

Abstracts in English

Colour, the sensibility of a transversal language

Glòria Jover

Understanding the psychology of colour has become an imperative in design and in any creative endeavour, given that colour is entirely instinctive and one of the most decisive factors in the selection of any product. Our task as designers is to analyse consumer behaviour, cultural trends, and socio-economic change in order to build solid bridges between creators and users. Colour allows us to trace creative, cultural, and social influences, which is why, year after year, colour is used to define and express new trends.

The Pantone Color Institute, founded in 1999, has established itself as one of the leading sources of colour information for the design community. Since 2017, *Viewpoint Colour* magazine has offered a transversal perspective on colour, anticipating the chromatic imaginaries that will shape the future. Issue 14, published in 2023 with the title “Human Nature”, is particularly revealing in its reflection on how the Anthropocene has radically transformed the landscape and our relationship with nature. Climate change, war, deforestation, and waste have turned once-living landscapes into scenes of devastation, compelling us to rethink our bond with the natural world.

Natural landscapes, once a source of protection, now alert us to the dangers of disconnection. The ash of a burnt forest or seas blanketed in plastic are witnesses to a profound imbalance. And yet nature continues to offer us pathways to regeneration: working in symbiosis with it, understanding its capacity for self-equilibrium, and recognising that everything is interconnected. Environmental philosopher Glenn Albrecht proposes that we move beyond the Anthropocene and into the Symbiocene, an era in which humans and nature coexist in harmony.

In this context, the colour of the landscape becomes a symbol of adaptation and survival. Like animals that metamorphose, we too can evolve and envision hybrid landscapes in which the natural and the artificial merge. Artificial intelligence and augmented reality allow us to project futures in which humans, machines, and nature coexist in a multisensory and bio-inclusive symbiosis. If we are willing, devastation can become care, and fear can become optimism.

Biophilia, the term introduced by biologist Edward O. Wilson in 1984 to describe our innate affinity for all living things, becomes essential. This concept is well established in the design world, and projects such as Richard Mosse’s *Broken Spectre* are a clear example. His infrared images transform the Amazon rainforest into an otherworldly landscape

of pink and red tones, conjuring a captivating beauty from ecological devastation.

It is from this conceptual framework that the “Human Nature” issue of the magazine unfolds across five major chromatic narratives: Symbiosis, Regeneration, Mutant, Eden, and Sacred. These are not simply colour palettes, but ways of thinking about landscape through colour, texture, and material.

Symbiosis

Symbiosis is a state of balanced and mutually beneficial interdependence. The colour palette expresses this reconnection with nature: from the blues of deep oceans to the rich browns of earth and peat, through the lighter tones of grass and food. Camouflage here sheds its military associations and becomes a strategy of respect: to become integrated in the landscape is to minimise our impact. Examples of this symbiosis include the jewellery of Mabel Pena, made from recycled bags, and the bio-inclusive projects of Studio Hendrikx and Hassan Ragab.

Regeneration

The concept of *regeneration* is fundamental: we cannot design if we cannot regenerate. This palette draws on the earthy tones of soil, the tender skin of earth worms, the yellows of cocoons, the greys of shells, and the semi-transparent hues of insect wings. It is a chromatic range that celebrates nature’s constant transformation and life as a cycle. Spaces such as the FabLab by Roth Architecture, built using ancestral techniques and biomorphic forms, exemplify this vision.

Mutant

The *Mutant* palette explores metamorphosis and carries us into an aquatic, amphibian world. These are damp, viscous, jelly-like tones in constant transformation: amphibian greens, oxygenated blues, liquid pastels that drift into toxic reds and kitsch pinks. This imaginary world combines myth and reality, conjuring a future in which AI and interactive technology generate unsettling yet fascinating ecosystems. The fantastical, translucent forms of Sandra Keja Planken’s work, alongside the biotechnological innovation of Colorifix, which produces pigments using microorganisms, reinforce this narrative.

Eden

Eden is a diverse and inclusive palette in which every colour coexists with the others: radiant turquoise, cherry tomato red, pure sky blue, frog green, canary yellow. A palette for expressing, attracting, and signalling. Yet it also reminds us that nature, like humans, uses red and yellow as a warning. Bosch’s *The Garden of Earthly Delights* inspires this chromatic explosion.

Sacred

The *Sacred* palette celebrates the power of fauna and the natural world, venerating objects and animals imbued with spiritual meaning. These colours have ancestral connotations that are potent, introspective, and timeless: misty mauve, oxide green, clay red, crystalline turquoise, gold dust, blackbird blue, sacred brown. A sober palette, yet charged with symbolic force.

Taken together, this journey through the five narratives shows how landscape inspires new chromatic ranges and how the relationship between humans, animals, and technology is redefining contemporary design.

I.

Reading the Colours of the Landscape

Wanderings through years of painting in the Vall d'en Bas

Alex Nogué

What I describe in this text has to do with methods of creation, though not the kind of process where “first I have an idea, then I write it down, then I photograph it, and finally I develop it”. I’m referring to that other part of the creative process: understanding why I do what I do, and why I do it the way I do. This understanding rarely arrives while you are working; it often comes years later, or sometimes even before.

Creation is not the exclusive domain of artists. Everyone lives through processes of creation whether or not they hold the title of artist, because the simple act of living is itself an act of immense creation. And so when I speak of my wanderings in the Vall d'en Bas (Garrotxa), I am speaking not only of painting, but also of life.

The title of this text is borrowed from a book by Jaume Morera i Galícia called *En la sierra del Guadarrama. Divagaciones de unos años de pintura entre las nieves* (In the Guadarrama Mountains. Wanderings through years of painting among the snows), published in 1927. This title fascinated me, and it took me years to track down a copy. When I fi-

nally read it, I was disappointed; it is mainly a book of anecdotes. But one idea stayed with me: Morera describes how, in his first year in the mountains, he went there “like a settler”, and how in his second year, once he no longer wished to “take anything”, the mountains gave him so many things. This idea of ceasing to impose oneself on the landscape and allowing oneself to be shaped by it resonated with me deeply.

