

# DESIGNING WITH COLOUR

**Evidence-based insights**  
for enhancing wellbeing

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[www.holisticdesign.fr](http://www.holisticdesign.fr)

# 1. INTRODUCTION

## Colour in design

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This document explores the use of colour during the design process to influence human mood, wellbeing and the use of space.

**Colour is a powerful tool for designers at every stage of their journey. For most people, colour is an intrinsic part of daily life. Colours in our surroundings often have an immediate impact: on our mood, our perception of space, and how we interact with others in a room. Mostly, we are not consciously aware of these effects.**

But, there is increasing evidence for the role of colour in the sense of wellbeing and the emotional associations generated by a space. The colours used can create an atmosphere of calmness or energy. They can promote concentration, or create a sense of luxury or warmth.

For designers, this makes colour one of the most powerful tools for shaping how space is used and perceived, and how it meets its users

needs. Painting a room deep, vibrant red has a very different impact to a cool blue palette, for example.

This document explores the different psychological associations humans have with specific colours. It also examines how the use of colour in different segments of a building shapes the dynamics of space and creates an atmosphere designed to support how that space is used.

Importantly, the document is not intended to be theoretical. Instead, Forbo Flooring Systems has created this guide to serve as a practical tool to support designers in making the best colour choices — choices that account for the sensory experience of colour, that promote wellbeing, and that best match each space to its intended function.





## 2. COLOUR, BEHAVIOUR, AND WELLBEING

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The effects of specific colours on mood, behaviour, and wellbeing are well-documented. And while we all experience colour subjectively, there are often common themes in our associations with each.

Colours can also guide us on what a space is used for, or promote a specific function. Certain colours stimulate conversation or creativity. Others serve as strong visual cues that can help users to navigate a busy space or reach a destination (for example, the coloured strips on hospital floors or walls).

### *Primary, Secondary, Tertiary and Complementary Colours*

All the colours we perceive in our day to day, and use in designs, are derived from the three **primary colours**: Red, blue and yellow. Additional hues are created when these are mixed to form **secondary colours** (orange, green, purple) and when primary and secondary colours are combined to form **tertiary colours** (additional shades of primary and secondary colours).

Meanwhile **complementary colours** are those that create a strong visual impact when used together. For example, red and green, blue and orange, and yellow and purple.

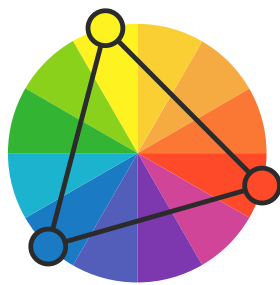
**“Colors act on the soul, they can excite sensations, awaken emotions of ideas that rest or agitate us and cause sadness or joy.”**

*Johann Wolfgang Goethe,  
Theory of colors, 1810*

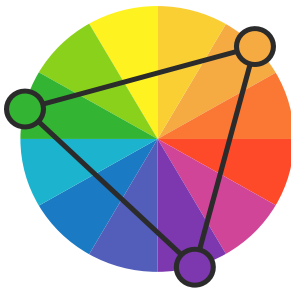
### Warm and Cool Colours

Warm colours, such as red, yellow, orange, and pink, stimulate exciting emotions. They can stimulate activity, conversation, appetite, or connection. Meanwhile cool colours, such as shades of blue, green, and purple, tend to create an atmosphere of calm and tranquillity, or a sense of security, comfort, or luxury.

Colours also play a role in making spaces more accessible, especially in cases where people may not perceive colour differences easily (such as in colour-blindness) or where colours are especially important to create a sense of safety (e.g, in senior homes, hospital wards or places intended for use by children). Using high contrast, avoiding monochromatic schemes, or using different textures, for example, can make a space more accessible.



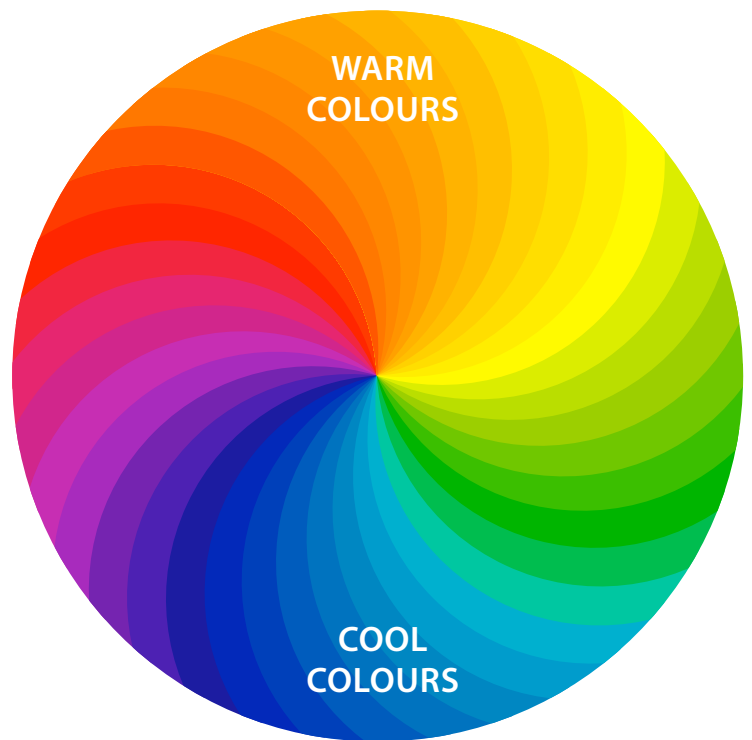
PRIMARY COLOURS



SECONDARY COLOURS



COMPLEMENTARY COLOURS

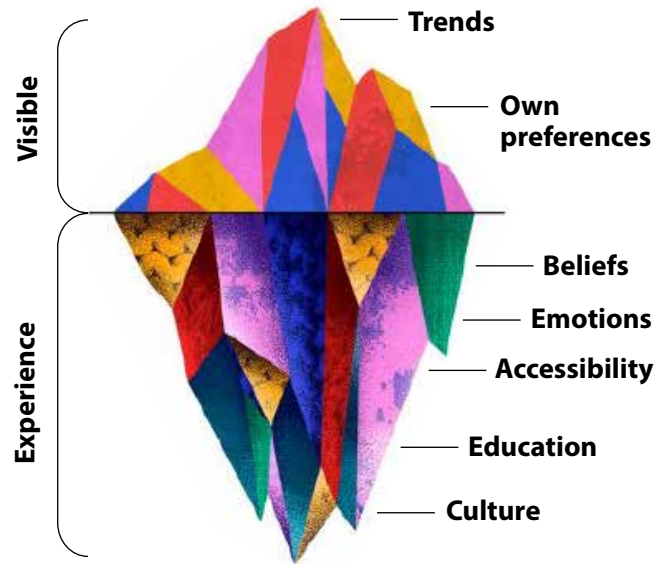


## Colour as a Funtional Tool

Colour also carries specific subjective and objective associations based on individual preference, experience and emotional resonance. The colours, and materials, used in a space therefore create a very specific user experience.

Though this differs from person to person to some extent, there are certain universal qualities that can be drawn on when designing space to make it more functional, attractive and better suited to a specific purpose.

In the following subsections, this ebook explores some common associations with colour, and the behaviours and emotions each one stimulates. It also discusses the segments of the built environment in which specific colours can be used during the design process, and examines the effects of each colour when used on the walls, ceilings, or floors of a room.



**Make the environment attractive**

**Provide visual comfort**

**Improve communication**

**Create an atmosphere**

**Easy maintenance and cleanliness**

**Identify a location**

**Create a path**

**Improve safety**

**All these needs relate to several uses of daily life:**



Better performance



Better efficiency and productivity



More pleasure



Commitment (sales, at work)



Less visual fatigue



More security



Better perceived quality (object, space)



Relax





# BLUE

Blue is associated with open skies, evoking a feeling of freedom and tranquillity. It's no surprise, then, that there is evidence that blue light decreases blood pressure<sup>3</sup> and promotes a sense of calm, improves focus,<sup>1</sup> and slows the metabolism.

Blue is also commonly selected as a "favourite colour",<sup>2</sup> and it bears associations of trust, loyalty, intelligence, and reflection.

There is evidence for a perception of a high standard of quality when buildings or logos feature this colour.<sup>3</sup> These associations make blue an excellent choice for educational and healthcare facilities, as well as recreational facilities that promote relaxation, like cinemas.

Deep blues represent integrity, authority, and knowledge. They can stimulate a sense of clarity. The deepest royal and midnight

blues can add a sense of gravity and luxury to a space. Meanwhile, lighter blues are often associated with healing and concentration. Turquoise, specifically, can add a feeling of calm and balance, but may be overstimulating if paired with too much yellow.

It's also worth noting that lighter blues can create a sense of chilliness in rooms with low levels of natural light, and that in some

cases blue may evoke a feeling of depression or feeling "down" - consider the expressions "Feeling blue" or "Having a blue Monday."

<sup>1</sup> [Blue light exposure decreases systolic blood pressure, arterial stiffness, and improves endothelial function in humans](#)

<sup>2</sup> [Color and psychological functioning: a review of theoretical and empirical work](#)

<sup>3</sup> [The Effects of Color on the Moods of College Students](#)

### Overall effect:

Relaxing, retiring

### Positive associations:

Calm, comfort, confidence, peacefulness, security

### Negative associations:

Depression, fear, melancholy, coldness

### On ceilings:

Cool, celestial, receding (light blues), heavy (dark blues)

### On walls:

Cool and distant (light blues), hygienic (turquoise)

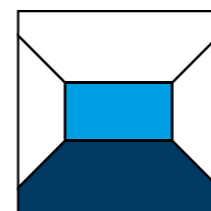
### On floors:

Effortlessness/effortless movement (light blues), cleanliness (turquoise), substance (dark blues)

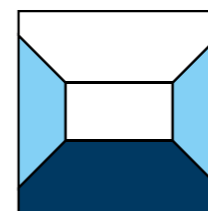
## COLOUR FACT

Exposure to blue light can improve cognitive performance, increasing task accuracy by up to **25%** in controlled environments.

