currently provided in any program apart from an Architecture degree, and here the colour training aspect is limited. While there are programs that address Heritage issues, such as the one at Holmesglen Institute of TAFE, there is still a need for further specialised colour knowledge. Part of the new competencies will provide the opportunity to develop necessary and practical knowledge and skills for taking Australia forward in this area.

These same aspects and proposals could equally apply to various other public facilities such as aged care and specialised care facilities in relation to colour training. There is potential to work with nursing graduates for example, and to offer post graduate studies for a range of career directions.

## **The Solution**

### **The Specific picture**

There is a range of areas that will be impacted by the findings from this report and study.

**1. Heritage Policy** – potential to impact on the directions of future policy setting in relation to ‘colour management’ issues. At present there is no Commonwealth/ Federal Policy on colour control for our built environment. This could be an area for future influence for an extended study in a report such as this.  
From a designers and teaching perspective this would be tackled through a visual presentation of ‘before’ and ‘after’ images that demonstrate the possibilities of ‘managing’ colour from a collaborative community approach. Lindsey and Victoria are proposing to do a virtual ‘paint up’ of certain areas within the Melbourne urban area, linked to researched information on the buildings, the year of construction, natural colour and light, regional palette etc., to demonstrate the improvement of ‘managed’ colour into the urban environment. There have been similar studies conducted in the UK to provide guidance.

### **2.State Government – Training Bodies.**

Potential for consideration of new ‘training skills’ to be developed into a range of competency units for delivery via OTTE programs and the Skills Council of Victoria, Council of Adult Education etc.

### **3. Local Government**

At the local level the new skills might also be considered as ‘professional development’ for council officers and heritage assistants.

The implications of ‘managed street colour’ would require thorough understanding at the local level by all involved in the decision making process.

In Victoria the only colour control is for places (including buildings) listed on the Victorian Heritage Register (approx 2000 of them).

In municipal planning for heritage overlay, where colour issues have been identified in the planning stage via a planning scheme ordinance, greater colour control is being considered. However, with a strong enough push from designers and industry alike, there may be the need to introduce a new section at local council level developed for dealing specifically with ‘community colour’ applications. This would provide a ‘designed’ approach to our living and working environments that would minimize ‘ugly’ streetscapes.

While we realise that these areas are beyond our time capability as part of this study, the report could inspire others in this field to take up some of these options.

Another side to this at the local level is the management of applied colour to previously ‘uncoloured’ buildings and how this might be considered from both a colour inherent in material perspective, and from a colour balance perspective within an overall street plan.

### **4.Professional Organizations**

There will be implications for professional bodies such as the DIA to revisit professional development opportunities, and perhaps even develop extra levels of qualification for colour consultancy and heritage specialist work. The associations might consider sponsoring a study scholarship into colour to build expertise in this area within Australia.

### **5.Urban Planning / Architecture**

Architects and Urban Planning practitioners may use the information concerning ‘broad picture colour’, utilizing the ‘google earth’ perspective, to provide a sense of general colour nuance in

an area or region, and then pursue this into application for presentation to councils and authorities. There may also be potential for sharing of specific 'inherent' colour through materials that could enhance the designers perspective on applied colour, leading to improved respect between designers and decorators and the architectural profession. This may in turn lead to greater opportunity for integrated projects.

## **6. Paint manufacturers and retailers**

There is opportunity for collaborative product development that could enhance both new product ranges, and provide joint training opportunities. The training could be offered as part of an agreed professional development program around applied colour, in return for the paint company's specialist product capabilities.

RMIT could work with a paint company to develop a 'designer' range of paints – perhaps requesting permission from the designer themselves to have their product made here under licence to a large paint manufacturer, but with the acknowledgement of the Designer within an existing paint company's range of product. For example – The David Oliver Paint Range – manufactured under license, and sitting within the Solver Paint companies standard range.

There is also potential for retailers to develop associated product ranges for the home that could work into this scenario, thus building an expanded holistic design solution.

## **7. Design Agencies and Studios**

The specialised knowledge can be shared across the whole design and decoration area, inspiring new and sensitive colour solutions for a wide range of environments and activities. The new 'colour awareness' will impact on how designers and design studios take a brief from a client, and may broaden the perspective on 'heritage' or 'historical' colour, providing a reinvigorated design direction and possible career pathway.