First wandering: “It was a lie (1978–1981)”

In the late 1970s, I embarked on a project that set out to study the landscape of the Vall d'en Bas from a formal standpoint. I wanted to identify its colours, its textures, its structures. In the fully analogue era, I developed a quasi-scientific method to determine the dominant colours of the Vall d'en Bas. The result was a range of two or three hundred colours, each one numbered so that they could be reproduced and compared. It was an enormous undertaking, which is why, when I was awarded the *II Beca d'Arts Plàstiques de la Ciutat d'Olot* in 1982, I used the entire grant to pay someone to help me. It was simply impossible to do it all alone.

The project attracted considerable attention in the fields of architecture and urban planning, at a time when landscape studies had yet to be established in Catalonia. But one day, while giving a talk in the Basque Country, I had a moment of revelation. I was presenting the colour charts when, suddenly, it struck me that the whole thing was a lie. It was a difficult moment, but I finished the talk. Afterwards, there came a calm, settled quiet, and yes: it had all been a lie.

What did I mean by “a lie”? I meant that the project was not, in truth, a scientific inquiry. It was an unconscious strategy for befriendng the landscape; a landscape I had long rejected for biographical, familial, and cultural reasons. Looking at it, analysing it, interpreting it: this was the way I had found to reconcile myself with it.

Some time later, I felt the need to make another project connected to the Vall d'en Bas landscape. I loaded a camera with a slide film and walked through the places that had been important to me: the house where I was born, the school playground, friends' houses, the football field. I did not look through the viewfinder; I walked and *clicked, clicked, clicked*. Afterwards I grouped the slides by theme and by place, then glued them together in bundles, it was impossible to see the images. It was an intimate gesture, a way of acknowledging that what I was seeking was not to represent the landscape, but to revisit it emotionally.

This project taught me that, when we are in the act of creating, we often do not know what we are doing. As Stefan Zweig puts it, you cannot write and at the same time watch yourself writing. Only after creating can you understand what you were doing and why, and there is a deep satisfaction in that.

Second wandering: “Look, Alejandru is still working”

Like many artists, I have often asked myself why I do what I do, for whom I work, and what sense there is in devoting hours and money to works that may end up packed away in a storage room. One day, two sisters from a farmhouse near my home said to me: “Every night, before we go to sleep, we go outside to look at the stars and say: ‘Look, Alejandru is still working’”. That phrase struck me. I thought: now I know who I am working for.

From that moment I began to observe the lights of houses at night. They are points of light in the midst of darkness, like small human presences. From this came the photographs of the series *Human Landscape* (2007): large-format images with one or two points of light that evoke lives, thoughts, and invisible activities.

In conversations with scientists, I came across the concept of reciprocal space: the idea that certain things cannot be seen directly by any instrument, but can be transposed into an alternative space where their underlying structure becomes visible. The candles of the Sanctuary of the Mare de Déu de la Salut became metaphors for this space. Each flame was the representation of a wish, a grief, a prayer. The resulting work combined a large-format projection on one side of the room with a small back-lit photograph on the other.

These are some of the projects I have created in which colour and light play a central role, alongside various reflections on art and the figure of the artist. All of the works combine an outward-facing dimension with a more introspective one, and it felt important to share something of both.

“Soraya Green”. Reflections on eco-social succession and chromatic allegory

Jordi Morell

“Soraya Green” is the title of the exhibition bringing together a series of works and chromatic explorations made over recent years, centred on water landscapes: a restored marshland in L’Estartit (Torroella de Montgrí, Girona), an artificial pond near Darmstadt (Germany), a drinking trough in Menorca, an everyday swimming pool, and the Venetian lagoon.

The exhibition reflects on situations and places existing in an “in-between time”, as well as exploring colour and its perception. Its point of departure is the idea that the succession and accumulation of layers, and therefore of information, is a concept shared by both painterly practice and the eco-social

understanding of the territory through which we move.

The artistic research is presented as a series of case studies, in which each particular situation may resonate in broader contexts. The primary focus is the colour of the waters of lakes, pools, and similar places, which offer both reflective surfaces and turbid depths as the result of many circumstances. At its furthest reach, the work offers a singular perspective for investigating the complexity of territory, with all its fragilities and inaccuracies.

Soraya Green is a colour I discovered while observing glasses, other pieces of glassware, and manufactured objects during one of my drifts through Venice. It is the name that the Nason Moretti factory in Murano gives to a chromatic range within its collection.

The painting series SG (2024) consists of recollections of this indeterminate colour, one that evoked for me the waters of the Venetian lagoon, translated into painted form with all their imprecisions and vulnerabilities.

Two photographs, *Algues brunes* (Brown Algae) (2023), serve as a counterpoint: in addition to identifying a type of algae known as phaeophytes, which encompass a wide range of brown tones, from golden through olive-brown and reddish-brown to near black, they also refer to an invasive species of the order Fucales that is proliferating in the Venice lagoon.

Laguna Suite (2023–) is a series of Venetian postcards, lightly altered to reveal only the printed areas relating to water. I began collecting this material with a mixture of nostalgia and sociological curiosity linked to tourism and the representation of the city. I thought it might serve as a visual bridge to other works. I decided to show some of them for several reasons: the eloquence of what remains hidden in the image despite the imprecise cuts, the decontextualized chromatic ranges, and the fragility of the inks, which will inevitably change over time.

One room of the exhibition was dedicated to the triptych *La Pletera*, 13.05.2015 (2018) and to the series *Taninos* (2018), both forming part of the personal project “La Pletera: un caso de entretem-po (2015-2018)” (*La Pletera*: a case of inbetween Time). This project was linked to the artistic initiative *Lloc, memòria i salicòrnies* (Place, Memory and Marsh Samphire) and the European LIFE-Pletera project, which followed the process of de-urbanisation and ecological restoration of a marshland in L’Estartit (Torroella de Montgrí, Girona).

The triptych is a panoramic view in three parts made on 13 May 2015 at La Pletera, accompanied by a list of territorial legislation, references to the vegetation, and biographical notes reflecting three years of monitoring the site. This project allowed me to reflect on how territory accumulates overlapping narrative layers over time, all of them bound up with the notions of value that have been projected onto the area. In La Pletera, interest and neglect have

alternated in rhythm with economic interests, urban expansion, and natural preservation.