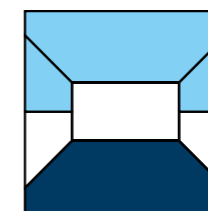
<sup>4</sup> Cajochen, C., Münch, M., Koblacka, S., Kräuchi, K., Steiner, R., Oelhafen, P., Orgül, S., & Wirz-Justice, A. (2005). *High sensitivity of human melatonin, alertness, thermoregulation, and heart rate to short wavelength light.* The Journal of Clinical Endocrinology & Metabolism, 90(3), 1311-1316.



receding space



clean / hygienic environment



spacial height





# GREEN

Like blue, green is one of the cooler colours, with corresponding associations of relaxation, restfulness, security, and calm. It is also widely considered the most restful colour for the eye.

Adding a splash of green in the form of flooring, wall accents, or even live plants can help people adjust to a new space.<sup>2</sup>

Most people also associate this colour with the outdoors and, to some degree, a sense of adventure. This can make it a powerful tool for creating an atmosphere of nature, growth, and youthfulness. Just keep in mind that green can also symbolise mould and sickness.

As with other colours, different shades of green can also have very different associations.

Dark green is sometimes associated with intense emotions like jealousy or greed. Yellow-greens create a sense of youthfulness, and olive green symbolises peace.

These attributes make the lighter shades of green perfect for use in areas that prioritise calm and emotional safety. Examples are hospitals, community facilities, and schools.

<sup>2</sup>Color and psychological functioning: a review of theoretical and empirical work

## COLOUR FACT

Green environments can increase feelings of calm and relaxation by up to **60%**, making it an effective colour for reducing stress in healthcare settings.

<sup>5</sup> Ulrich, R. S. (1984). *View through a window may influence recovery from surgery*. Science, 224(4647), 420-421.

### On ceilings:

Protective, though note that the reflection of this colour on the skin can be considered unattractive.

### On walls:

Cool, secure, calm, passive.  
Glaring greens can be an irritant.

### On floors:

Natural (if not saturated), relaxing, soft, cold (blue-greens)

### Overall effect:

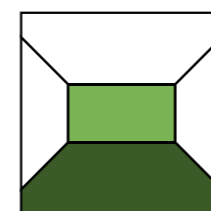
Retiring, relaxing

### Positive associations:

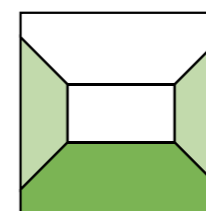
Tranquil, refreshing, natural, healing, peaceful

### Negative associations:

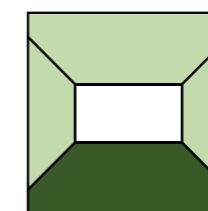
Tiresome, common



receding space



Refreshing environment



natural feel



# YELLOW

Yellow evokes feelings of joy, energy, curiosity, and vitality. It is also often associated with inspiration, communication, and enlightenment. Bright yellow is the colour of optimism, happiness, and upliftment. We associate lighter yellows with intellect, and deep yellow with sophistication (especially

when paired with grey). In contrast, the lightest pastel yellows are sometimes viewed as childlike or playful.<sup>2</sup>

**Yellow stimulates creativity and promotes feelings of optimism and energy.**

Yellow is also a colour associated with psychological safety, and it is typically the first colour the eye notices when you enter a new space. This makes yellow a strong choice for use in spaces where hazard notices or safety are a primary consideration.

Yellow can be used to introduce a sense of openness and expansion into a space. This

makes it a strong choice for active spaces like dining areas and kitchens. With that said, this colour is best used as an accent rather than the dominant colour, as too much yellow can be overbearing.

<sup>2</sup> [Color and psychological functioning: a review of theoretical and empirical work](#)

### On ceilings:

Luminous, stimulating, lightness (lemon yellow)

### On walls:

Warm (orange-yellow), stimulating, or irritating (if highly saturated)

### On floors:

Elevating, diverting

### Overall effect:

Cheering

### Positive associations:

Radiant, vital, cheerful, sunny

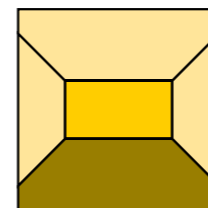
### Negative associations:

Glaring, egocentric

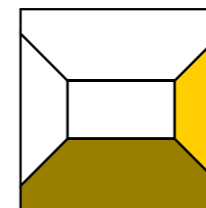
## COLOUR FACT

Yellow can stimulate mental activity and boost memory retention, making it a great colour for learning environments and creative spaces where focus and innovation are key.

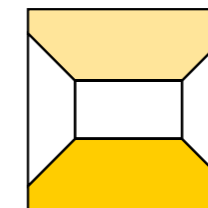
<sup>6</sup> Elliot, A. J., & Maier, M. A. (2014). *Color Psychology: Effects of Perceiving Color on Psychological Functioning in Humans*. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 65(1), 95-120.



elevating area



sunny accent



luminous space



# ORANGE

Along with yellow and red, orange is one of the colours typically used to add a sense of activity to a space. For many people, orange evokes associations of joy, sunshine, joviality, and enthusiasm. Like red, it can also stimulate excitement and a sense of energy.

Orange can be considered a less intense option than red, evoking fewer associations with strong emotional states. Instead, it generates a milder stimulating response.

*While people might associate words like "passion" and "anger" with red, studies have found that orange evokes associations of happiness, optimism, and warmth.<sup>7</sup>*

Apricot or terra cotta shades can have a relaxing effect. Bright orange creates a sense of adventure. Like red, orange is thought to stimulate appetite, and can be incorporated in cafés and dining halls.

Worth noting, however, is that this colour should be used thoughtfully in design, as many individuals list it as a least favourite colour.<sup>2</sup> Orange can also appear cheap or lacking in vigour if low in saturation.

<sup>2</sup> [The Emotional Connotations of Color: A Qualitative Investigation](#)

<sup>7</sup> [Color and psychological functioning: a review of theoretical and empirical work](#)  
[The emotional connotations of color: A qualitative investigation](#)

### On ceilings:

Stimulating, attention-seeking

### On walls:

Warm, luminous

### On floors:

Activating, stimulating motion

### Overall effect:

Exciting, stimulating, cheering

### Positive associations:

Jovial, lively, energetic, determined, successful, extroverted

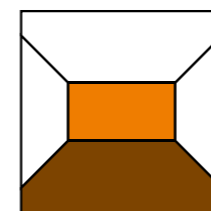
### Negative associations:

Intrusive, blustering

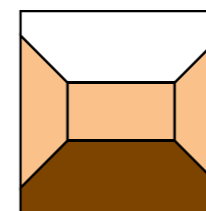
## COLOUR FACT

Research shows that orange can increase social interaction by **25%**, making it ideal for spaces that encourage communication and collaboration.

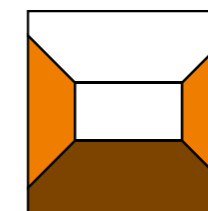
<sup>8</sup> Weller, J. (2014). *Color and its impact on communication and collaboration*. *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 40, 98-105.



activating accent



warm ambience



narrowing space



# RED

As one of the most dominant and dynamic colours available to designers, red represents vitality, strength, power, and leadership. It's also associated with warmth and passion. As a result, it makes a room bolder and more exciting, and stirs up a sense of energy and alertness. These traits make red a go-to

colour for creating a strong first impression in reception areas, or for generating a sense of energy where people gather and interact, such as areas where meals or ideas are shared.

**|** *Red increases attention and stimulates emotional responses in environments.*

There is also evidence that red enhances athletic performance,<sup>2</sup> increases activity in the body by 5.8% and boosts muscle strength by 13.5%. It may, however, have a negative effect on cognitive performance during complex. Therefore, this colour should be carefully selected for areas where alertness and energy, but not focus, are prioritised.

Red is also known to stimulate both appetite and conversation. This means it can be a perfect choice for social settings like cafés, galleries, or meeting rooms.

<sup>2</sup> [The Emotional Connotations of Color: A Qualitative Investigation](#)

### On ceilings:

Heavy, intrusive, disturbing

### On walls:

Advancing (red makes a surface appear closer), aggressive

### On floors:

Alert, conscious

### Overall effect:

Exciting, stimulating

### Positive associations:

Passion, fervour, strength, command, dynamism, vitality

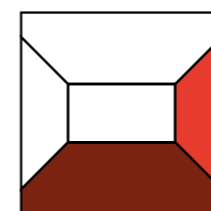
### Negative associations:

Intensity, aggression, rage, fierceness, blood

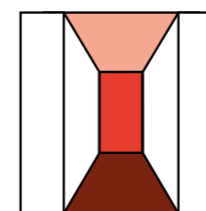
## COLOUR FACT

Studies show that red can increase heart rate by up to **10%**, making it ideal for spaces where alertness and energy are needed.

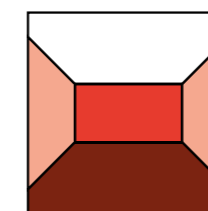
<sup>9</sup> Wilson, G. D. (1966). Arousal properties of red versus green. *Perceptual and Motor Skills*, 23(3), 947-949.



activating, stimulating accent



shortens the space



Compact, vitalic feel



# PURPLE

Purple is a colour often associated with sophistication and luxury. In some contexts, it can create a delicate and rich atmosphere, and designers often turn to this colour to add a sense of drama or a “hip” feel to space. In other contexts, this colour may present as unsettling, disconcerting, or even completely overpowering.

Dark purple accents can create a sense of mystery, while lighter purples can create a sensation of restfulness in a room, especially bedrooms.

*Purple is popular with pre-adolescent children, with many choosing it as a favourite colour.<sup>4</sup>*

Potential use cases for purple include spaces that seek to promote a sense of exclusivity, such as salons. Purple can also be effective in creative spaces, enhancing both imagination and productivity. Additionally, it brings a unique character to interior designs, often helping to break away from more traditional colour schemes and create a memorable visual

impact. By combining purple with neutrals or subtle textures, designers can achieve a balanced look that feels both elegant and inviting.