## **8. The Consumer**

An even more wide reaching effect of the new colour knowledge and it's application will be for the general public. Their choice will be expanded, greater expertise and professionalism will emerge around that choice, and they may be given the opportunity to consider design colour outcomes for community streetscapes as well as individual dwellings and buildings through participation in local councils.

According to Michael Lancaster –“The understanding of colour in context is being lost. Few people are aware that the impact of a colour will depend on its setting and its relationship to adjacent colours”.<sup>37</sup>

To further quote on this issue – “The public's perception of architectural colour has been confused by the explosion of cheap pigments in an almost infinite variety of colours and tones”.<sup>38</sup>

## **Colour for the Future**

A final solution will be via the delivery of two proposed one day workshops that aim to increase public and professional awareness of colour. The first will focus on the individual, their perception and interpretation through comparative colour exercises and project.

The second will look more specifically at colour from an historical perspective, and provide the participant with a new way of seeing 'heritage' or historical colour.

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<sup>37</sup>. Michael Lancaster on colour and conservation from 'Colour in the historic environment', Context archive June 2001 Pge 3 of 4

<sup>38</sup> Michael Lancaster - ibid



It is believed that through these workshops a greater colour awareness, and a real sense of customized and contextualised colour can occur.  
With this increased awareness should also come improved colour outcomes for the individual and for the broader community as a whole.

Victoria Versteege  
Lindsey Glover

## APPENDIX

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Questions and Answers from both Paris and London follow:-

### Interview 1

Paris American Academy\_- a range of teaching staff were interviewed

1. Historical colour – How is it managed in France at the local level?

**Response:** Very regulated due to historic dimensions which is considered necessary to retain overall character and a sense of unity.

Does it allow for individual interpretations? –

**Response:** To a limited degree in Paris, historical buildings, natural materials etc. and regional colours are respected.

How do you provide a contemporary feel for a 'heritage' colour scheme?

**Response:** Again, traditional style is greatly respected, but more than this is an underlying appreciation of the need to maintain the French character, so often colour is applied minimally to lift or brighten a small section of the building façade, rather than an 'all over' treatment. Natural materials such as concrete, stone, limestone, are left to weather rather than coloured. The contemporary colour scheme is not ranked as importantly as the historic reference.

2. Your students come from all over the world – is colour a common language?

**Response:** Yes, with a strong balance of American and French appreciation of colour through reference to past and present trends, particularly in fashion and seasonal colour. See attached sample of a typical exercise.

3. How much importance does Paris American Academy place on the formalised teaching of standard colour theory, and how does this get assessed in terms of an overall project that must also address emotional and psychological aspects of colour?

**Response:** Integrated into project work through a range of media, and based on the Munsell system. The 'essence' of the concept is interpreted through colour that is linked through the relevant discipline, and awareness is developed through association with the required outcome for the project.

4. Can you teach about colour without the physical activity of mixing pigment colours to understand warm and cool, tints, tones, pastels, shades, etc?

**Response:** No, still an integral and final stage in selecting exactly the right colour, best viewed 'in situ' if possible, or in a range of lighting conditions.

5. Commercial colour versus residential colour – what are the key aspects that you address to clarify and differentiate the two different client expectations?

**Response:** With commercial colour there is the ability to incorporate brighter stronger colour if necessary.

6. What do you believe are the 3 key aspects of colour that are essential to achieve successful colour outcomes?

**Response:** Consider theory, latest trends, historical reference

Can we produce effective and successful solutions without thorough training and understanding of colour theory?

**Response:** *To a degree, but formal learning removes much of the 'fear' of selecting and specifying colour.*

7. Is there an awareness of environmental and sustainable colour in the curriculum at Paris American Academy?

**Response:** *Only as determined by individual project needs, then addressed as required, delivered by practising architects.*

8. How closely are colour and light linked in your curriculum?

**Response:** *No emphasis on this in the teaching program at present, but students will learn about this through their individual projects on an 'as required' basis.*

9. Do students / designers at Paris American Academy utilise technology in their presentations?

**Response:** *Very little, except for Autocad. Other colourboards and conceptual work is still presented as hand rendered with physical samples attached.*

10. 'Designer' colours. Where do designers draw inspiration from for developing new ranges of colour and related product?