The *Taninos* series is a chromatic speculation on the water found in pools and lagoons. During this project, I learned from the ecologist Xavier Quintana about tannins. These are complex substances that, together with microorganisms and sediments, influence the chromatic variations of the lagoons of La Pletera. The effect is not unlike that of tannins in a cup of tea.

Goetheteich (2021-2024) is also a work that explores tannins and ideas of ecological and social accumulation. Composed of several elements, coloured glass, a halftone image of the site, and an old booklet on lake plankton, it centres on a small pond in an artificial woodland in Darmstadt, Germany, named in the 1970s after the poet J. W. von Goethe. The place attracts me both as somewhere I frequently visit and for its emotional connection to a thinker who was fundamental to colour theory and the observation of the natural world.

The booklet records observations made by biologists between 1908 and 1929 in lakes in the area. Beyond the temporal distance of roughly a hundred years, what drew me to it was the classification of various aquatic elements in relation to the evocative power of their colours and the imagination these awaken. One example concerns the cyanophytes (today classified as photosynthetic bacteria and commonly known as blue-green algae), whose cellular colour, the booklet notes, can range from red to green, from cyan to blue, and through to brown and black. This variation may be influenced by the light available in any particular microhabitat, giving cyanobacteria a remarkable chromatic plasticity and adaptability. It is also noted that these cyanobacteria, as the principal primary producers of phytoplankton, can “contaminate” surface water supplies, particularly during the warmer months, giving the water a smell of mould, damp grass, or septic matter.

The exhibition also presents a drinking trough for animals found in Menorca, a photograph kindly provided by the artist Tònia Coll, and the video *Redención* (2021), (*Redemption*, 2021), which documents the action “Vaciar para rellenar” (Emptying to refill). This action, carried out by the writer Joan Pons and the artist Tònia Coll, aimed to restore an old, abandoned stone drinking trough. The place had once served to collect rainwater for animals, such as pigs, and the intervention became the occasion for Joan to perform a symbolic act of personal redemption connected to his experiences as a young man in those woods.

Another work in the exhibition is a photograph of a swimming pool, called simply *Piscina* (2024). It could be any pool, but in this case it belongs to an archive of images of the pool at my parents’ house. The initial inspiration came from the early years of the ecologist Ramon Margalef, who as a child observed the pond in the garden of his family home

in the Barcelona neighbourhood of Gràcia. Over time, however, these images have come to construct a parallel story about the problems of fresh water, drought, urban expansion, and the different uses a space can have according to the needs of the moment.

Alongside the photographs of the pool and the drinking trough hang two *Formes negres* (2024) (Black forms), evoking these containers of water. These painted “holes” operate on a poetic level (connecting with feelings of strangeness, enigma, and desire) but also on a political one, given the constant presence of these water containers in urban and media contexts.

To date, my artistic investigations have focused primarily on an urban perspective. The themes of the “hole” and of desolate urban spaces are recurrent in my work, and I consider them representative of the mutability of territory and the instability of human destiny.

Faced with the anxieties of our time, marked by ecological and social crisis, the exhibition proposes looking outward towards a recognition of the world around us. This is not a return to a romantic idea of nature, but an acceptance of the culture-nature continuum in which we are immersed. Despite the idyllic imagery so often associated with lakes, these spaces are also key witnesses to contemporary ecological problems and struggles.

Green place

Ariadna Rodríguez and Iñaki Álvarez

Our relationship with the Landscape Observatory of Catalonia has placed us in a space of experimentation, trial and error, attentive listening, and “making as it happens”, which are all intrinsic to our artistic practice. The perceptive and subjective dimensions of landscape were our point of entry into this universe, and through exploration and learning we came to understand that the socially shared values of landscape can generate individual emotions as well as diverse and collective readings. All of this intersected with our work, our practice, and our understanding of culture, art, and life itself.

This journey began with Joan Nogué: geographer, mentor, and friend. Conversations with him and his wife Adela led us, almost without our realising it, to settle in Mieres, a village of 220 inhabitants. It is here that we have rooted our practice and built the *Espai Nyamnyam*. This is a space dedicated to supporting research in contemporary creation within the area of degrowth, where we bring together cycles of activity, gatherings, and open sessions with practitioners from artistic practice, critical thinking, agroecology, and philosophy, always with a transdisciplinary outlook. None of this is incidental: it is

precisely because we live and work in this context that we approach the environment, landscape, and colour in the way we do.

Each June, on the road from Mieres to Olot, as the green fields are cut, we find ourselves returning to a reflection made by the farmer Marcel de Collbahi about this “green so green” of cereal monocultures; landscapes that everyone photographs, yet which are also the result of an excess of slurry that permeates the soil, the water, the flora, the fauna, and, inevitably, our own bodies. This tension between appearance and reality is a thread running through all our research.

In 2021 we began “Geografies Invisibles” (Invisible Geographies), a long-term research project made possible by a grant and a residency at the Observatory and the Museu de la Garrotxa. For months we consulted materials at the Landscape Documentation Centre, talked with the teams there, explored the museum’s collections, and developed relationships that helped us understand what we were doing, “while, or even after, we were doing it”. This closeness allowed us to work in a focused way, with a careful attentiveness to the territory.

From this process emerged *Desenfocant l’Anècdota* (Taking focus off the anecdote), a fifty-minute video work presented in 2024 at the Museu de la Garrotxa. The title came from conversations with Xevi Roura, a museum technician, who explained that in nineteenth-century painting the “anecdote” referred to human figures, animals, or wisps of smoke that prevented the landscape from standing on its own, without the anthropocentric presence and gaze. Joaquim Vayreda struggled throughout his life to free himself from that anthropocentric presence. We wanted to take this idea further: to blur the anecdote in order to question the instrumentalisation of landscape.