<sup>4</sup> Cajochen, C., Münch, M., Kriebel, S., Krauchi, K., Steiner, R., Oelhafen, P., Orgül, S., & Wirz-Justice, A. (2005). High sensitivity of human melatonin, alertness, thermoregulation, and heart rate to short wavelength light. *The Journal of Clinical Endocrinology & Metabolism*, 90(3), 1311-1316.

### On ceilings:

Disconcerting, subduing

### On walls:

Heavy, overpowering

### On floors:

Fleeting, magical

### Overall effect:

Subduing

### Positive associations:

Dignity, exclusivity, intelligence, artistry, solemnity

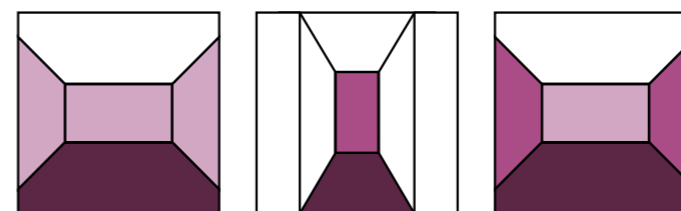
### Negative associations:

Loneliness, mournfulness, conceit, aloofness

## COLOUR FACT

Purple can increase perceptions of creativity by up to **20%**, making it an excellent choice for environments where innovation is encouraged.

<sup>10</sup> Lichtenfeld, S., Elliot, A. J., Maier, M. A., & Pekrun, R. (2012). Fostering creativity through color: Effects of red, blue, and green on divergent and convergent thinking. *Social Psychology*, 43(5), 217-222.



powerful space

exclusive

distinguished atmosphere



# PINK

Pink is one of the more challenging colours to use effectively. This colour can quickly shift from positive connotations like liveliness and playfulness to a feeling of “over-sweetness” if used extensively and not toned down.

In general, pink is thought of as a feminine colour, and it can add real warmth, comfort, and a feel-good atmosphere to a space when used effectively.

*Pink promotes a sense of calm and relaxation and can reduce blood pressure and aggression.*

Given these associations, this colour can be used across a wide range of contexts, including hospitals, clinics, colleges, offices, kindergartens, or simply to add some comfort to communal areas such as dining halls. Soft shades of pink can also soften the feel of larger

spaces, making them more welcoming, while bolder pinks can add a playful or energetic touch to creative environments. With careful application, pink can serve as a versatile tool to bring warmth and balance to both private and public spaces.

### On ceilings:

Delicate, comforting, excessively intimate

### On walls:

Inhibition of aggression, intimate, over-sweet

### On floors:

Over-delicate, unfamiliarity in a location

### Overall effect:

Lively, calming

### Positive associations:

Lively, calming, intimate

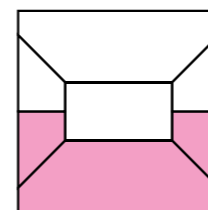
### Negative associations:

Over-sweetness, weakness

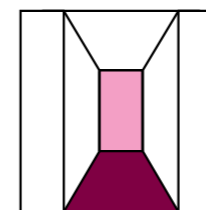
## COLOUR FACT

Exposure to pink can reduce feelings of aggression by up to **30%**, making it useful in calming environments like hospitals or correctional facilities.

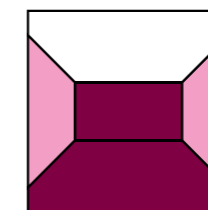
*Schauss, A. G. (1979). Tranquilizing effect of color reduces aggressive behavior and potential violence. Journal of Orthomolecular Psychiatry, 8(4), 218-221.*



soft and delicate



comforting



Compact and intense



## FACT

Neutral colors, particularly shades of grey, can influence decision-making and cognitive performance by promoting a sense of neutrality, reducing emotional bias, and creating a balanced, focused environment.

<sup>12</sup> Elliot, A. J., & Maier, M. A. (2012). Color in-context theory. *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, 45, 61-125.

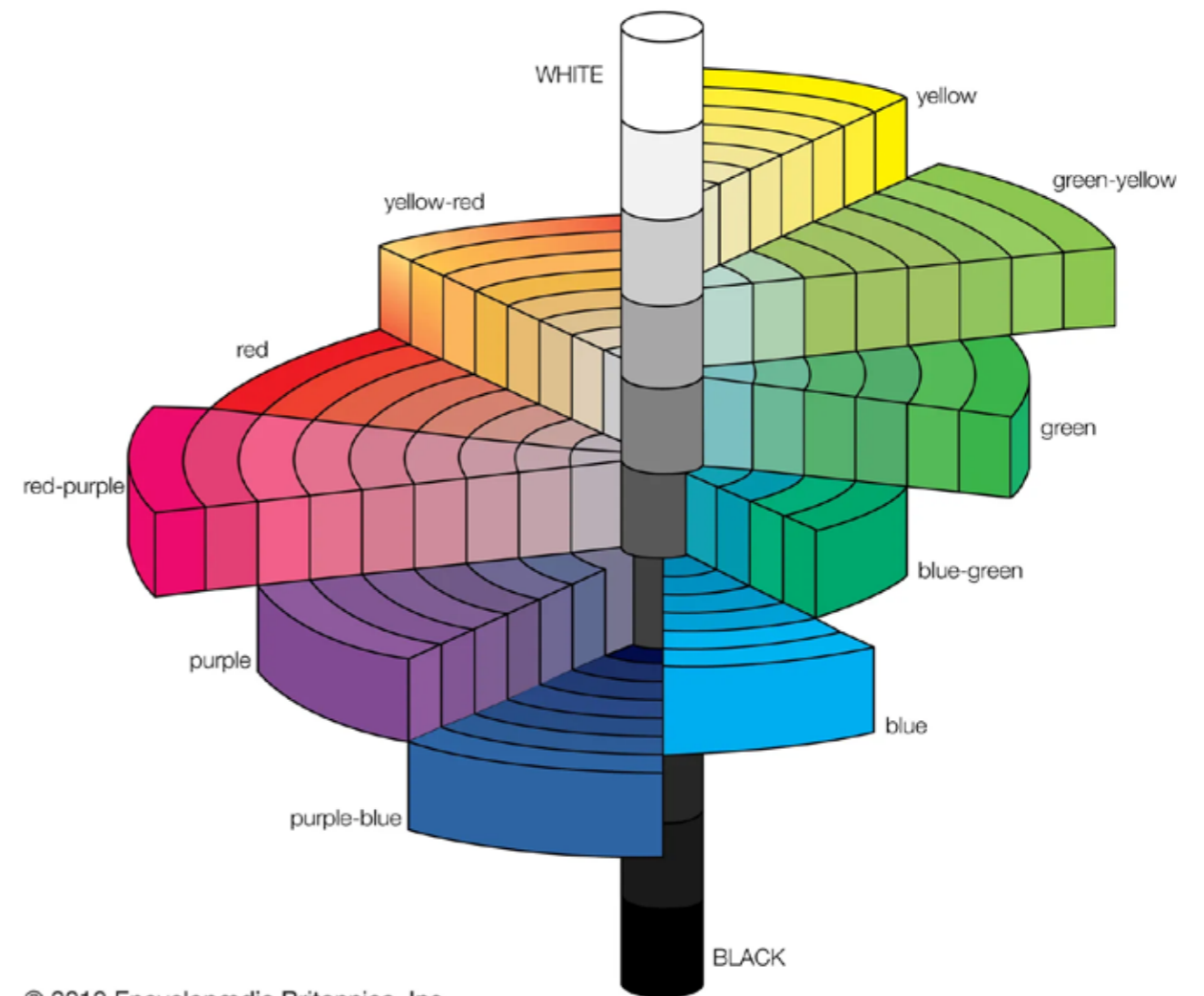
## NEUTRALS

Neutrals, or “non-colours”, are shades of grey, brown, and white, as well as the colour black. These colours are typically found at the “ends” of a three-dimensional colour wheel. They are therefore viewed as complementary to primary and secondary colours, rather than as competitive.

*Neutral colours are typically considered to be easy on the eye. They create resting space in between more dominant colours and features.*

In other words, neutral colours can be used to complement and highlight other colours and materials.

In broad terms, all neutrals are associated with relaxation, neutrality, and tranquillity. However, each category also has its own associations depending on how they are used, in which context, in what amount and the other materials and colours they’re combined with.



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## BLACK

Black is the strongest of neutral colours, often associated with sophistication, elegance, and authority, making it a timeless choice for modern interiors. It adds depth, creates striking contrasts, and can beautifully highlight other design elements. However, black can also evoke a sense of dominance or feel oppressive if overused, especially in small or dimly lit spaces. When used thoughtfully, black can ground a room, creating a bold and luxurious atmosphere.

Combining it with lighter or natural tones can soften its intensity and add a sense of balance to the design.



## WHITE

Typical associations with white are purity, cleanliness, brightness, and lightness. White can also generate a feeling of emptiness or sterility, however. Off-whites create a sense of elegance and subtlety. However, large tracts of white are often viewed as boring or monotonous,<sup>2</sup> so this neutral should be contrasted with more dominant colours.

On ceilings, white helps to diffuse light sources and reduce shadows. White walls project a sense of neutrality or emptiness, or a lack of energy. White floors can create a sense of inhibition about walking over them.





## GREY

The interpretation of grey accents is often largely dependent on the shade of grey being used. Therefore, this is another neutral that should be carefully coordinated with a dominant colour.

Overall, grey can be considered calming or neutral. Dark greys create the impression of steadfastness, solemnity, and solidity. Lighter greys are considered soothing, and metallic greys convey a sense of sleekness, sophistication, and modernity. Overall, shades of grey convey a sense of timelessness, fairness, loyalty, emotional steadfastness, and practicality.