**Response:** *From the influence of fashion, and the seasons.*

## **Interview 2**

### **Questions for Patrick Frey, Pierre Frey Fabrics, Paris 2005.**

1. Can you describe a personal philosophy of colour – do you think about this consciously, or is it instinctive?

**Response:** *It has come from cultural absorption over a long period, but started in my youth with a range of influences from my mother. Travel, and the influence of style from Coco Chanelle, and other key persons in the textile design trade – eg. Brunswig and Fils. His mother was very significant in his early training by exposing him to quality design.*

2. From where do you draw your inspiration for your new ranges – what influences your colour choices each year? What gives them global appeal?

**Response:** *From the past and looking at how this can be reinterpreted for the future – but always with an eye on the French cultural heritage, the sense of style that emulates from this is one part. The other factors include picking up ideas from everywhere – acknowledging market awareness, personal loves and being to trail and error ideas for successful development.*

3. How do you feel about historical colour – is it restrictive in France or in a global sense – and how do you deal with it within your textile ranges?

**Response:** *It is embraced with respect and awareness of the uniqueness of French style, the use of natural indigenous materials, (limestone and render) to retain the French character. This is mixed with the latest trends and technology for new buildings of significance such as the Museum of Modern Art.*

4. If you were to teach about colour in a formal sense, what would you recommend as the 3 key areas for consideration – for example – understanding the theory of colour and colour mixing?  
following latest trends in colour?  
encouragement of subjective response to colour?  
sustainability of colour?  
correctness of colour?  
international colour awareness?  
any other aspect?

**Response:** *Developing an eye for colour – putting details together, using photography to capture and distil the vision, comparing items from anywhere to evaluate intensity, difference etc. Categorising into groups, leaving under the eye for a while.*

5. Has technology affected your approach to colour? Could you describe any influence this may have had on your ranges from a manufacturing perspective, and from a personal perspective? What have been the key influences?

**Response:** *Yes, now used for reproduction of certain fabrics and has speeded up colour resolution. Useful for simulating sample ranges only, but final appearance is still by hand and eye.*

6. How do you incorporate 'green' thinking into your fabric ranges

**Response:** *The younger generation is very concerned about these matters and the business is as environmentally friendly as possible. However, it is essential to maintain the balance between practicality and safety – you cannot say no to the world we are living in. For example, if a wool fibre needs 10% polyester to ensure it's performance then that should be incorporated.*

7. Would you ever consider bringing out an 'environmental' range of product, and would you see this as a future challenge for textile designers? Or something that is inevitable? Or something that can be addressed sufficiently within standard ranges?

**Response:** *As above*

8. How do you as a designer develop and communicate your vision of colour for a particular colour / textile range to your manufacturers? What would you start this process with?

**Response:** *Working in teams with particular specialist mills I have come to trust, trial and error approach, looking, seeing and discussing, but always with my individual 'eye' for design overseeing the process.*

9. How do you ensure that the team of designers who develop your product achieve the exact quality of product that you have envisioned?

**Response:** *Going back to the original, checking, reviewing and not only 'seeing' the fabric, but 'feeling' whether it is accurate, and saying the right things.*

10. Considering CMYK print colour, and the variations from the RGB colour found within the computer system, do you see this as a potential medium for learning

about colour from a designers and decorators perspective? Does the medium really matter?

**Response:** Computer colour (2000 - 3000 colours generated) is only used for simulation purposes and is very effective in this capacity. It has not proven the best medium for capturing authenticity of fabric texture where this has been based on antiquity and tradition – the computer ‘perfects’ the detail and originality is lost.

## LONDON ENGLAND

### Interview 3

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#### David Oliver - ‘Paint and Paper Library’ – 5 Elystan Street London.

1. Historical colour – How strictly is this managed in London / Britain at the local level?
  - How much freedom does a designer have to interpret this for individual outcomes?

**Response:** Considerable freedom except on heritage listed properties. David specialises in historic colours with a contemporary feel and mixes / invents his own colours – seeks out colours that don’t already exist in other manufacturer’s catalogues.