The work focused on Vayreda’s painting *Summer*, which we brought down from the museum’s galleries and placed at the heart of the exhibition. A video projected onto the reverse of the canvas invited the viewer to move in and out of the work with a critical eye. The “outside” of the painting was constructed through a collective reading of the landscape, drawing on contributions from geography, restoration ecology, climatology, philosophy, and art history. The “inside” was explored by filming the search for a herd of Alpera (Alt Empordà) cattle with the farmer Josep Caldas. The difficulty of finding them, despite their presence in the painting, revealed the impossibility of reconstructing that landscape and its stereotyped nature, one not far removed from the strategies of commercial cinema.

As so often happens in our work, after the video piece we began to transform all this material into a stage piece. Thanks to an invitation from Tena Busquets, we premiered *Lloc* (Place) at the Sismògraf Festival 2024. The piece deepens the idea that places are not merely material realities but cultural

and social constructions with a powerful intangible dimension. Returning to the words of Joan Nogué, we understand that “place is not approached as a location, but by proposing imagination as a geographical space”.

We are equally struck by his observation that “landscape is simultaneously signifier and signified, container and content, reality and fiction”. This quality of in-between space led us to reflect that the same holds true of theatre and cinema: they are *in-betweens* that exist between subject and object. *Lloc* (Place), the title we gave the piece, proposed inhabiting that interstice. At a certain moment, the screen disappeared, and the sonic space (the radio) became a space from which to speculate and to listen deeply to the place.

It was at this point that the radio narrated the history of the colour green. We close this text with a condensed version of that account:

Everyone has rushed towards green: green zones, green energy, green economies, green cities, green vehicles, green labels... [...]

The symbol is too beautiful to be true; green is not a simple colour. A colour whose true nature is instability — not sustainability! Centuries ago, green was transgressive, turbulent, even eccentric. It was a chemically unstable colour.

[...] In 1775, an intense, luminous, magical, brilliant green appeared. It was created artificially by oxidising copper with vinegar or even urine, and mixing it with arsenic: pure green poison. [...]

Colour of chance, of gambling, of destiny, of luck, of fortune. In the feudal era, opponents faced one another in duels on green meadows; jesters, jugglers, and hunters dressed in green. Everywhere, money, cards, and gambling chips are placed on green. The boardroom tables of great corporations and governments are green.

Green represents good luck, but also bad. It is an ambiguous colour. Evil spirits, demons, dragons, serpents, and other wandering creatures take on green tones, inhabiting the void that separates the earthly world from the beyond. In publishing, there is a belief that green book covers perform less well. Jewellers know that emeralds are harder to sell than other precious stones, as they have a reputation for bringing bad luck. The origins of these superstitions reach back to a time when green was unstable and poisonous.

In the eighteenth century, chemists invented a pseudoscientific theory defining certain colours as “primary” and others as “complementary”. This influenced artists of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries to the point where many painters chose to work only with the “primary” colours, and our green was demoted to second rank. The theory of primary colours still taught today is a fiction. It does not correspond to any social reality and refuses to admit that colour is, first and foremost, a cultural phenomenon. It is a classification that reveals a startling ignorance of history.

This gave rise to another symbolism of green: regarded as the “complementary” of red, the colour of the forbidden, it became its opposite, the colour of permissiveness. This idea took hold after 1800, when an international signalling system was devised for ships, which was later adapted to trains and cars. [...]

Until the eighteenth century, nature was defined above all by four elements: fire, air, water, and earth. It was probably early Islam that first associated green with nature. [...]. Green is sacred in the Muslim world, which appears to have contributed to its being undervalued in Christian eyes.

In the West, the association of green with nature did not begin until the Romantic era. Then, in the mid-nineteenth century, when commercial signage appeared, a green cross was chosen to mark the first pharmacies, as these were places where plant-based remedies were prepared. [...]

Today, everything green is presented as evidence of freshness and natural life. Green has become ecology and cleanliness. [...] It was once the colour of disorder, now it is the “apparent” colour of freedom.

Full colour postcards in wonderland (welcome to the colourful world of the picture postcard)

Cristina Arribas

Landscape, or rather its representation, is shaped by the capitalist system of production and consumption, and presented according to the logic of tourism: reduced to a commodity, it becomes one more product in the machinery of capital. Within the strategies of tourist promotion, and in the service of selling a desirable and stereotyped image of places and landscapes, the editing and manipulation of colour plays an essential role. Without going deeply into the complexity of the term *landscape* at this point, we begin from the premise that landscape, and of course its representation, is a construction: one that delimits a fragment of its own infinity, dresses it up and tailors it, and elevates it to the pedestal of the shop-window product.

We think of the landscape of tourism in colour because tourist postcards have taught us to see the world as a dazzling, luminous four-colour print, as a reality assembled from superimposed chromatic layers that give meaning to contemporary experiences of leisure and pleasure. It was colour that invented the modern tourist postcard and transformed it into a palette laden with saturated pigments, into a chart of artificial and, at times, irrational colours, whose sole purpose was to enhance

and “breathe new life” into the photographic images of tourism.

Picture postcards unfold ludic and cheerful chromatic interpretations of the destinations they represent. Colour beautifies and adorns them, but it also helps to sell, transforming places into tourist commodities. In order to catch the tourist’s eye, postcards push their colours to the limit, sometimes to the point of stridency and dissonance, in search of the ideal colour space: the bluest skies and seas, the whitest clouds, the greenest trees, the most orange sunsets, and the reddest reds. Colour dresses up the fiction of tourism and softens its damaging consequences for the territory: it constructs it, glorifies it and turns it into a postcard.

Landscape and colour share, in their essence, the visual dimension: the observer is essential to the existence of landscape as a concept, and colour is an impression produced by a tone of light on the visual organs. The observer of landscape and of its colours is thus both the receiving subject and its consumer.

It would appear that chromophobia has been latent in Western culture since antiquity, evident in every attempt to eliminate colour from art, architecture, literature, and photography, dismissing it as non-essential, as oriental, as merely cosmetic. The modernism of the first half of the twentieth century, in its most cultivated and elite manifestations, was particularly chromophobic: serious modern architecture is always in black and white, as is authored photography, serious books on architecture or design, good portraits, and so on. Yet these principles seem not to apply to the world of advertising and the picture postcard. The presence of colour is striking in the most popular and mass-market media, in sharp contrast to the more cultivated spheres of identified and celebrated authorship. As the Almerian photographer and pioneer of colour Carlos Pérez Siquier put it, “colour was for *postcards*”. And this means colour at the height of its splendour, vivid, gleaming, uninhibited, and unabashed: colour that is expressly, and perhaps deliberately, excessive.

