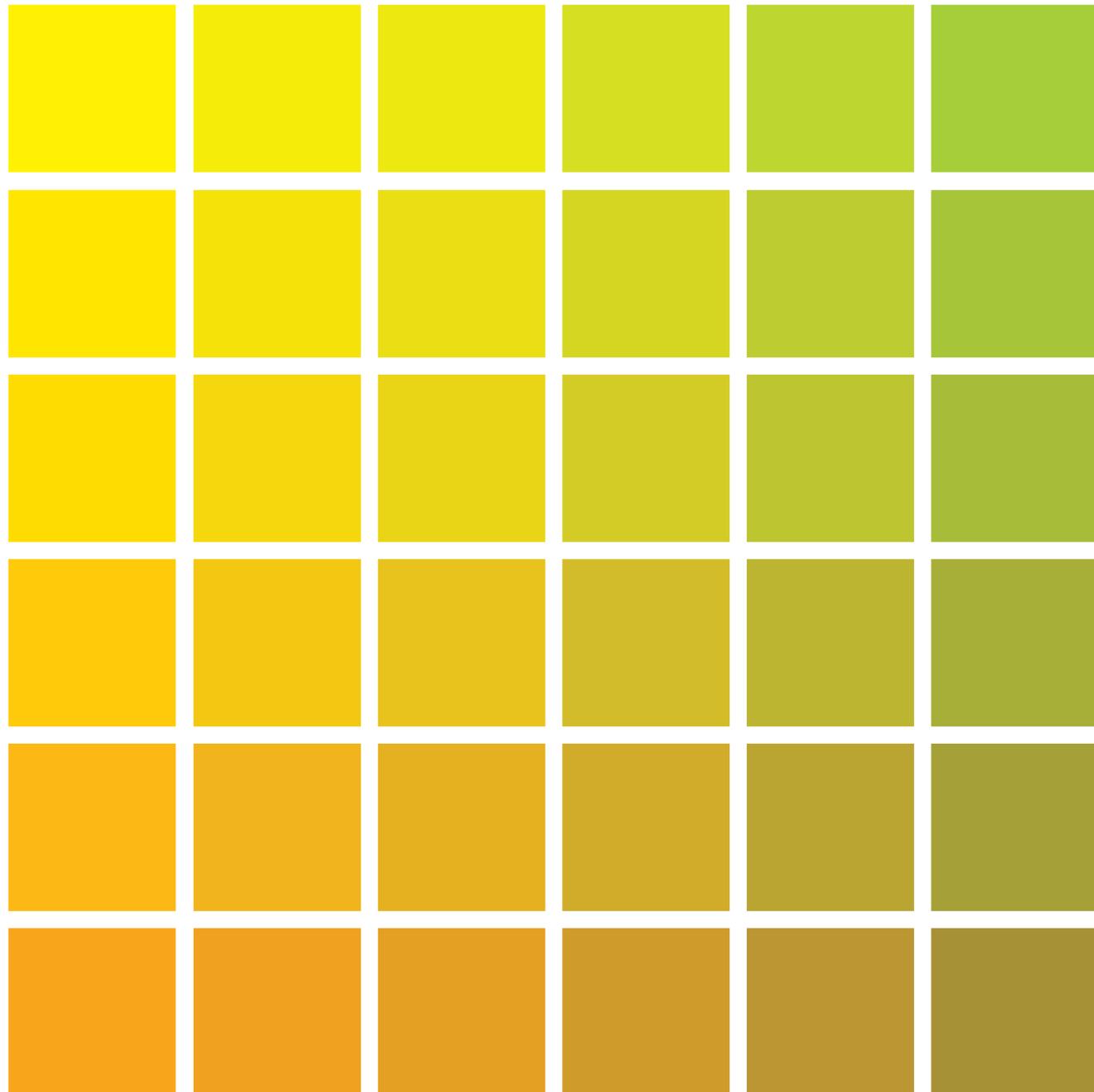


# A world in colour



Three quarters of the swivel chairs sold by Giroflex are black or dark grey. Colour at the workplace is provided primarily by walls, pictures, plants and carpets, everything on tables and shelves, and of course the people. Nevertheless, Giroflex approaches its own colour collections with great sensitivity and care. Doris Kurzmeyer, a textile designer and head of the Material Design programme at the Lucerne School of Art and Design at Lucerne University of Applied Sciences and Arts, told us why this is so.