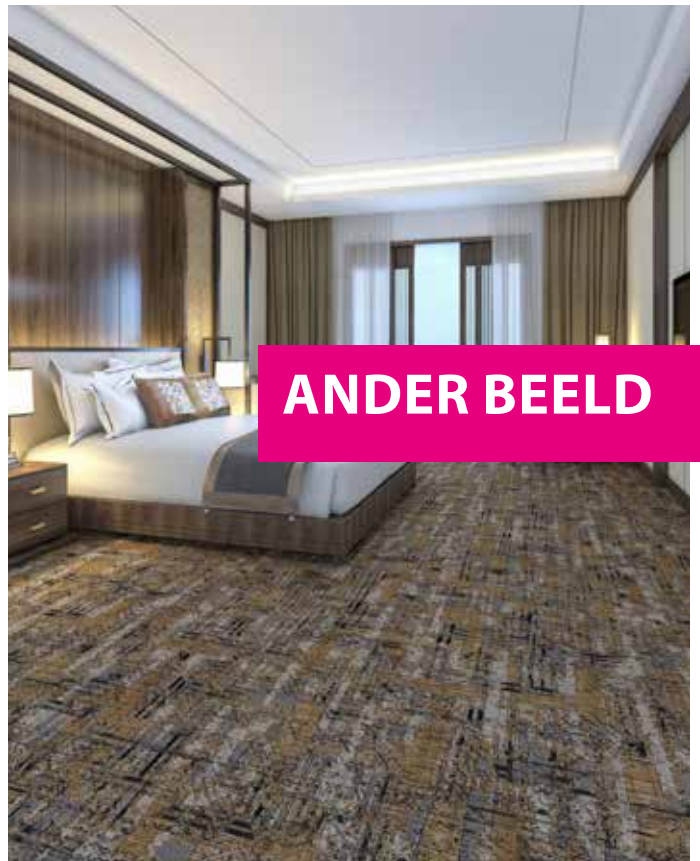
However, plain grey walls and floors may be experienced as neutral or boring, so this colour should be used carefully. It also makes ceiling spaces feel shadowed.



## BROWN

As one of the most ubiquitous colours occurring in nature, shades of brown can add a light, natural feel to space – especially when lighter browns are paired with fresh, youthful shades of green. Other associations with brown include authenticity, warmth, approachability, a sense of grounding, and homeliness. Brown floors invoke stability and steadiness. Using wood can add a strong sense of comfort and warmth. Wooden walls create a sense of security.

Brown can also be viewed as oppressive or heavy, however, especially when used on ceilings.



### 3. DYNAMICS OF A BUILDING

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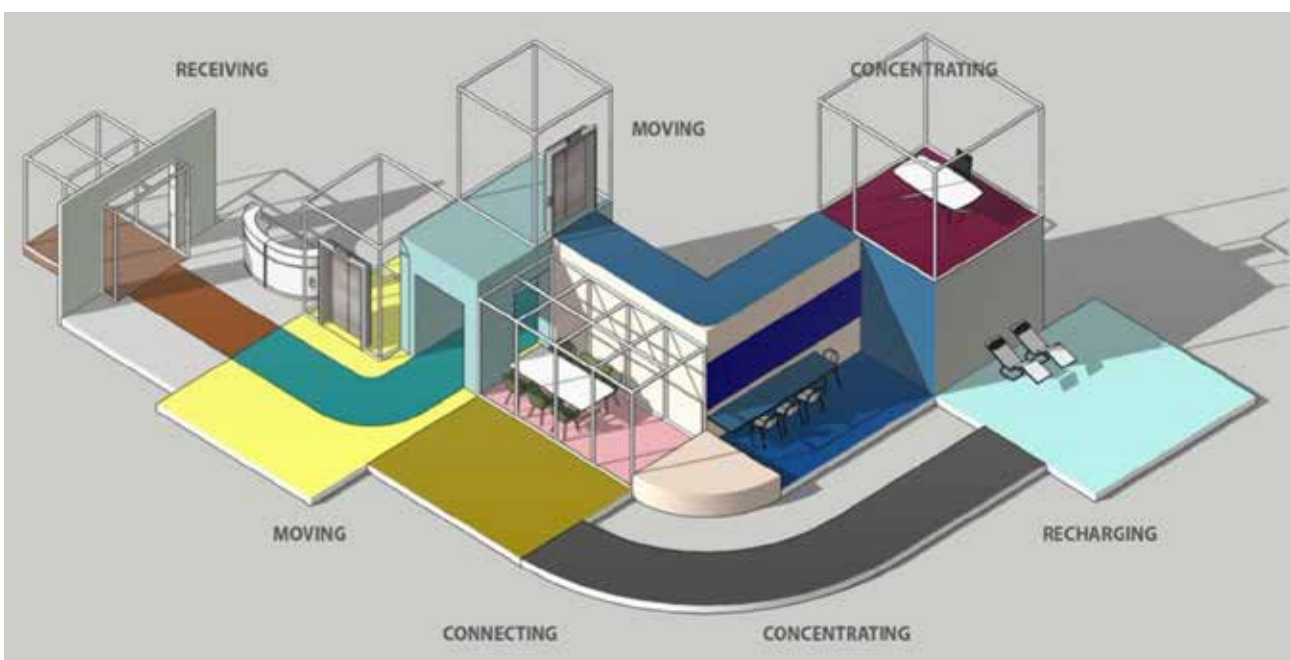
**As the preceding sections demonstrate, the right selection of colours plays a powerful role in creating a specific feeling or emotional context for a space. Colours influence not only how space is perceived, but also how it is likely to be used. This makes it vitally important to tailor the colour palette selected for each individual space within a building to its exact purpose.**

A hospital, after all, isn't "just" a hospital. There are reception and retail areas, cafeterias, consultation rooms, and recovery wards – each serving a different function, and each in need of a very different kind of ambience. These differences mean that in addition to considering a building's overall function, the designer must also keep in mind the function of each individual space within it.

With these considerations in mind, the Forbo team have created a new framework for how colour selections can be used, dividing the spaces within a building into five key themes:

- Receiving
- Moving
- Connecting
- Concentrating
- Recharging

These themes each tie into a key activity or experience taking place in specific sections of the same building. Each theme has a unique colour dialogue and identity that can be created and altered based on the intensity, contrast, and positioning of the colours within the theme. This makes it easy to update colours as needed, while keeping the overall feel of a specific theme intact.



Using the Dynamics of a Building concept as a foundation, Forbo Flooring's international Design Team created a Global Colour Card that represents the dialogue between colours within each theme. Because it speaks to colour *relationships*, rather than fixed individual colours, the Colour Card framework serves as a reference that Forbo's design team uses to create updated yearly collections.

This provides designers the flexibility to follow new trends and offer bold new colour choices, while still working within an established theme.

This approach results in a product range that can be used to create effortless synergy in any building. It allows for design that embraces new ideas and tells a consistent story, all while foregrounding best practices to promote wellbeing, mental health, and purpose-designed spaces.

In the following subsections, we explore these five Dynamics of a Building, the colours that can be used to activate them, and examples of how to put these principles into practice.





## Receiving

**The receiving theme focuses on the experience created at entry-points to a building. These are the spaces where visitors receive their first impression of a brand or facility.**

A key role of the receiving space is to create an atmosphere that is warm, welcoming, and representative of the organisation's identity. Any points of movement between a building's outside and indoor spaces also fall into this category. Visitors are generally expected to either pass through these areas quickly, or to wait in them for short to mid-term stays.

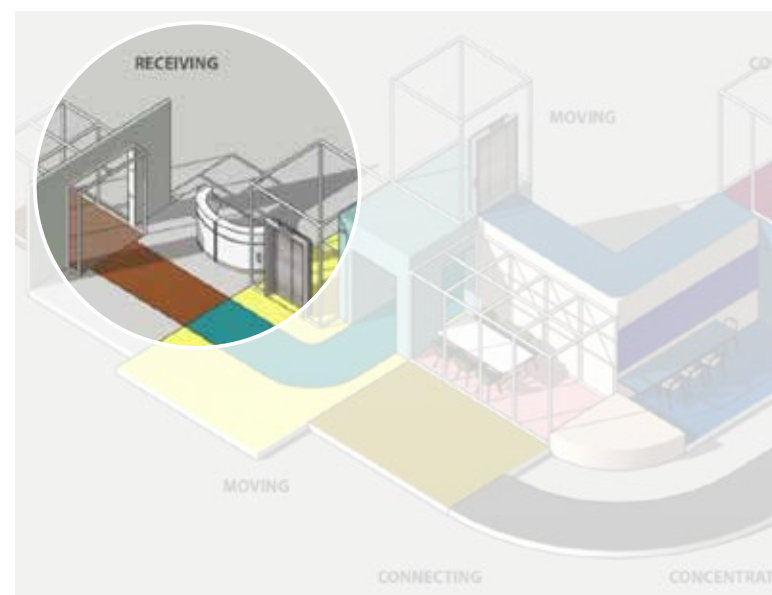
**Key themes:** Accessibility, transparency, comfort, welcoming, clarity

**Colour selections:** Natural and neutral colours work well to generate a warm and welcoming ambience. Natural materials, like wood and stone, are often excellent choices for inclusion in receiving areas. In addition, cooler colours like blue and green can be used to create a calming



effect and create a sense of connection with nature, linking outdoor and indoor spaces for a seamless effect. Yellow is another strong choice for this theme, evoking sunlight and outside space. This is also a useful colour for a company that wants to create an impression of innovation, creativity, and friendliness. Natural and neutral colours can also be contrasted with brand identity colours to create a strong first impression.

**Materials:** Wood, stone, glass, and other natural materials to create a high-end and warm, accessible appearance.



## Moving

**The theme of moving represents the transition from one area towards a destination elsewhere in the building. Whether this is a visitor finding their way to the office of the person they're meeting, or an employee moving between departments, moving areas should facilitate that transition as clearly and legibly as possible.**

The colours used in moving areas are also especially important for aiding orientation - for example in care facilities catering to the elderly or patients with dementia. Easy-to-read colours, contrasts, and simple signs or symbols are key components of these spaces.

**Key themes:** Clarity, legibility, orientation, guidance, dynamic movement

**Colour selections:** Simple, bright colours work well, as do contrasting hues to create a sense of surety and security when navigating the space.