In the universe of advertising, where visual impact is everything, photography saturates colours and “naturally” enhances them to the limits of (in)credulity, simplifying forms until they reach streamlined, semi-abstract formats that often brush against the territory of kitsch. Colour becomes a guarantee of sales, an indispensable tool for making places desirable.

From 1957, the Spanish postcard shifted to full-colour offset printing (the ideal commercial model), producing laminated, full-colour cards that projected the delight and optimism needed by a country hungry for promotion. From this point, another golden age of the picture postcard unfolded: an explosion of modernity, joy, and colour.

The picture postcard not only represents reality in exaggerated, exorbitant colours, but also recreates it in condensed form as a kind of painted palette: the

world can be explained pictorially through a literal painter's palette. For each colour there is an aspect, a beauty of the city, a picturesque corner, a partial view, a landscape. The world is summed up in fragments and in full colour, because in colour the world is a happier, more delightful, more beautiful, and ultimately more desirable place.

A key reference point in the world of chromatic photo editing for postcard production is the British photographer and postcard publisher John Hinde (1916-1997): John Hinde Studios. His cards featured dazzling blue skies and vibrantly coloured landscapes, capturing the optimism of those decades in the second half of the twentieth century when the United Kingdom was finally emerging from post-war austerity. Hinde's postcards accentuated, and at times altered, the colours of the original images to produce more optimistic and cheerful results. It appears that Hinde found the landscape and reality before him imperfect, in need of beautification and improvement. He presented scenes perfectly staged and populated by happy, smiling families, signalling a new future for the United Kingdom. Hinde's edited photographs, now postcards, were aimed at a rapidly growing demographic: the tourist. John Hinde is one of the most important and indispensable figures in the world of colour photography, and above all in the photography of the picture postcard.

From the very beginnings of photography, photographers longed to "paint" their monochrome images. The hand-colouring of printed photographs became a widely used method throughout the nineteenth century. Was this to bring the image closer to the reality it showed? To beautify that reality? To improve it? This is the question, because the colouring was often so utterly unreal, fantastical, or implausible that it bore little resemblance to the photographed reality, and perhaps did little to improve it either. It is also true that the world and its landscapes exist in colour; therefore, the desire to document and represent them in colour ought, in principle, to bring us closer to reality and reflect an intention of fidelity.

It is clear that colour sells, and the picture postcard sells: it sells the landscapes it represents. And so, landscapes for sale are offered in colour. Landscapes of green meadows and mountains, seas and skies of luminous blue, but also towns and cities in vivid, joyful colours; perfectly staged scenes of exaggerated colour that confirm and guarantee a happy life in a world of colour. This is the emphatic reality of the picture postcard. But photographing reality in colour is not enough to ensure commercial success or guarantee sales. Colour must be exalted to achieve images of desire, perfect worlds and perfect landscapes: landscapes of dubious credibility and emphatic realism.

And colour, I insist once more, was "for postcards", and that "was" sits in the imperfect tense, very imperfect, bathed in nostalgic colour, because

yesterday's landscapes are just as coveted today as colour itself once was. The photographic modernity of yesterday has become today's idyllic pop nostalgia: a perfect world in the imperfect tense. Glorious Technicolor.

In Wonderland, the landscapes are picture-postcard perfect. And the most wonderful of all..., they are in full colour!

II.

Acting in the Landscape Through Colour

Colour of damp earth. The colour of the landscape as an ecological and perceptual tool for sustainable land management

Miriam García García

Beyond its aesthetic function, colour reflects ecological, cultural, and social processes, facilitating the understanding and appreciation of landscape. The perception of landscape is a complex process, conditioned by memory, culture, biogeography, and socioeconomic context. Within this framework, colour is an important sensory variable. Numerous studies have demonstrated that the colours of our surroundings influence human wellbeing, territorial identity, and collective decisions regarding land use and conservation (Gobster *et al.*, 2007; Kaplan & Kaplan, 1989).

From the perspective of landscape ecology, colour also reflects the phenology of vegetation, soil composition, geology, climate, and the presence of pollutants, constituting a visible indicator of the biophysical processes that structure a territory.

Environmental psychology has also documented how colours influence the perception of a space as natural, safe, or artificial.

It can therefore be affirmed that colour constitutes an essential component in human perception of the environment and a relevant indicator in land use planning and protection.

Colour as a multi-scale ecological indicator

The colour of the landscape makes it possible to characterise ecological attributes such as biodiversity, phenology, the physiological condition of biomass, and biogeochemical cycles. Changes in chromatic parameters (hue, saturation, and spectral contrast) can function as early indicators of desertification, habitat fragmentation, or urban expansion. Tools such as NDVI (Normalised Difference Vegetation Index), EVI (Enhanced Vegetation Index), and SAVI (Soil-Adjusted Vegetation Index) and multi-spectral metrics derived from time series allow us to evaluate structural heterogeneity, primary productivity, and ecosystem diversity.

The use of satellite sensors, UAVs, LiDAR, and machine learning algorithms enables dynamic landscape analysis at multiple scales, integrating visual perception, remote sensing, and landscape ecology. Spectral diversity, represented through spectral clustering or the concept of “spectral species”, correlates with plant and animal biodiversity, offering quantifiable indicators for land management.

Time series imagery (Landsat, Sentinel-2) captures seasonal variations in colour, reflecting leaf emergence, flowering, drought, and fire events, and significantly improves habitat models compared to static land-use maps. These metrics also enable assessing the impacts of natural disasters, providing relevant information for planning and conservation.

Climate change and the transformation of the chromatic landscape

Climate change is rapidly altering the chromatic palette of the landscape, affecting both natural and urban ecosystems. In the Mediterranean, a yellowing of arboreal vegetation has been observed in association with prolonged drought and high temperatures, as plant species modify their UV pigmentation to protect themselves from intense radiation. This affects pollinator perception and floral fertility (Koski *et al.*, 2022).