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*Doris Kurzmeyer, you are currently working on the colour language of the giroflex collections. What are you and Giroflex trying to achieve?*

Giroflex has noticed that the competitors in their market are getting more and more alike. Colour can be a means to emphasize the uniqueness of a company and to communicate the values a company stands for. In addition,

colour can be used to address and attract new customer segments. You always need to keep in mind, though, that colour should not be considered in isolation.

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*Meaning?*

Colour is inextricably linked to materialization. The same red has a different effect on a smooth

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shiny surface than on a matte rough one. Structure, lighting and the base material influence the effect. So only changing the colour without taking the material into consideration is not very productive.

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*Where did you first have an influence at Giroflex?*

We started with leather. We did some fundamental thinking about colour and thus about the statement the leather makes and the way it is put together. Leather is a premium, very sensual and timeless material. Because Giroflex customers mainly ask for black leather, we added other dark colours to the collection. We've thus created a somewhat heavier, mysterious segment in the group. It is flanked by an elegantly earthy unit in the neutral colours. Here we opted for warm shades, as they are also found in nature, e.g. stone grey or earth brown. In this way we do justice to the naturalness and dignity of the material.

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*Giroflex seating furniture has a service life of about ten years or more. Is it wise to set on trends over this length of time?*

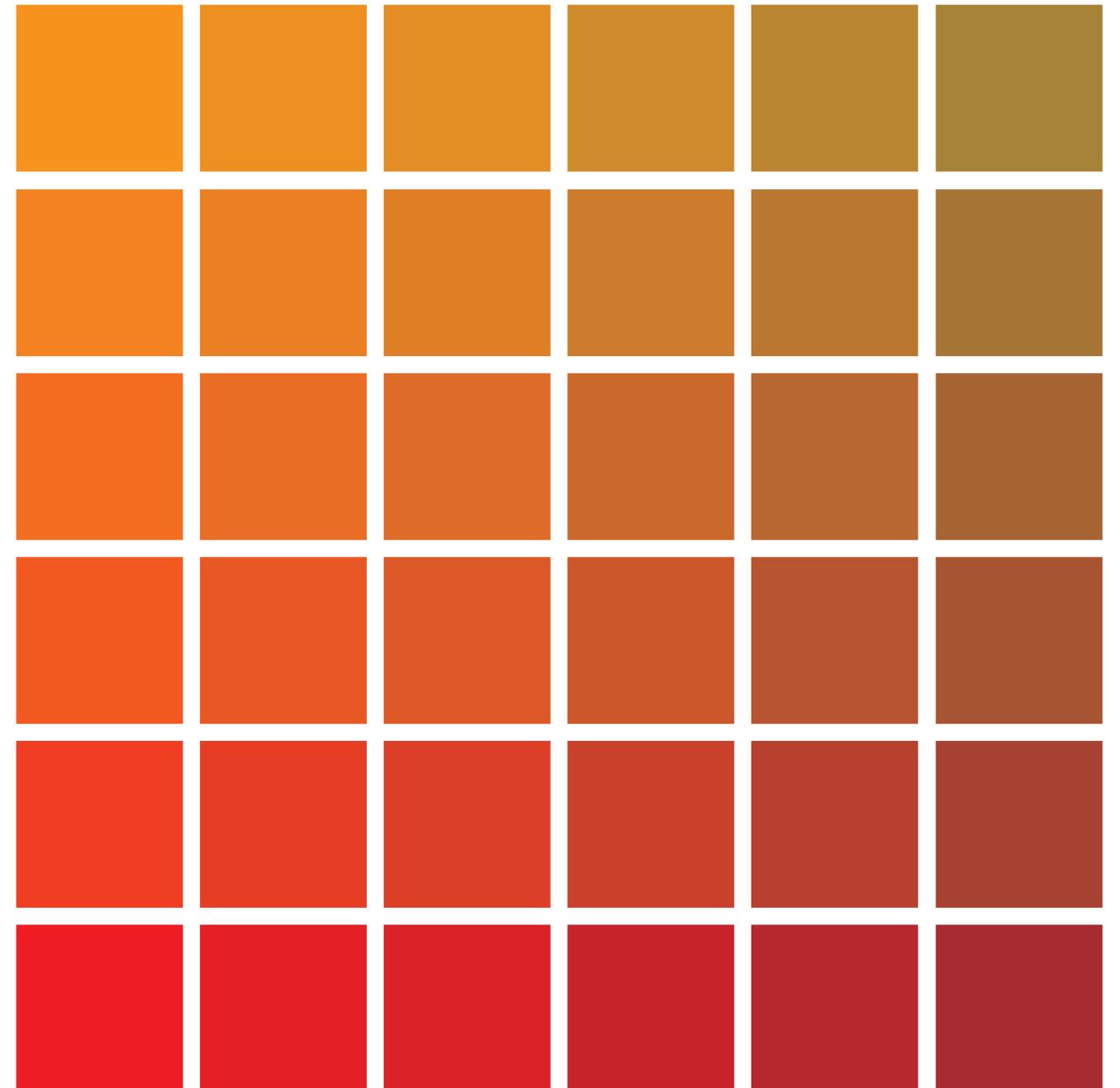
It depends what trends we are looking at. Based on the developments in working environments, Giroflex and I both work on the assumption that the private sphere and the working world are becoming increasingly intertwined. Mobile workplaces are gaining in importance and the multiple use of workplaces will continue to become more widespread. The atmosphere at the workplace changes accordingly. All this is unfolding against the backdrop of the presence of digital communication. These trends have a major effect on the use of colour, the materials used and the surroundings.

