Colour Becomes Texture In Light

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ABSTRACT
Colour and texture interacting with light pre-occupies my thoughts every day in research and practise. I have developed a language of colour and materiality, which I use to create large-scale wall murals and surface textures for wall paneling, furniture and objects within the domain of architecture and design.

In understanding the way in which colour and texture absorbs or reflects light, giving it a specific character, I am able to create unique spaces. All my surface texture designs are made to measure and made by hand in my Parisian studio. I would like to present some of the designs and artworks showing them in moments of light that reveal all their subtleties. Our attention is first attracted by the colour and then gradually penetrates into a world of successive layers and details created by a play of light and texture. Colour becomes texture and light.

Keywords: Architecture, Interior design, Surface texture

1. INTRODUCTION
After finishing my studies in France, (Ecole Boulle and Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Arts Décoratifs in Paris), I began my career in a design studio where my principal occupation was to carry out research in colour. I am perpetually discovering new creative horizons, inventing palettes inspired by the observation of nature and its transformations throughout the seasons and light. I collect leaves that have fallen in autumn, earth from various quarries and natural objects and insects from forests, beaches and deserts. I study their colour structure and analyse their evolution, capturing the eternal marks and prints made through time. Details in these natural objects and landscapes inspire me to create colours and surface textures, which are used to transform architectural spaces. Each artwork is destined for a specific place, taking into consideration the history and purpose of an environment, the construction of the space and its light, as well as the client.

Colour cannot be separated from its association with its texture, its inherent structure. The skin of an animal, the surface of a shell, the wing of a beetle, the veins in a leaf or a piece of bark reveal depth of structure. The strength of the association between colour and texture is reinterpreted by understanding the way it absorbs or reflects light giving it a specific character and creating a unique sense of space whether it is a living room, a boat’s cabin, a gallery, a restaurant or a shop.
2. NOTE BOOKS
Black notebooks document the history of each study. The ideas, reflections, conversations, colour experiments and recipes are all recorded. I treat colour like a living material, watching it interact with the light. Sand, pigments and glue constitute the raw materials in the coatings. Chosen for their grains, the sands determine and dictate the coarseness and unevenness of the surface. As for the numerous pigments, researched with passion, they are part of my all-absorbing obsession with colour. Light gives a voice to the pigments within the coating and allows the surface texture to vibrate.

3. COLOUR PALETTE
My colour palette is inspired by the natural world and the observation of nature through time and light. I am fascinated by the life of surface textures in different cities. The aging of palace walls in Venice and temple walls in Japan. Each place colours my imagination. I do not belong to the standardized world of industry. All my colours and textures are made-to-measure. I assemble rather than mix shades.
4. TEXTURE & LIGHT
Granular, porous, uneven, rough, projecting, scarified, the textures of my coatings play on their diversity. Elements are included in the texture to communicate with the light. The complexity of texture and colour offers many doorways to legibility and perception. Seen from a distance of ten centimeters, two meters or thirty meters the coatings look quite different. Seen in different types of light or in varying light intensities, different characteristics of the texture are revealed. This diversity of sensory apprehension of the same material is what gives its life, in the same way as a piece of music, a play or any work of visual art which exists only through its variety and levels of interpretation and perception.

5. TOOLS
The defect, the irregularity and the random variation of the texture are the fruits of a demanding knowledge and expertise. I try to lift the material. I engrave, scratch, print and rip the surface. The sharpness of the movement, the composition of the material and its level of humidity and the length of time it is applied determine the height and crumbliness of the raised areas of the coating. The three dimensional result, while certainly random, is also disciplined. As well as, the many instruments used to apply the coating (trowels, brushes, flexible and sharpened or serrated spatulas); I use a variety of sanding and polishing tools. Their rubbing action at varying grades of coarseness results in a material bearing the wear of hours, months and years. The research development of a desired surface aspect frequently leads me to design and make my own tools.3

6. INSPIRATION - INVISIBLE
In a recent study, I began with the observation of flowers, moss and lichen in Japan. The finished artworks expressing vibrations of colour and a complexity of scale are exposed in my gallery in Paris. I focus on a vision of the ‘inside’ and
I worked on the idea of the ‘invisible’\(^4\). To the naked eye there is a view of the inside where one can find vibrations created at the same magnitude as a microscope.

I keep a microscope in my pocket, enlarging things by forty times. Often I collect sand to analyse its texture. From the analysis of an atom to the expansive galaxy I can constantly imagine transformations. The scales of vibrations, the dimension of things being hidden, the cycles of metamorphose accompany each of my projects. With the passing years, I go further into the material texture, somewhere between physics, chemistry and alchemy.\(^5\)

The ideas presented in the exhibition ‘Invisible’ were then developed into a series of large-scale murals for the public circulation areas of three lobbies linking three high-rise buildings in Paris. All the surrounding surfaces are grey – stone, timber and metallic paint surfaces. The neutrality of the surrounding surfaces allows the rhythms of the coloured panels to guide the visitor through and around the building. The wall panels are used to create a framework, to trace out a series of proportions bringing a new character to each of the volumes. Each mural gives an identity to each space, giving the visitor a sense of orientation, place and scale. I search for a harmony between the inside and the outside. I look to understand the volumes, the articulations, how the light transforms the walls. Colour is used as an element of construction. The viewer’s movement creates coloured light movement on the shiny metallic paint surfaces. The important presence of large glass partitions creates a beautiful play of reflected light harmonies and rhythms of colour at different times of the day.