In urban areas, the combination of water stress, an intensifying heat island effect, and the degradation of building materials is modifying the colouration of vegetation and infrastructures, impoverishing the urban chromatic palette and affecting perceptions of comfort, habitability, and territorial identity.

The colours of climate adaptation: green and blue

Green and blue infrastructures are a key urban strategy for climate adaptation, mitigating the heat island effect, restoring ecological functions, and regulating the hydrological cycle. Their effectiveness depends on the integration into urban planning strategies that limit soil impermeabilization, and promote green roofs, permeable paving, and sustainable drainage systems (SuDS).

Illustrative urban examples include the High Line in New York, where vegetation was selected for resilience to local conditions and water scarcity, and Potsdamer Platz in Berlin, which combines green roofs and water features to achieve zero surface runoff. These projects demonstrate that green and blue infrastructures in the urban landscape are not merely aesthetic elements, but functional components of urban resilience and efficient water management.

Colour as a tool for climate activism

The colour of the landscape offers citizens a tangible indicator of the effects of climate change, making it easier to understand abstract phenomena such as the disruption of ecological cycles, water stress, and biodiversity loss. From a socio-spatial perspective, the landscape is simultaneously a physical container and a cultural construction, in which chromatic transformation reveals and evidences environmental, social, and ecological impacts, contributing to awareness and action towards territorial sustainability.

Landscape and colour as a tool for regenerative design

The contemporary landscape is conceived as a living system in which ecological, social, and cultural dynamics converge. In this context, colour becomes a fundamental design tool, capable of articulating perceptual experiences that give value to natural processes and regenerate degraded ecosystems. The social perception of restored spaces is closely linked to natural tones: citizens associate greens and blues with healthy and accessible environments, while grey or highly saturated colours are perceived as indicators of degradation or intensive human intervention. This connection allows ecological restoration and land planning projects to communicate their sustainable objectives in an immediate and understandable way.

The integration of flowering cycles into landscape design generates ever-changing landscapes, in which the seasonal variation of tones and textures enriches the visitor's experience and fosters a direct connection with nature's rhythms. The selection of native or naturalised species adapted to local conditions ensures ecological resilience, reduces maintenance and irrigation requirements, and reinforces ecosystem services.

Examples such as Barcelona's Superilles Verdes (Green Superblocks) show how replacing the grey of asphalt with green surfaces and permeable paving improves urban biodiversity, air quality, and the perception of neighbourhoods as more welcoming and healthful spaces.

Colour design rooted in ecology and natural cycles can restore value to territories, strengthen ecological resilience, and offer aesthetic and cultural experiences grounded in nature. As Piet Oudolf puts it: “I want to work with plants that die beautifully. Brown is also a colour”, reminding us that the

beauty of landscape can emerge from the continuous interplay between natural processes and design decisions, and not only from saturation or artifice.

Of gods and *siurells*. The make-up of landscape

Ignasi Esteve

As a painter, I invite the reader on a journey that begins with my own sensory and artistic experience, moves through an analysis of how colour is applied in built structures, and concludes by proposing strategies of “chromatic make-up” in the landscape.

Plastic and visual arts provide us with a methodological foundation for analysing the elements of landscape and for projecting interventions within it. Landscape becomes an image. Aesthetics, with its formal and chromatic criteria, is the academic reference that facilitates analysis. Personal sensibility, nourished by the creative journey, is the driving force and the basis for decision-making. The natural setting and functional considerations bring projects into reality and down to earth.

In my own creative process, painting begins at the easel and, in its search for contemporary relevance, seeks to move outward and project itself into the landscape. It is a pursuit of a utopia of visual comfort in which reverie is always present.

In the 1990s, the chromatic combinations of intense rhythms and complementary colour contrasts in my autobiographical canvases migrated from the support to shop windows and exterior walls. The possibility of intervening in the nearby rural environment was the result of a commitment to the local community, in collaboration with a cooperative dedicated to the conservation of heritage poultry breeds that needed colours and textures to express its identity. The pigments and textures of traditional domestic materials, with lime as their central protagonist, opened the door to the search for a fragile heritage connected to collective identity. The faded passions of rural life still carried within them an intimate knowledge of natural systems — poultry, livestock, and gardens.

The loss of the values embedded in rural ways of life is evident both in the disappearance of indigenous animal breeds and in the ignorance of traditional crafts and building techniques. We have lost varieties of fruit trees, flowers, and vegetables, but also gypsum-and-ash floors, limewashed walls, and the whole cycle of lime. With this loss of diversity and resilience, tastes and perfumes, textures and colours have also vanished.

This ignorance has left a void that has been filled, in popular culture, with new beliefs severed from old ways. For the sake of a return to the

“natural and authentic”, the last traces of the old colours and traditional domestic materials have been “cleaned away”. *Repicantismo*, the stripping back of rendered surfaces, has changed the face of landscapes, eliminating the whiteness of lime and the functional, protective logic of traditional coatings. This “naturalist” tendency has, for example, destroyed the very subject matter that scholars of popular Baroque once studied.

The fashion for stripping buildings and walls invites reflection on the false beliefs about the visual appearance of the classical world that persisted for centuries. Purity of style was associated with cleanliness, with the whiteness of marble sculptures and columns. Even today we find it difficult to digest the studies that have demonstrated, for over a century, the omnipresent polychromy of the temples and sacred images of ancient civilisations.

The need to humanise everything that surrounds us and carries meaning for us is as old as culture itself. Painting, as make-up and as symbolic language, has persisted across the centuries, though the pursuit of the sublime and the refined has often led to a preference for sobriety, or even chromatic silence.

The Mallorcan *siurells*¹ are a vestige of the classical gods, as are the saints of Olot, clothing fashion, and the return of tattoos. Colour signifies and identifies through its presence as much as through its absence.

