



Colour and
Landscape

Proceedings of the International Colour Association (AIC) Conference 2019

Buenos Aires, Argentina
14-17 October 2019
Universidad de Belgrano

Organized by
Grupo Argentino del Color
(GAC)

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grupo argentino del color
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The contents have been moved to a more permanent site: <https://aic2019color.wordpress.com>.

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Color in residences for the elderly: ideas competition for scholars

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ABSTRACT

We explore the possibilities of color to improve the quality of living in existing residential buildings for the elderly. We show some of the interior design projects developed by scholars enrolled in the Master in Architecture in Valencia who participated in the “Gesmed ideas competition: Color in residential buildings for the elderly”. Every color project started from the analysis of the needs detected in current spaces like disorientation in big size rooms and a particularly concerning general lack of cosines. Together with these initial needs, the chromatic resources explored by other artists and architects in noteworthy buildings were analyzed to guide the final formal solution. The goal is to help elder people to feel like at home and maintain their memories by using simple interior design interventions.

Keywords: *color in architecture, interior design, elderly, Gesmed*

INTRODUCTION

The disposition of color is a good starting point to reflect about the architectural possibilities for an interior design project. Course after course, scholars enrolled in the subject “Graphic and Chromatic Design” of the Master in Architecture, accept the challenge of updating an existing inner space by using simple architectural actions: redistribution of rooms, refurbishment, graphic design and color. The places to work in are existing buildings where users find problems or the owners consider that need a renewal. A company external to the university is involved in the activity and awards the best project in an architectural ideas competition. In previous editions, students worked in the offices of the international enterprise [Guzman Global](#), the rooms of the research center LabHuman, or the waiting rooms of [La Fe hospital](#).

In the course 2018-2019, scholars have been working in three residences for elderly people of public ownership, managed by the Gesmed company near the city of Valencia: Manises, Chiva and Velluters. In each residence there is an architectural intervention in a living room and in the spaces that give access to it, as well as a global graphic solution for the signs of the building. Every project

pays a special attention to the use of color, to favor the visual comfort of the residents, responding to the functional, compositional, aesthetic, cultural and any other aspects that concur in the design of the interior space. A video presentation of all the projects is available [online](#).

CURRENT STATE OF PUBLIC RESIDENCES FOR THE ELDERLY IN VALENCIA

The residential centers for the elderly are an architectural typology that is becoming very relevant in the context of the accelerated aging of the European population. The growing demand for places in these centers as an alternative to housing, invites to reflect on the most appropriate architectural conditions to accommodate the elderly. These residences become elder people's own house and therefore they should become their home, promoting and facilitating an optimal welfare state. It is necessary, therefore, to improve the stay of the elderly from an optimally developed physical environment, where the resident is stimulated in a functional, perceptual and emotional way.

To develop the architectural project for each one of the three residences selected, scholars and professors visited the places and recorded all the information needed, not only about the forms and colors of the existing buildings, but also about the problems that users and staff perceive in day to day. In the case of Velluters, Chiva and Manises, the architectural spaces were characterized by having a chromatic scene that tended towards white and neutral or very clear colors (Figure 1). From a perceptual point of view, the spaces were cold and impersonal, thus being spaces of an institutional aesthetic. Some of the most common needs detected were difficulties related with glare, disorientation in big size rooms and a particularly concerning general lack of cosines. Definitely, users would like to feel like at home.



Figure 1: Current state of the residences in Manises (a) and Chiva (b).

CHROMATIC RESOURCES TAKEN FROM OTHER EXAMPLES

Together with the information collected on site, every color project started from the cast of the chromatic resources assimilated in a previous work of analysis of existing noteworthy architectures. It is important to emphasize that color is an effective vehicle to achieve architectural intentions connected with the ideation. Depending on the main idea that drives the design, the different color

projects developed in this experience can roughly be categorized in three groups: (1) projects in which color relies on the function, (2) projects that seek for nature and vegetation, and (3) projects that opt to recover memories. Some chromatic possibilities like dynamism, kinetics in spaces, anamorphisms and other optical effects were left aside because of their disturbing effect for elder people; despite scholars studied some of these interesting resources in other contexts after some artists like Felice Varini, Olafur Eliasson, Carlos Cruz Díez or Boa Mistura.

COLOR AND FUNCTION

Color may interfere in the functional organization of the architectural spaces, in the orientation of the users and their circulations, or in the characterization of the functional destiny, after the critical reading of some buildings by Norman Foster (Arnoldi 2007), Richard Rogers or Renzo Piano.