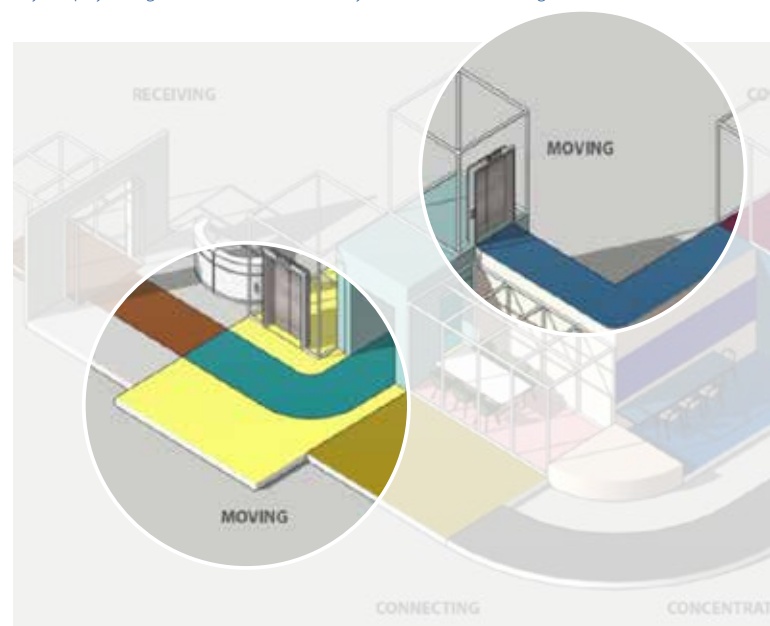
Floor strips in active colours, like orange, red, or yellow, can be used to offer guidance for navigating the building. These warm colours stimulate a sense of movement, with research showing that strong colours, like red, can increase activity by nearly 6%.<sup>13</sup>

**Materials:** Resilient materials, smooth surfaces, matte or satin gloss. Good lighting should be used to aid wayfinding.

<sup>13</sup> Gerard, R. M. (1958). Differential Effects of Colored Lights on Psychophysiological Functions. University of California, Los Angeles.



Ewout Huibers Photography, Design Agency MMEK'



## Connecting

**Connecting spaces are dynamic areas, designed with spontaneous conversation, workshopping, and brainstorming sessions in mind. These might be formalised spaces like meeting rooms, more open-ended relaxation zones, or small, informal lounges.**

Connecting spaces boost extrovert energy and may also serve the function of giving the brain a time out from intense focus or cognitively complex tasks. Because connecting areas are designed to spark curiosity and spontaneity, they can make use of interesting or layered selections of colour and material. Playful motifs, especially as applied to flooring materials, can encourage creativity, playfulness, and connection.

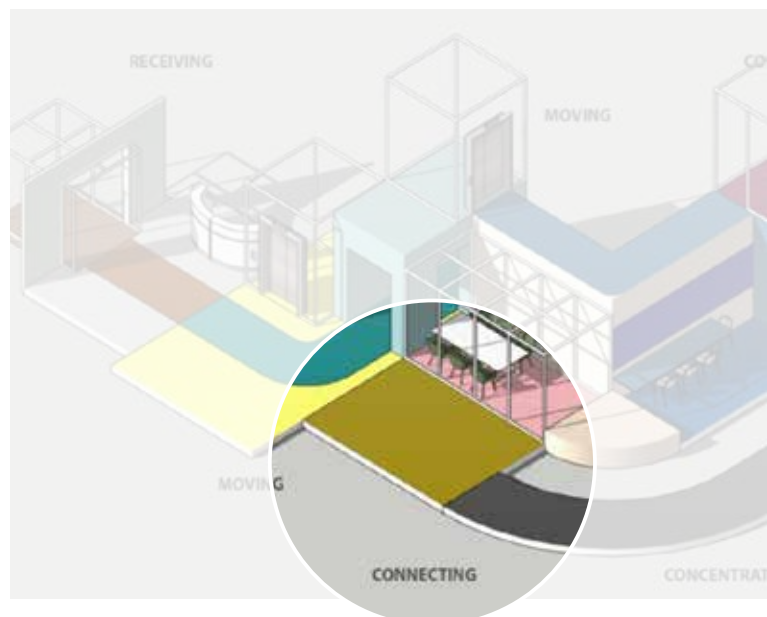
**Key themes:** Communication, engagement, creativity, encouragement, informality

**Colour selections:** Unexpected combinations and complex, layered colour schemes work well in these areas. Materials, flooring materials



and colours should therefore be used in combination to create designated spaces for connection and communication. Warm and active colours like reds and oranges can be mixed with neutrals or relaxing blue or green tones for impact. Orange, in particular, has associations with human connection and communication, liveliness, sharing, and altruism.

**Materials:** Soft, comfortable materials should be used in furnishings. Different flooring materials, such as rugs or patterned floor coverings, can be used to delineate these spaces from surrounding areas.



## Concentrating

**In contrast to the activity and connection emphasis of the preceding three themes, concentrating spaces are focus areas for the individual. As such, these areas should prioritise seclusion and privacy, moving away from the stimulating themes seen in moving and connecting spaces and minimising distraction.**

Examples of this type of space include study areas and private or shared offices, as well as consulting rooms in healthcare facilities where colour schemes should be additionally selected to promote a sense of safety and calm.

**Key themes:** Individual use, introversion, immersion, focus, subtlety

**Colour selections:** Muted colours, saturated, matte, or warm colour ranges that are soft and neutral for the senses. Greens and blues are good choices for this theme, particularly as these colours have a proven impact in boosting efficiency.<sup>14</sup> Colours such as yellow-

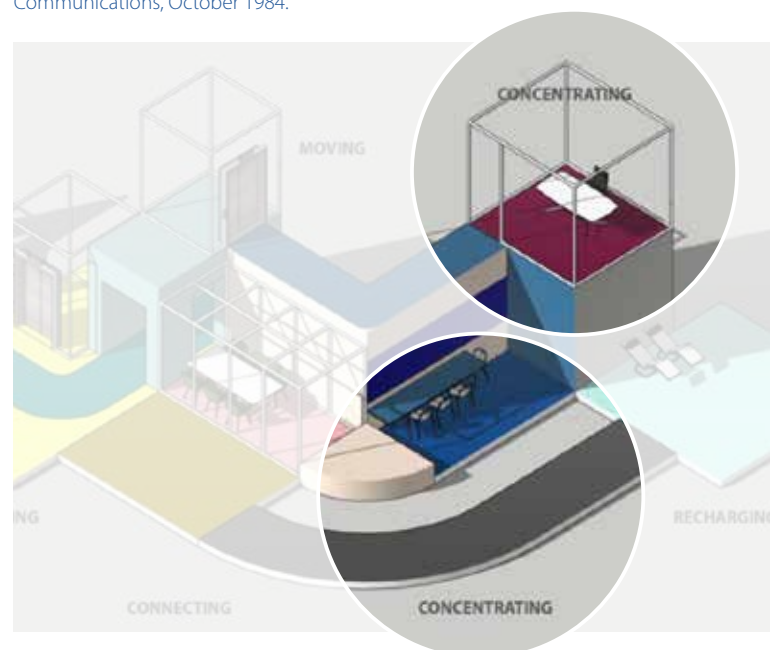


green, orange and sky blue can all be used to boost learning<sup>15</sup> with some studies showing evidence of a 55-78% increase in learning with appropriate colour choices.<sup>16</sup>

**Materials:** Minimalist textures and natural materials should be prioritised. Acoustic properties are especially important to this theme. Strive for a muted ambience, with absorbing furnishings and floor materials.

<sup>15</sup> Hamid, P. N., & Newport, A. G. (1989). *Effect of colour on physical strength and mood in children*. *Perceptual and Motor Skills*, 69(1), 179-185.

<sup>16</sup> Embry, D. (1984). *The Persuasive Properties of Color*. *Marketing Communications*, October 1984.





## Recharging

**The last theme is about meeting the need for spaces that prioritise mindfulness and a chance to re-energise.**

Recharging spaces are those where people can let their guard down and engage in activities that promote mental and physical wellbeing. Lounges, sport and recreation spaces, and spaces for quiet contemplation all fit within this theme. Recharging areas should, therefore, be designed with materials and colours that encourage people to take a break and escape from the demands of their day-to-day life.

**Key themes:** Recovery, renewal, wellbeing, homeliness, comfort

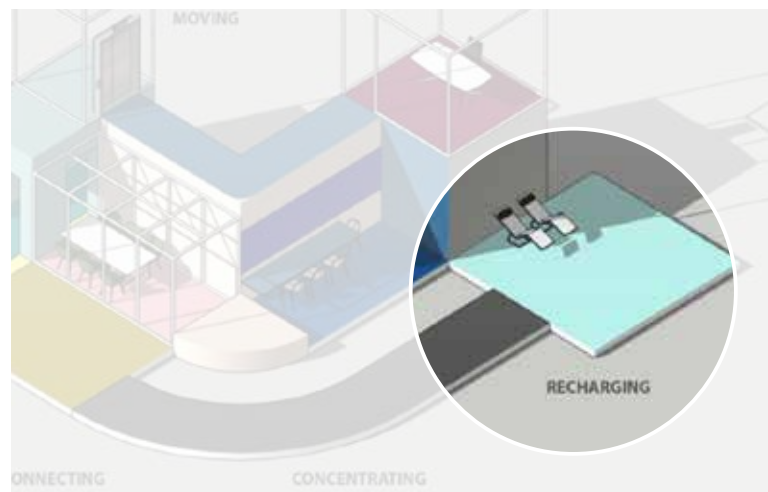
**Colour selections:** Light and fresh shades, pastels. Blues, greens, and soft purples should be used in conjunction with nature-inspired neutrals for a crisp, weightless feel. These selections reinforce the use of the space as a place to recharge and escape. In addition to greens and blues, recharging spaces can



benefit from the addition of turquoise, due to its role in regulating the hormone melatonin,<sup>17</sup> which is involved in maintaining the body's circadian rhythms.