7. THE TREE, THE BARK AND THE LEAF

I spent the last two autumns in Japan observing the colour transformation of the leaves. Watching the ginkgo, a mythic tree protected by the Buddhist monks, loosing its leaves, covering the ground with a powerful yellow, was a moment of great emotion for me. The ground became light! The gardens of the temples in Kyoto are places of contemplation and meditation. The ground is covered with carpets of mosses; the environment is carefully constructed with trees of varying forms and colours, from red maples to silvery bamboo. My observation of colour, texture and light were documented with watercolours and gouache paints.

My research has led to the collaboration with a client passionate about Asian and European trees. Each window from her château, two hours from Paris, is a painting collecting together different forms and colours of trees. I used a series of dark Prunus tree colours in the reception rooms on the ground floor to create a contrast and a link with the outside world. Each window becomes an aperture of light, drawing the viewer’s eye to take part in the symphony of trees outside. The carpets on the floor of these rooms are inspired by a bed of leaves on the forest floor, filling the rooms with the memory of the leaves that have fallen in autumn. From the moment that you enter into the château, the viewer does not imagine that he is in a landscape because there is a total absence of figurative expression. I constructed the polychromatic harmonies like a tree branching out to its leaves and flowers. The staircase and the corridors are inspired by bark. The rooms represent the transformation of the colours in leaves. Nothing is said or explained, but instead suggested, implied, in resonance with the seasons, the changing external landscapes and the cycle of natural life, represented through colour and texture.
8. PLACE VENDÔME
Inspired by the constructions of the stones on the Place Vendôme, I imagined a geometric play of superimposed colours and material textures for the offices of Clifford Chance. In the entrance lobby, I designed a series of mural compositions breaking up and redefining the space. The surfaces play between stone colours which are mat, polished, textured and pearly. The gallery leads the visitor past a series of vertical rhythms in highly textured bronzes. The meeting rooms in the original architecture looking onto Place Vendôme are decorated with mouldings of several different periods. I reinterpreted these proportions by superimposing geometric and asymmetric constructions over the top. The colours and textures are subtly different. Applications of pearl powders in transparent glazes create refractions and reflections of the light. For the lawyers who can spend days on end working in these spaces, the meeting of the existent styles and proportions with a modern expression of proportion, identity and place, creates calm and reflective spaces.

9. HÔTEL PARTICULIER DE WENDEL
The offices for the lawyers Baker and McKenzie are in a Parisian mansion decorated with several different architectural styles; a ballroom in marble, a music room in gold gilded wood. I created a link between these different styles with a modern interpretation of a motif in the existing decoration of the building, a ‘rinceau de feuillage’ or ‘the folding tip of a stem’ transformed through scale, colour and texture and light. At the start of the study, I made an inventory of the existing colours in the building. I developed a palette of colours and textures for a series of wall murals hiding and revealing computer screens for international conference meetings and bringing acoustic value to each space. The original motif is thirty centimeters high. Each fragment of the motif is different in each room, a play between polished and textured white material texture where the motif is now six metres high. As the visitor moves in the spaces the motif appears and disappears in the changing light.

10. SURFACE TEXTURE RESEARCH – NESPRESSO & L’OREAL
I work with many architects on different scales of project. The
Nespresso flagship shop on the Champs Elysées presents a mural wrapping around a fifteen metre wide space. The stratifications of the earth and its physical sensations transform into air and the aromas of fine coffee suggested by three thousand gold leaves applied to the top layer. A light source inbetween each superimposed panel reveals each different texture.

I recently created two artworks for Didier Gomez who designed an exceptional space for professional research and training for l’Oréal. I imagined two art works inspired by the way hair is fluid and supple when brushed and sculpted. The works are images of the marks made in hairs, which have been blown up in scale. I am constantly pre-occupied with scale, the proportion of the strand and the grain of the texture. The carbon black artwork reveals depth while the white pearl artwork reveals the brilliance of light on a head of hair.

11. COLOUR CONCEPTS

Colour concepts are developed every day for my own projects, but sometimes I work on colour studies for brands. Some years ago, I created a new colour concept for Grand Optical for their European eyeglasses shops. The concept, entitled “sand to sky” observed the transformation of sand and water in light and sun. The resin on the floor was inspired by sand; the shop counters by pebbles; the laboratory windows by the sky and the shops windows by the transparency of water and superimposed glass fragment collected on the beach.

12. THE LIBRARY OF COLOURS AND TEXTURES

My research studio is a library of colours and textures; an archive of the experiments, the studies, artworks and furniture designs that I have made for clients and designers and architects over twenty five years. It is a place of inspiration and work to further develop the language of colour, texture and light in architecture.  

![Fig.7](image1.jpg)

Offices, Paris

![Fig.8](image2.jpg)

The library of colours and textures
REFERENCES

6. Compiled by Melanie Yonge, architect graduated from Auckland University Architecture School in 1998 with honours, assistant to Pierre Bonnefille since seven years.
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