2. Why are your contemporary designs successful?
  - Because they can work back into historical settings? Can also work with a contemporary feel?
  - What are the key elements that you consider make your wall coverings work into both environments - eg. Scale of pattern, subtlety and tone, non figurative texture? New colour ways? Easy care and maintenance?

**Response:** a) His personal choice (playing around with colours) drove his original colour range known as ‘Architectural Colours’. He created colours that were not available anywhere else – he saw this as ‘filling the gap’.

b) Colours and patterns that derive from historical motif, but are translated into current design trends, and will work into any period of style and architecture.

3. When you launch a new range, what are the key factors you are responding to? Do you do considered research, an instinctive response to current trends? From where do you draw your knowledge around current trends in the market place? Travel, mag. reference, artists/designers expressions? Other - product, trade shows, forecasting company?

**Response:** David’s approach to this is a very personal journey – he recalls experiences from life and relates these to his colour ranges. He likens this to working with musical instruments – each producing its unique sound or quality that embellishes the whole. His latest colour range is called ‘Orchestration’. This is how David interprets decoration and the painting of spaces.

4. Is there ‘environmental’ and ‘sustainable’ awareness in your paint and paper ranges? Do you see this as an increasingly important factor to consider in the development of new ranges? What percentage of clients would you say are keen to have environmentally friendly product on their walls?

**Response:** Yes, this is an essential aspect of product these days - clients are keen to engage with environmentally friendly product, and the whole 'Paint and Paper Library' range is environmentally formulated.

5. What 'colour system' is your paint range based on? Munsell, NSC, other?

**Response:** Not based on any particular colour system, but developed up from a black and white base ( same theory as the Munsell system – the Grey scale), then a little colour is added, building to the final tone or shade. Again David referred back to his drawing and rendering at art school which helped him to see colour in subtle tones and values, starting from the shading he applied in his drawings to capture light and shade.

6. How closely do you link colour and light when advising a client on a particular product? How do you demonstrate the variations that light and the finish of a colour will have upon the final outcome? eg. flat finish, light reflectivity, etc.

**Response:** The Paint and Paper Library range is cleverly displayed in a three dimensional format – a series of boxes that represent rooms, attached to the walls in his shops. These allow clients to view the applied colour from a number of different angles and under different light conditions, thus clearly demonstrating how light effects the colour intensity, and reflectivity.

7. Do you deal mainly with residential clients or do you also do commercial spaces? Do you have different ranges for the 2 environments? What are the main differences? Do you find commercial ranges are also popular for residential situations?

**Response:** David's range does not vary from residential to commercial application – he uses the same colours, but in different quantities and depth, and tones down the colour value for residential environments.

8. What is your view of the 'global village' impact, both transient and perpetual, on colour and design?

**Response:** Does not impact greatly on his interpretation – sufficient market to absorb his 'bespoke' ranges within London. Clients come to him for a particular look that he has become known for.

9. How has technology affected your ranges? Do you use computer imaging and printout to simulate a new design and colours? How successful is this?

**Response:** Technology is a useful tool for simulation of the look only, and is used widely in accurate 'recipes' for mixing paints. It has also helped from an environmental aspect in terms of sending a client a digital representation, but also includes the physical samples of recommended colours.

10. What do you believe are the 3 key aspects of colour that you would like your staff & our students to understand?

Can any one produce effective and successful colour solutions without a good understanding of colour theory?

Can 'good colour sense' be instinctive, without training, or do you really need to know what happens to colour using various bases, and how and why some work well together, because of warm and cool derivations for example?

**Response and Summary**

1. David recommends considering colour firstly from the tonal perspective, look at gradations of colour to soften, to blend, to enhance the sense of space – merge colours into one another to minimise unnecessary break up of spaces.
  2. He also believes ‘good colour sense’ is related to early exposure to colour in one way or another – formally or informally, and may even be accidental, but that this helps to develop an awareness and appreciation. eg. His Fine Art degree.
  3. Mixing, playing, experimenting with colour is the best way to ‘learn’ about your own sense of colour interpretation – nothing is wrong, everything can work when the right combination comes together.
- A summary from this interview with David Oliver has been captured in the body of the report in relation to various aspects of colour.