**Materials:** Lounge areas should feature furnishings that create a home-like ambience. Create a sense of timelessness with natural materials like wood, and subtle or diffused patterns for wall and floor coverings. Use rounded, soft shapes, tactile materials and warm light to maximise comfort.

<sup>17</sup> Brainard, G. C., Hanifin, J. P., Greeson, J. M., Byrne, B., Glickman, G., Gerner, E., & Rollag, M. D. (2001). *Action spectrum for melatonin regulation in humans: Evidence for a novel circadian photoreceptor*. *The Journal of Neuroscience*, 21(16), 6405-6412.



# CONCLUSION

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**As design concepts evolve, the fundamental role of the built environment in enhancing wellbeing will remain a focal point for designers across the globe. In that context, the colours selected for each building, and each space within it, play a vital role. The right colour palette can breathe life into a building and create an environment where people can live, interact, work, heal, learn, and play.**

This makes it fundamentally important that each colour choice is evaluated in terms of its place within an overall scheme and its interaction with neighbouring colours and materials. Similarly, the surface to which a specific colour is applied can have a dramatic impact on how it is perceived. Using black in a floor pattern has a very different psychological effect to using it on a ceiling or wall, for example.

The proportion of each colour used can also have a dramatic effect. A yellow accent can add a sense of friendliness and cheerfulness to a space. But, too much yellow used in the same space becomes an irritant.

Placing these considerations at the forefront of design efforts elevates the use of colour beyond merely creating a space that is on-trend or aesthetically pleasing. Instead, colour becomes a tool for transforming each space to best meet the needs of the people using it and to create an emotional and psychological experience that matches the intended functionality.

Through our work on colour, in conjunction with the Dynamics of a Building framework, Forbo offers designers, architects, and business leaders support and expertise to make choices that resonate with these values.

We also offer ongoing support to explore the latest trends, ideas, and concepts to build spaces that are both accessible and functional for all their users. We ensure that those spaces truly support health, inclusivity, and ongoing wellbeing.



# MORE INFORMATION

## Colour inspiration

Dive into a spectrum of tools and links dedicated to all things colour and discover why colour is at the heart of Forbo Flooring's passion and innovation, shaping every collection with precision.

[GET INSPIRED](#)



## Colour finder

Explore the Colour Finder, an intuitive tool that helps you curate the perfect palette for your flooring projects. Whether you're aiming for calm, vibrant, or neutral tones, this resource allows you to match colors with precision and bring your design vision to life.

[FIND YOUR PALETTE](#)



## SOURCES

<sup>1</sup> [Blue light exposure decreases systolic blood pressure, arterial stiffness, and improves endothelial function in humans](#)

<sup>2</sup> [Color and psychological functioning: a review of theoretical and empirical work](#)

<sup>3</sup> [The Effects of Color on the Moods of College Students](#)

<sup>4</sup> Cajochen, C., Münch, M., Kobiacka, S., Kräuchi, K., Steiner, R., Oelhafen, P., Orgül, S., & Wirz-Justice, A. (2005). High sensitivity of human melatonin, alertness, thermoregulation, and heart rate to short wavelength light. *The Journal of Clinical Endocrinology & Metabolism*, 90(3), 1311-1316.

<sup>5</sup> Ulrich, R. S. (1984). View through a window may influence recovery from surgery. *Science*, 224(4647), 420-421.

<sup>6</sup> Elliot, A. J., & Maier, M. A. (2014). *Color Psychology: Effects of Perceiving Color on Psychological Functioning in Humans*. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 65(1), 95-120.

<sup>7</sup> [The emotional connotations of color: A qualitative investigation](#)

<sup>8</sup> Weller, J. (2014). Color and its impact on communication and collaboration. *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 40, 98-105.

<sup>9</sup> Wilson, G. D. (1966). Arousal properties of red versus green. *Perceptual and Motor Skills*, 23(3), 947-949.

<sup>10</sup> Lichtenfeld, S., Elliot, A. J., Maier, M. A., & Pekrun, R. (2012). Fostering creativity through color: Effects of red, blue, and green on divergent and convergent thinking. *Social Psychology*, 43(5), 217-222.

<sup>11</sup> Schauss, A. G. (1979). Tranquilizing effect of color reduces aggressive behavior and potential violence. *Journal of Orthomolecular Psychiatry*, 8(4), 218-221.

<sup>12</sup> Elliot, A. J., & Maier, M. A. (2012). Color in-context theory. *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, 45, 61-125.

<sup>13</sup> Gerard, R. M. (1958). *Differential Effects of Colored Lights on Psychophysiological Functions*. University of California, Los Angeles.

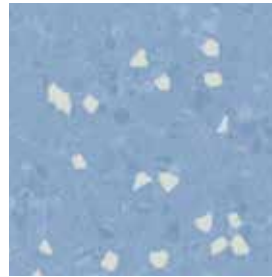
<sup>14</sup> Hathaway, W. E. (1987). *Light, Colour & Air Quality: Important Elements of the Learning Environment?* *Educational Facility Planner*, 25(2), 8-10.

<sup>15</sup> Hamid, P. N., & Newport, A. G. (1989). Effect of colour on physical strength and mood in children. *Perceptual and Motor Skills*, 69(1), 179-185.

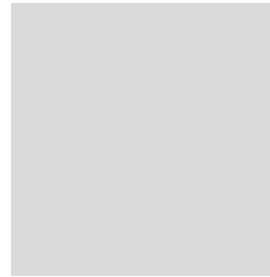
<sup>16</sup> Embry, D. (1984). *The Persuasive Properties of Color*. Marketing Communications, October 1984.

<sup>17</sup> Brainard, G. C., Hanifin, J. P., Greeson, J. M., Byrne, B., Glickman, G., Gerner, E., & Rollag, M. D. (2001). Action spectrum for melatonin regulation in humans: Evidence for a novel circadian photoreceptor. *The Journal of Neuroscience*, 21(16), 6405-6412.

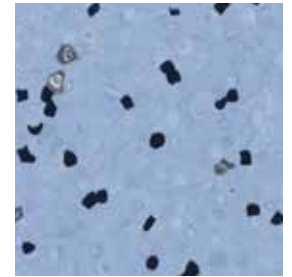
# APPENDIX | BLUE



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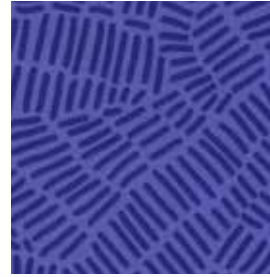
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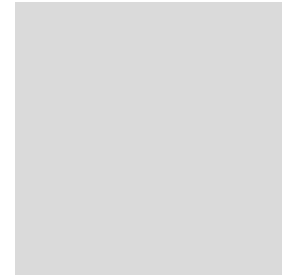
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**3645** | Marmoleum Piano



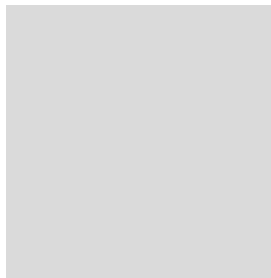
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**217** | Sarlon Trafic



**267** | Sarlon Trafic



**t5400005** | Flotex



**s482026** | Flotex



**3030** | Marmoleum Real



**3754** | Marmoleum Concrete



**337** | Sarlon Trafic



**3406** | Tessera



**3261** | Marmoleum Fresco



**3358** | Marmoleum Walton



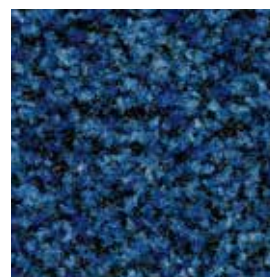
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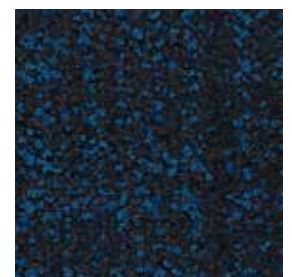
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**51207** | Sphera



**5722** | Nuway grid



**3913** | Tessera

# APPENDIX | GREEN



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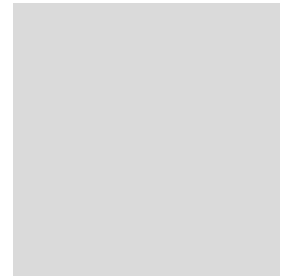
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3891 | Marmoleum Fresco



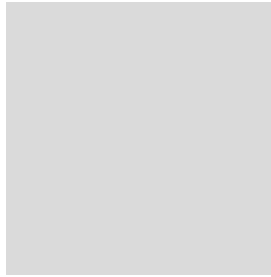
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50075 | Sphera



4184 | Desktop



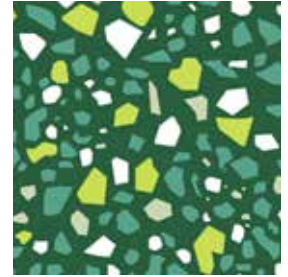
218 | Sarlon Trafic



3647 | Marmoleum Cocoa



40642 | Eternal



9608 | Sarlon Trafic



408 | Sarlon Trafic



3271 | Marmoleum Fresco



51242 | Sphera



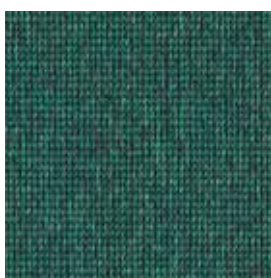
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9718 | Allura



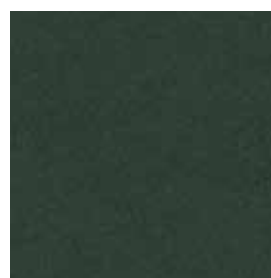
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3714 | Tessera