In order to appreciate architectural and artistic heritage to restore clarity to the landscape, current technology and knowledge impel us to explain and disseminate values that allow for a cleaner, more harmonious reading of our surroundings. At the same time, they can unmask the false beliefs and ignorance that have given rise to fashions which leave houses and churches without their skins. Historical arguments accompanied by chromatically altered before-and-after photographs of the landscape can be a remarkably persuasive tool.

A fresh look at the colour white, the very image of lime, with all its nuances, allows us to analyse both the present and the past of the human landscape.

The breakneck pace of construction produces a “white foam” effect, in which light, whiteness, scale, and visibility reinforce the new buildings of housing estates and industrial zones that spread unapologetically across the territory, resulting in a chromatic dimming of historic centres. We see this in inland and mountain villages, and above all along the coast, where traditional fishing cottages are muted and swallowed up by the proliferation of new “seaside houses”, tower blocks strung along

1. Editors' note: *siurells* are clay figures, typical of Mallorca, that incorporate a whistle; they are a fundamental part of the island's popular craft tradition.

mountain terraces, abruptly erasing the organic, historically layered character of these settlements.

To persuade the sceptical and offer substantive alternatives, we can put forward the concept of the *snow-capped mountain summit*. This refers to using chromatic treatment to restore visual prominence to the historic cores of settlements, which are places charged with symbolic meaning and a strong sense of identity. Today we can read the landscape from the air, in aeroplane views or drone footage, and observe how urban centres dissolve into waves of “white foam”. Through chromatic make-up simulations we can visualise a before and after in which the original settlement centres, with their pale lime-washed tones, are brought back into relief, while industrial sheds and disproportionate, incongruous apartment blocks are softened and made to “integrate” into their surroundings.

If we use white as a strategy of intervention, we rehabilitate lime and its colours in historic centres and in old or traditional buildings.

In the built environment, painted surfaces are the clad skin that identifies a space as belonging to a place with its own character. Colour humanises dwellings and integrates them into a community, just as make-up, masks, ethnic textiles, and fashion do. Painting is culture, illusion, mask, make-up: humanity. With these premises, we hope to persuade those working in construction and landscape to champion and restore the coating of façades, interiors and historic walls using lime-based wall painting techniques, or environmentally respectful paints such as casein, silicate, or Swedish painting processes.

Building and urban painting festivals establish a new dialogue between marginal architecture and its audience. The scale at which they operate and the visual impact they generate can open a channel for chromatic vitality to return to our built environment, and for a new composition of the contemporary landscape through processes that bring together function, nature and dream.

Colour as a component of landscape and its influence on character

Lucas Peries

Colour is an aspect of landscape perception that enables particular interpretations rooted in emotional principles. It is well established that the chromatics of things and spaces affect people as emotional experiences. In technical terms, colour is a sensation produced by light rays that stimulate the visual organs, and depends on wavelength. Colour therefore

corresponds to the light that enters the retina and is, for this reason, relative to the person perceiving a given environment with its particular illumination and quality of light. There is thus a direct and intrinsic relationship between the concept of *landscape* and that of *colour*, for just as colour is a sensation, so too is landscape. Sensations are relative to each individual, according to the way in which the brain interprets the stimuli it receives from its surroundings through the senses, forming an impression consciously or unconsciously. In the case of landscape, a conscious act predominates, allowing us to organise the assembled elements (objects, subjects, and landscape components) and the sensations perceived, and thereby invest them with meaning as a landscape imaginary.

Landscape is inherent to the act of looking: a reflective and profound perception of a given spatial reality that translates into a mental image. It is the synthesis of what has been observed, the result of inhabiting, contemplating, and feeling a particular territory or space. This image is a thought, an intellectual construct that is not restricted to the visual; it is generated by the entire human sensory system, through multisensory perception. Such an image takes into account sounds, smells, tastes, textures, luminosities, and colours, among other aspects of “form” in the broadest sense of the term, as well as haptics: the full range of non-visual, non-auditory, non-olfactory, and non-gustatory sensations experienced by people with bodily integrity, including touch, balance, proprioception, and interoception. One might object that soundscapes — landscapes perceived exclusively through hearing — have no chromatic dimension, but even what is heard is interpreted by the mind, which constructs a mental image, and colour finds its way into that image too.

It is clear that both landscape and colour are the result of a conjunction of elements bound up with biotic and abiotic, cultural and natural, tangible and intangible factors. In this regard, it is worth placing particular emphasis on the last of these, since landscape is intangible; like colour, it is incorporeal, it cannot be touched. Both are also dynamic, subject as they are to temporality. Landscape is therefore recognised as an immaterial, cultural, and human fact, one that can be perceived, interpreted, represented, and valued. Colour in particular depends on light — whether natural or artificial in origin — and light, in turn, depends on the passage of time, from the most dramatic moments of dusk and dawn to the effects of electric light. Yet landscape and colour are also distinct and independent, for there are spaces in which colour is not relevant, passes unnoticed, and is not valued as an essential part of the landscape. However, when colour does form a significant part of a place, when it is a defining element, when it shapes the character of the landscape, it becomes embedded in memory, memorable and sealed into the landscape-image.

Colour signifies, denotes, and connotes, as well as highlighting the particular qualities of objects, buildings, flora and fauna, geomorphology, people, vehicles, and whatever other elements make up a large part of a landscape. Colour in the things that compose inhabited spaces, whether corporeal or incorporeal, natural or artificial, concrete or virtual, manifests in three ways:

- Natural colour, arising from the intrinsic materiality or substance of things.
- Applied colour, from the pigments or paints that cover things.
- Luminous colour, from the coloured rays of light that things emit or receive.