In the project “**Colourful Chessboard**” (Figure 2), the room of a wide corridor is divided in different zones intended for different activities and colors help in the description of these smaller areas. With a similar concept, in the project “**Feel at Home**”, the main idea is to create integrated areas, divided but keeping the unity. Other times, like in “**El día que mi abuelo se volvió color**”, the living spaces are drawn after the expression of the activity flows, by displaying different concentrations of holes in the ceiling. In this case, colors are subtle and display a neutral environment for living, after the understanding of specific architectures by RCR architects, Selgas Cano, or Peter Zumthor.

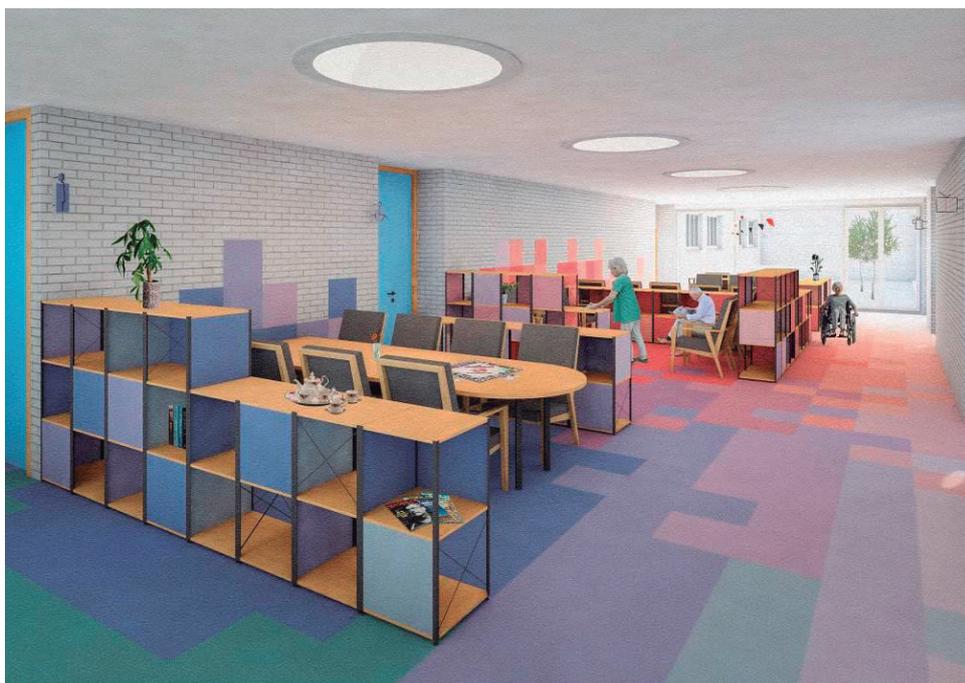


Figure 2: “Colourful Chessboard” by Mattia Tonini & Simon Hagen.

The project “**PATHofLIGHT**” (Figure 3) takes the color palette from the canvases of the famous Valencian painter Sorolla to reorganize the functional distribution of the different areas and help elder people in their way finding. A similar ideas was developed in the project “**Color Tube**”, but taking the illustrative language of the metro plans as a reference. This clear and direct visual language helps in the orientation. While the color of the symbol always relates to a specific use or activity, the background color points out on which floor of the building they are.



Figure 3: “PATHofLIGHT” by Claudia Galván Zuloaga, Iñaki Millán Omar & Rocío Gramage Micó.

COLOR AND NATURE

Sometimes color and the general design tries to link inhabitants with nature displaying greenery or evoking the sense of a landscape, after the critical reading of projects with roots in the ecological utopians from the sixties and contemporary sustainable architecture (Serra-Lluch 2019).

The project “We all love nature. Don’t we?” (Figure 4) is confident in the presence of vegetation to improve the quality of living in the residence. The main idea is to create the interior of the corridor in a way reminiscent of nature. Going out from the private rooms (the only private spaces in the residence) should be a metaphor of going out from houses for a walk to the forest and make elder inhabitants feel fresh, relaxed, and cozily.

The project “Circular Nature” works with the idea of an abstraction from nature. The colors are displayed on the glass walls in the form of silhouettes of the vegetation present in the garden behind it by using a self-adhesive foil on the windows. The silhouettes of the different types of plants or trees are completely made up of circles. Just like the very simple and easily understandable circular icons designed for the signals.