## **Interview 4**

### **Leora Brook – Lecturer - American Intercontinental University, London.**

*An informal interview with Leora Brook, a lecturer in the Interior Design program revealed some excellent insight into the colour course at this private university in the exclusive Knightsbridge area of London.*

*This university offers a strong colour program structured basically around the Ittens approach – starting with the Grey Scale (9 steps only) and then developing this outwards into colour values. However, what makes this program distinctive, is that Leora has developed a new order of learning by placing exercises in a different sequence.*

*While the Grey Scale is a typical beginning in a colour learning sequence, Leora’s colour teaching quickly adapts to moving students through a series of exercises focusing on saturation rather than the traditional concentration on hue or value.*

*This is developed through the formation of balanced abstract designs which aim at creating an awareness of the subtlety of colour that can be produced via an informal ‘feeling’ process, rather than the very theoretical approach of considering strict colour families and groups at this early stage of colour education.*

*This practise tends to encourage students towards a more individualised and personal approach to colour, and is in strong contrast to traditional rule driven outcomes which tend to categorize colour too simply, and perhaps too early.*

*Leora recommended the need to focus more on the ‘experience’ of colour mixed almost by accident . These ‘unpure’ colours can then be ‘tweaked’, arranged and balanced with other colours of similar levels of saturation. Often these colours are not of an obvious derivation, but when combined with colours of similar intensity and saturation teach students a great deal about the value of colour, the value of experimentation – the ‘new’ colours becoming the basis for their colour thinking.*

*This helps to ensure that they are not ‘locked’ into available ranges, and that they are able to appreciate unique colour combinations and solutions.*

*A further important part of developing a ‘feel’ for colour is through the compilation of a*

*Colour diary – a record of anything to do with either formal colour exercises, experimental doodlings, and any groupings of colour. These collections help develop ‘the eye for colour’, a sense of style, an edited selection.*

*It has been obvious since this discussion on colour with Leora and other colour experts in London and Paris, and also in Sweden at the NCS Colour School, that specifiers of colour do not readily rely on standard ranges.*

*Many are able to visualize their own colours based on experience & background, and are able to access a paint manufacturer that is prepared to interpret their vision.*

*This approach is one we believe will enhance colour directions for designers and decorators in the Australian environment.*

## **Interview 5**

### **KLC School of Design – Chelsea Harbour, London.**

*A list of questions were forwarded to KLC prior to arrival, and Director of Studies, Simon Cavelle arranged a meeting amongst a select group of colour experts and designers from the London area. This group consisted of Sue Timney Fowler from the famous Textile Design and Manufacturer Colefax and Fowler.*

*Sue is a practising graphic designer in London, who also provides lifestyle solutions and was adamant that colour mixing, experimenting, and building a personal perspective on colour was as important as the formal theoretical learning, but that both were relevant for any realistic colour learning.*

*This interview also proved invaluable in terms of key issues that had arisen from previous discussions and interviews that had taken place on the journey, and focused largely on the historical aspects of colour and the interpretation of this into a strictly regulated colour environment.*

*Patrick Baty dispelled a number of myths around sustainability and natural ageing. From his research and scrapings taken from historic buildings over a thirty year career in his specialty area of restoration, Patrick found that natural ageing is a fallacy – most buildings were painted every six years or so.*

*He also dispelled the belief that ‘natural’ dyestuffs were more environmentally friendly than ‘synthetic’ colourants, as chemical colours are far more highly tested and are therefore often more environmentally friendly.*

*Added to this is the increasing practise of only using water based acrylics which are very user friendly. The whole paint industry has changed in this area, and lead paint is now only allowed to be used on some historic sites, in England, and that this will also shortly become unacceptable.*

*Victoria Blunden and Simon Cavelle, who both teach at KLC, talked briefly about how we develop colour sensitivity in students, and believe that the setting of some initial colour rules is helpful for providing a foundation for colour rationalisation, especially when communicating ideas back to clients. This enabled practitioners to work with confidence when making statements about colour.*

*They also believe that historical colours are needed to maintain links to the past with accuracy.*



*This interview took the form of a more informal discussion rather than question and answer approach, and much of the response has been included in relevant sections throughout the report.*

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