The chromatics of landscape can derive from any of these three categories and their interrelations. In the neighbourhood of Nueva Córdoba (Córdoba, Argentina), for example, fired brick buildings predominate, and it is this material that provides the dominant chromatics of the landscape. In Cerro Belavista (Valparaíso, Chile), and in most of the city's neighbourhoods, buildings are painted in many colours, and it is the pigment that is primary there, regardless of whether the surfaces are brick, corrugated metal, or wood. In the neighbourhood of Santa Teresa (Rio de Janeiro, Brazil), colour appears in the predominance of vegetation, ceramic roof tiles, and whitewashed walls; here it is the natural colour of materials and applied paint that provides the main chromatic character. When colour arises from artificial light, the emblematic case is Times Square (Manhattan, USA): here, neon tubes updated to LED and giant screens prevail, their constantly moving images producing a ceaseless multi-chromatic kaleidoscope day and night. Clearly, in all four examples there are many other elements contributing further tones; however, what matters in the landscape perspective is chromatic predominance, what Ávila and Polo (1996) call *ambient colour*: "[...] that particular generalised chromatic impression of a place as perceived in relation to incident light according to latitude, the different seasons, the different times of day, and by virtue of its form and configuration" (Ávila and Polo, 1996: p. 41).

Why insist that colour is relevant as a component of landscape, and that it can even be defining and decisive in its character? Because if you visit a place where the walls are entirely yellow, you are in Izamal, Mexico. If pink stucco predominates, you are in Jaipur, India. When the buses and telephone boxes are red and the taxis are black, you are in London. But when the taxis are a distinctive turquoise green, you are in a city in Saudi Arabia. If there are blue doors, windows, and domes, you are in the village of Oia, Greece. If the boats on the canals are uniformly black, you are in Venice. When building façades display the natural tones of volcanic rock, you may be in the historic centre of Mexico City. And when the trees turn to autumn orange and carpet the

ground, not with leaves but with flowers, you may be in Bucaramanga, Colombia, beneath the shade and fragrance of the búcaro tree (*Erythrina fusca*). Colour is therefore one of the defining features that tells us where we are. In each of these places there is a reason and a history behind each colour, a meaning that builds tradition and perpetuates it. The result, in each case, is a landscape with a distinctive character that in some instances enjoys universal recognition: an archetypal landscape.

The examples discussed here are intended to illuminate several questions about landscape and its relationship to colour. First, that colour in the city can be planned intentionally to produce desired effects — enhancing landscapes, stirring emotion, and creating something worthy of being remembered — whether through intervention in natural elements such as flora, in street furniture, or in buildings. Second, that such design decisions acquire significance over time, becoming representative of a culture and attaining heritage value. And directly related to this, that colour can become a defining sign of a landscape capable of producing geo-referencing, that is, a means by which a place is instantly located in the mind. Finally, the recognition and appreciation of landscape character demands sound practice in both public and private management committed to the conservation of landscape, or, where conservation is not possible, to its enhancement. Studying and determining the character of a landscape allows us to recognise the aspects that establish the identity of a place, and it is sometimes in colour that the main key to preservation lies.

Ultimately, and whatever the element in which it appears, colour behaves like any other component of landscape in that it contributes to forging the "idea" that is formed of any perceived environment, because "landscape is an idea (individual and collective) derived from the multisensory perception (direct and indirect) of a given urban-architectural space, integrated by multiple components (biotic and abiotic, tangible and intangible), which, according to their value, are ordered in the mind to form an eidetic image, subject to variation over time" (Peries and Barraud, 2024).

Colour charts for historic centres: methodology and management protocols

Joan Casadevall Serra

It is now broadly accepted among the professionals and institutions involved in the restoration of historic centres that landscape ordinances cannot be reduced to the prescription "colours shall be traditional to the area, with the exception of white". In

this article I reflect on and present the methodology developed at the Gabinet del Color for producing colour charts. These charts cannot be limited to a fan or a Pantone swatch; it is necessary to establish the ground rules for interpreting local architecture and the chromatic ranges and harmonies specific to each building typology or stylistic period. This is what is known as a colour plan.

The more than forty colour plans produced by the Gabinet del Color in municipalities across several countries have demonstrated, however, that for their correct application and observance, they need to be incorporated into planning instruments (special plans, landscape ordinances, and so on) and made easily accessible on municipal websites, so that professionals can not only “choose” colours but also carry out genuine chromatic restoration projects. This is what we have called chromatic studies.

These studies must precede the basic project brief and consist of an individualised analysis of the pre-existing surfaces and finishes of historic architecture. They include a historical and stylistic description of the building, its architectural composition and urban context, an assessment of the constructive condition of the various elements making up the façade, and the taking of samples to allow rigorous analysis of materials, textures, and colours. All of this must culminate in a detailed intervention proposal for the technical team working on the project.

In this chapter I begin with the case of Barcelona, which led me to define my working methodology and to assemble a multidisciplinary team within a defined schedule and budget. These are not erudite academic studies, but genuine research with practical application.

After setting out the ten steps that structure this methodology, I present the specific example of the Pla del color d’Olot (Olot Colour Plan). This was a municipal commission from 2008, incorporated into ordinance in 2009, which — despite being carried out twenty years after the Barcelona plan — follows the same steps. It was carried out in two phases. The first consisted of analysis and diagnosis, encompassing a geological and environmental study of the surroundings, urban development history, a classification of architectural typologies, an analysis of the original surface finishes of façades, and finally the drafting of urban landscape intervention ordinances aimed at protecting locally distinctive features, both those tied to the territory and those describing and valorising the traditional Olot plasterwork, considered a local technology with highly significant physical and chromatic characteristics.

The second phase of the commission sought to demonstrate the practical value of the work through hands-on intervention. In 2011 we carried out a chromatic study of the twenty or so buildings in Plaça Campdenmàs in Olot, applying the Colour Plan guidelines strictly. This was not a comprehen-

sive urban rehabilitation, but a landscape requalification intended to strengthen residents’ identification with their surroundings and to serve as a model for the rest of the historic centre. The same approach was applied more recently to Plaça Major.

Having explained the methodology of a colour plan, I go on to show how the stewardship of the urban landscape can be exercised through chromatic studies. Examining two specific buildings in Plaça Major in Olot: Ràdio Puig and Can Casabona. After establishing their history and original materials and colours, I set out what finishes would be most consistent with their typology. Although the recent renovations of these two buildings (the only cases in which I have been directly involved) did not follow the proposals I put forward, I trust that they may have served as a point of reflection prior to the intervention, and that they will remain as a technical document for future generations. Olot, a town of artists, has always been characterised by proposals in the urban realm that generate debate and controversy, and I hope that this continues for many years to come.