3359 | Marmoleum Walton



4174 | Desktop



5708 | Coral Brush

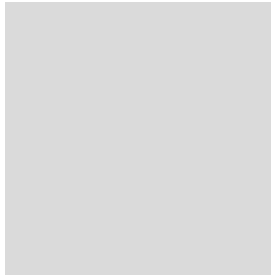
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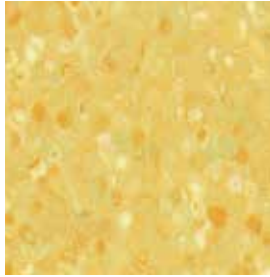
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**865** | Sarlon Trafic



**225** | Sarlon Trafic



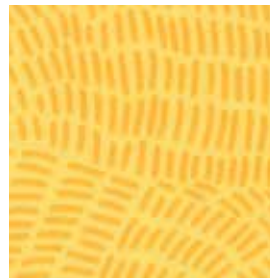
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**3225** | Marmoleum Real



**405** | Sarlon Trafic



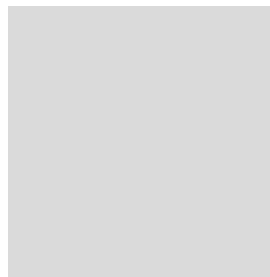
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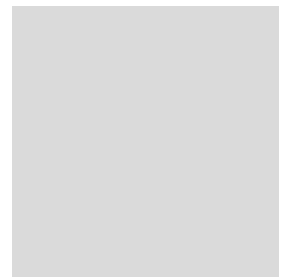
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**3846** | Marmoleum Fresco



**s445030** | Flotex



**3287** | Marmoleum Cocoa



**900265** | Showtime



**9715** | Allura



**3709** | Tessera



**1821** | Tessera



**142004** | Flotex

# APPENDIX | ORANGE



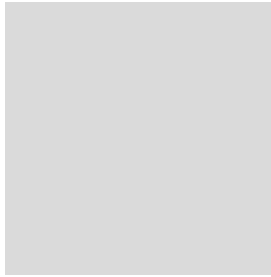
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**50210** | Sphera



**3262** | Marmoleum Fresco



**172932** | Surestep



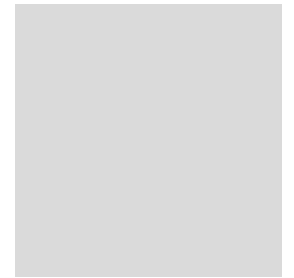
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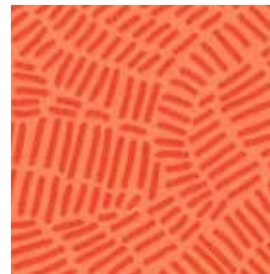
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**51210** | Sphera



**206** | Sarlon Trafic



**406** | Sarlon Trafic



**4186** | Desktop



**3126** | Marmoleum Fresco



**3592** | Marmoleum Cocoa



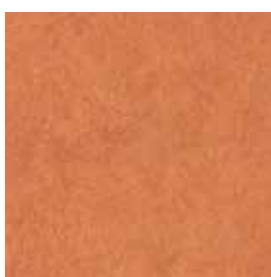
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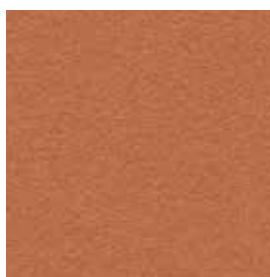
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**3403** | Marmoleum Vivace



**3825** | Marmoleum Fresco



**2207** | Bulletin board



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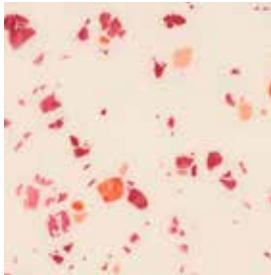


**96035** | Forte



**900276** | Showtime

# APPENDIX | RED



**106** | Sarlon habitat



**150233** | Colorex



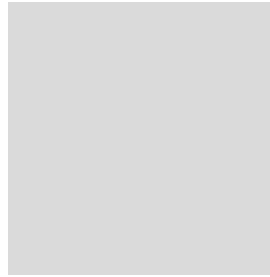
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**40202** | Eternal



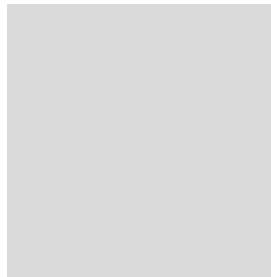
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**171562** | Surestep



**50241** | Sphera



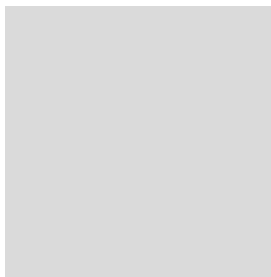
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**2210** | Bulletin board



**3352** | Marmoleum Walton



**131001** | Flotex



**3127** | Marmoleum Real



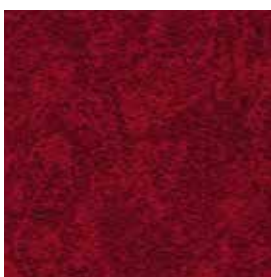
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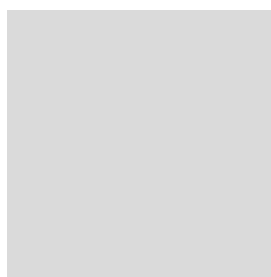
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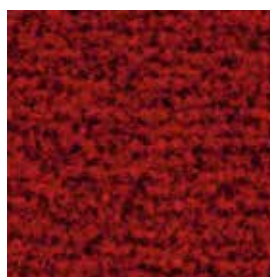
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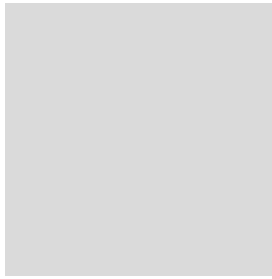
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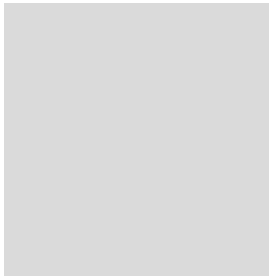
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# APPENDIX | PURPLE



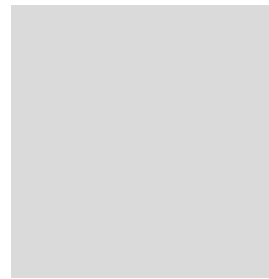
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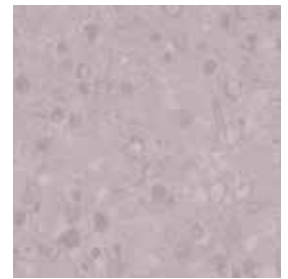
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**171332** | Surestep



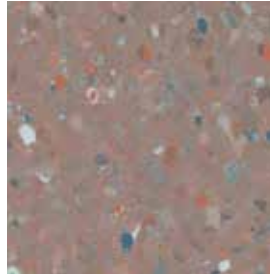
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**40582** | Eternal



**50071** | Sphera



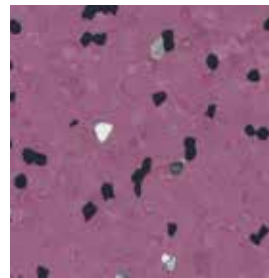
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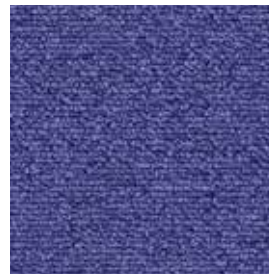
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EC 450034 | Sphera



**3272** | Marmoleum Real



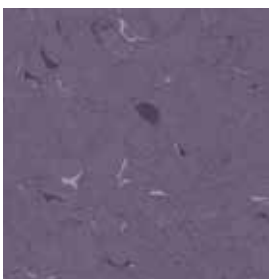
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**5246034** | Flotex