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*Can you give an example?*

We are finding an increased need for haptic sensuality. That has implications for the materials used and gives structured surfaces a boost. There is a clear trend towards the tactile. Why? On the one hand, in recent years we have been surrounded by monochrome colour surfaces to a great degree. On the other hand, we are constantly in contact with glassy smooth touchscreens such as smartphones and tablets. The desire for more structure is a

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countertrend. Or the immediacy of digital communication. It leads to a longing for localization in time and therefore also for the stories that surround us. The keyword here is authenticity.

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*And what about the colours?*

With regard to colour we need to distinguish between trends and fashions. Fashions are short-term phenomena. With clothing fashion we are stocked up with new fashion colours at least twice a year. Then they only last a season. For a company like Giroflex that focuses on quality and long-term use of its products, it would be wrong, in my view, to focus on fashions. Exceptions are always possible of course, such as with a model like the giroflex 434, which allows the owner to easily adapt to the colour zeitgeist of the moment in the course of the product life.

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*Anything else?*

The new range of colours should continue to cover a broad segment. Classic shades, i.e. all those

colours that take the surroundings into consideration and don't stand out, are the basis here. They are complemented by the more trendy colours. They provide highlights outside the familiar. It is also important that the colour matches the design of a model.

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*Why such an emphasis on colour as a manufacturer when in the end everyone buys a black office chair?*

Before I answer that, let me just say this: black is not just black. When you take into account and celebrate the materiality and the different shades of black, you can create a whole world just with this colour. There is a special quality in that. In addition, black needs a range of colours it can stand out from. This needs to be high quality so you can also trust the black. Choosing a colour is not easy, by the way. Colour integrates with its surroundings and it changes depending on the surface it occupies. That's why the composition on a colour chart says very little about how a colour will look on the chair and how it will stand

out at its final destination. This makes choosing very difficult. Nevertheless I want to achieve that Giroflex are also known for their colour. It should be another reason to want a giroflex chair – even though in the end you choose the version in black.

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*How important is personal taste in developing the colour ranges?*

I believe it does have an impact. But experience is much more important, especially regarding the effect of a colour. My job is to look at it closely and precisely. You can only develop a signature when you have an overview of all the collections. The whole pro-

cess is a constant balancing of sales figures, trends and taste.

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*One last question: if you had to furnish an open plan office, what would you do?*

Colours create atmosphere and moods. So I would pay more attention to colour tones than to strict CI colours. Employees should move within a spectrum and maybe even have a choice. In this way the atmosphere and the mood in a room can be modulated.

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*Doris Kurzmeyer, thank you for the interview.*

Doris Kurzmeyer, [www.doriskurzmeyer.ch](http://www.doriskurzmeyer.ch), develops her textile projects from the material and from craftsmanship. As a qualified textile designer she is familiar with all superior manufacturing technologies and uses these in the service of function and design. Since 2001 she has been passing on her knowledge at the «Lucerne School of Art and Design» at Lucerne University of Applied Sciences and Arts, where she is also head of the Material Design programme.