Figure 4: “We all love nature. Don’t we?” by Olliwia Golenia & Anna Miroforidu.

COLOR AND MEMORY

Some of the proposals tried to connect with the visual universe, the color codes and other cultural conventions that are usual for people in the range between 70 to 90 years old. Some different design strategies like the reuse of existing objects, vintage furniture or graphics from ancient advertisements, are some of the resources to help elder people to maintain their roots and not to lose their memory.

The project “[rightDIRECTION](#)” in Manises, develops a reinterpretation of the ceramic industry which was historically so important in this village. The colors and shapes for the signals, walls and furnishing are taken from the traditional Valencian tiles with two dominant hues: yellow and blue. “[The Tiled Cenefa](#)” also takes the ceramic tradition as a starting point. The variety of possibilities of a simple tile allows to play with a pattern in many ways and to find modern approaches and solutions for the traditional use of ceramic tiles. The color palette is taken from the ceramic tiles of the Modernist Central Market in Valencia (Hidalgo Delgado et al. 2010).

Memories are connected to specific objects which are familiar to us. Following this idea, the project “[Recuerdos, sueño, hogar...](#)” (Figure 5) uses photographs, texts, postcards etc. to reach a deeper connection between spaces and inhabitants. Similarly, the project “[...stand by them with colours](#)” (Figure 6) uses the iconography of ancient objects in different colors to help in the functional description of corridors which are too similar and banal.



Figure 5: “[Recuerdos, sueño, hogar...](#)” by María Montserrat Cadena Velasco & Florencia Stilman.

Residents are involved in the creation of a new color image for the interiors in the project “[Wood warm wool](#)”. With a very sensitive intervention, the proposal incorporates wood and wool to cover architectural elements as hand railings and columns. Wool handcraft is also used to create signage elements to replace the existing ones.

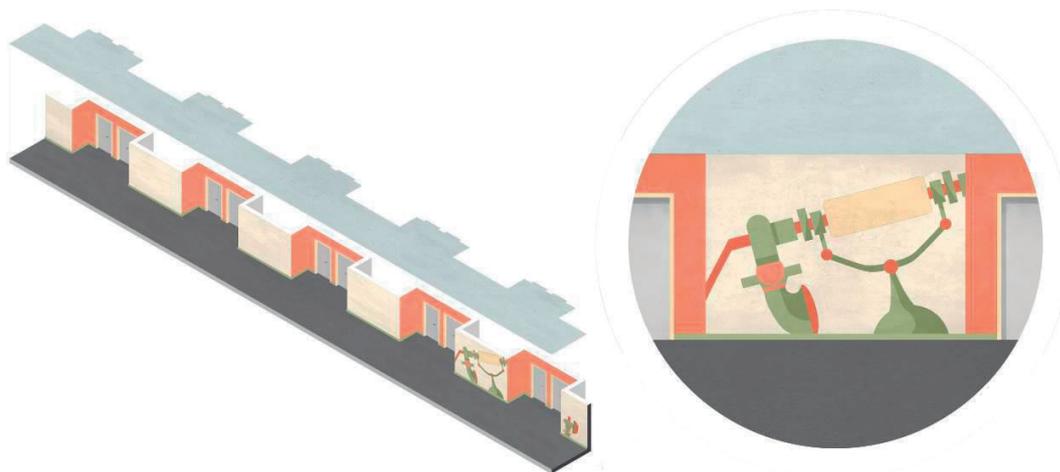


Figure 6: “...Stand by them with colours” by Jannis Sprenger, Manuel Rossi & Pablo Fillit.

CONCLUSIONS

We have explored the possibilities of color to improve the quality of living in existing residential buildings for the elderly. We show some of the interior design projects developed by scholars enrolled in the Master in Architecture in Valencia who participated in the “Gesmed ideas competition: Color in residential buildings for the elderly”. Every color project started from the analysis of the needs detected in current spaces like disorientation in big size rooms and a particularly concerning general lack of cosines. Together with these initial needs, the chromatic resources explored by other artists and architects in noteworthy buildings were analyzed to guide the final formal solution.

We have pointed out three design strategies to improve the quality of living in existing residential buildings for the elderly: projects in which color relies on the function, projects that seek for nature and vegetation, and projects that opt to recover memories. All these projects demonstrate that it is possible to help elder people to feel like at home and maintain their memories by using simple interior design interventions.

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