**40182** | Eternal



SD150267 | Colorex



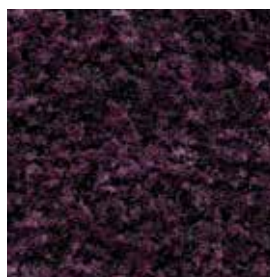
**4154** | Desktop



**3353** | Marmoleum Walton



**142015** | Flotex



**5739** | Coral Brush



# APPENDIX | PINK



**4807** | Sarlon Trafic



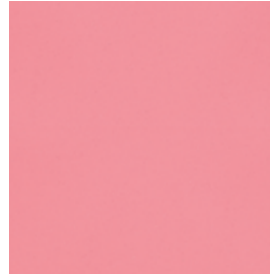
**51231** | Sphera



**50231** | Sphera



**50073** | Sphera



**40372** | Eternal



**3268** | Marmoleum Real



**51073** | Sphera



**4185** | Desktop



**3624** | Tessera



**63843** | Allura



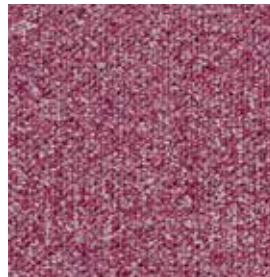
**3263** | Marmoleum Fresco



**3710** | Tessera



**900266** | Tessera



**4210** | Tessera



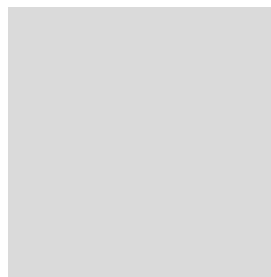
**886** | Sarlon Trafic



**40152** | Surestep



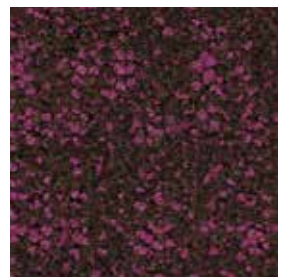
**3273** | Marmoleum Fresco



**s246035** | Flotex

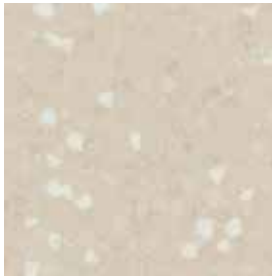


**2119** | Tessera



**3910** | Tessera

# APPENDIX | NEUTRALS



**SD 550023** | Sphera



**2499** | Marmoleum Real



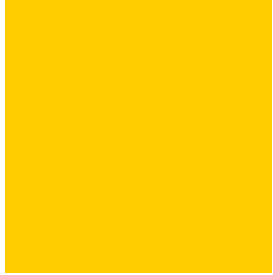
**3120** | Marmoleum Real



**3630** | Marmoleum Piano



**3141** | Marmoleum Real



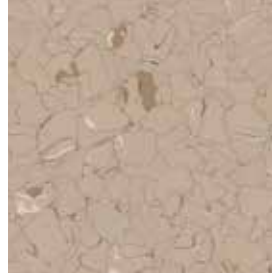
**337** | Sarlon Trafic



**60084** | Allura



**313** | Sarlon Trafic



**SD 150264** | Colorex



**5253** | Marmoleum Linear



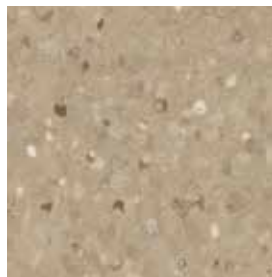
**3811** | Sarlon Trafic



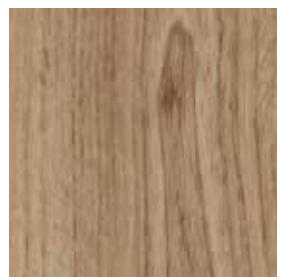
**211** | Sarlon Trafic



**7720** | Sarlon Primeo



**50488** | Sphera



**5204** | Allura



**010038F** | Flotex



**60305** | Allura



**303** | Sarlon Trafic

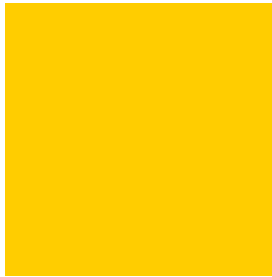


**3104** | Tessera



**3705** | Tessera

# APPENDIX | BLACK



t350002 | Flotex



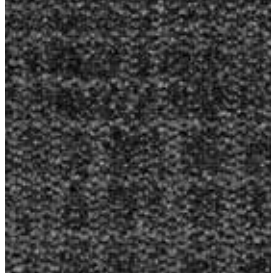
3236 | Marmoleum Real



17172 | Surestep star



3637 | Marmoleum Piano



4702 | Tessera



234709 | habitat modal



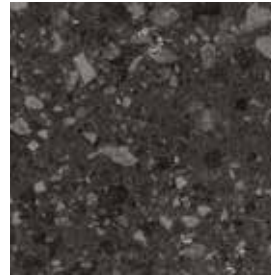
3410 | Tessera



3591 | Marmoleum Cocoa



919 | Sarlon Trafic



032 | Eternal



51001 | Sphera



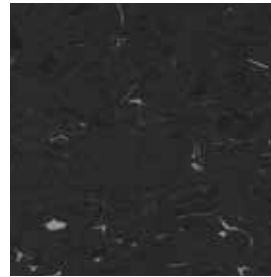
60061 | Allura



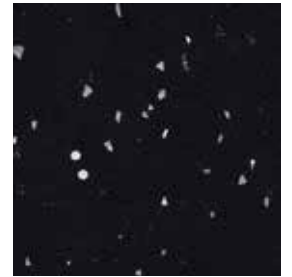
742 | Sarlon Trafic



s246007 | Flotex



SD 150240 | Colorex



292 | Eternal



2910 | Coral Luxe



2209 | Bulletin board

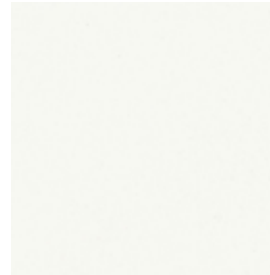


2939 | Marmoleum Fresco



3323 | Marmoleum Walton

# APPENDIX | WHITE



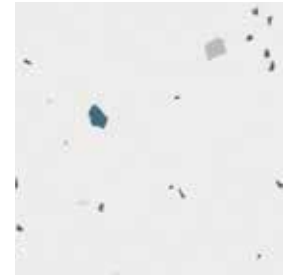
**26500** | ONYX+



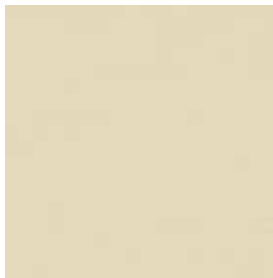
**002** | Eternal



**150201** | Colorex



**51243** | Sphera



**4157** | Desktop



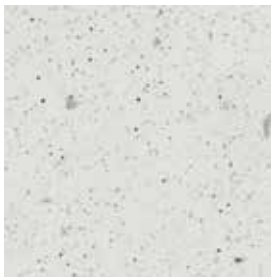
**50000** | Sphera



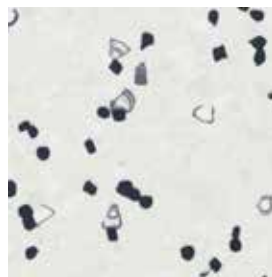
**EC 250204** | Colorex EC



**SD 5500000** | Sphera



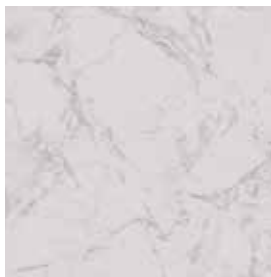
**171082** | Surestep



**EC 450000** | Sphera EC



**69102** | Allura



**332** | Eternal



**5252** | Marmoleum Linear



**3650** | Marmoleum Piano



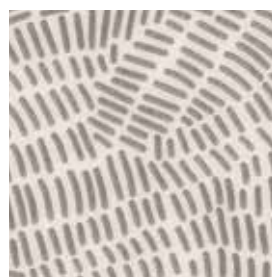
**3732** | Marmoleum Concrete



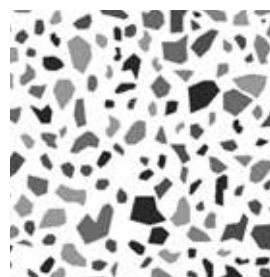
**SD 550017** | Sphera SD



**180262** | Safestep



**402** | Sarlon Trafic



**9602** | Sarlon Trafic



**000533E** | Eternal

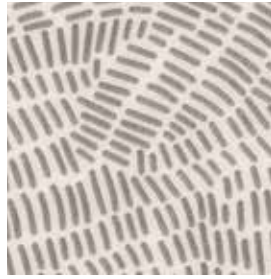
# APPENDIX | GREY



**4177** | Desktop



**50004** | Sphera



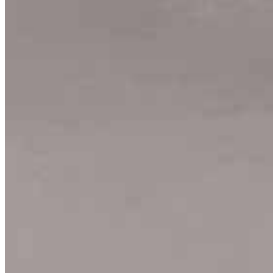
**402** | Sarlon Trafic



**63632** | Allura



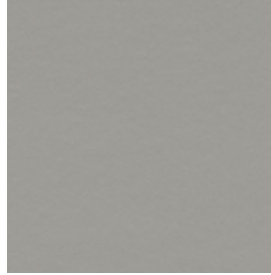
**3801** | Sarlon Trafic



**63847** | Allura



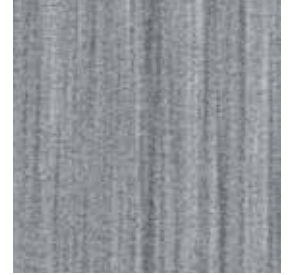
**3601** | Marmoleum Piano



**3371** | Marmoleum Walton



**3594** | Marmoleum Cocoa



**111001** | Flotex



**3420** | Marmoleum Real



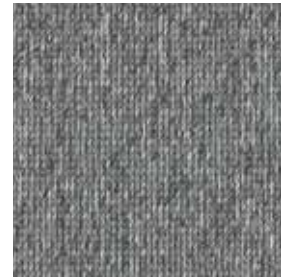
**63658** | Allura



**212** | Sarlon Trafic



**5249** | Marmoleum Linear



**3700** | Tessera



**69203** | Allura



**2162** | Bulletin board



**2629** | Marmoleum Real



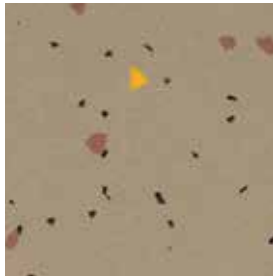
**878** | Tessera



**944261** | Showtime



# APPENDIX | BROWN



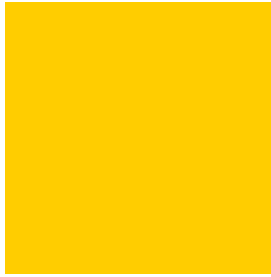
51209 | Sphera



2208 | Bulletin board



63724 | Allura



114 | Sarlon Trafic



3426 | Marmoleum Vivace



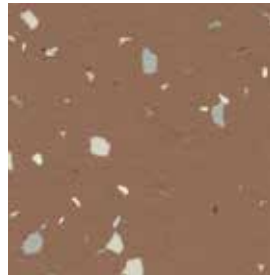
3370 | Marmoleum Walton



3631 | Marmoleum Piano



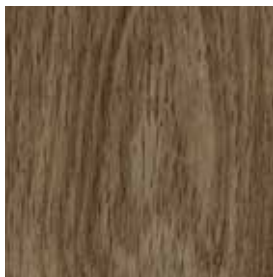
96013 | Taupe



52225 | Sphera



2107 | Tessera



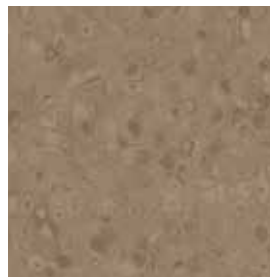
5524 | Allura



304 | Sarlon Trafic



176262 | Surestep



50025 | Sphera



3705 | Marmoleum Concrete



3874 | Marmoleum Fresco



2004 | Tessera



t546015 | Flotex



5218 | Marmoleum Linear



4726 | Coral Classic

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