

Helenio Barbettà Kurt Stapelfeldt

All you need is colour at home

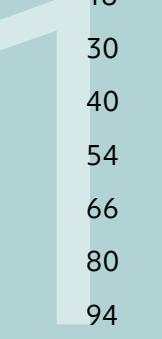
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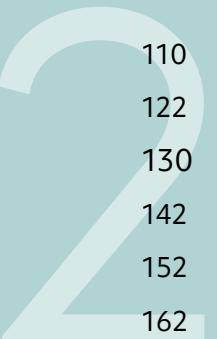
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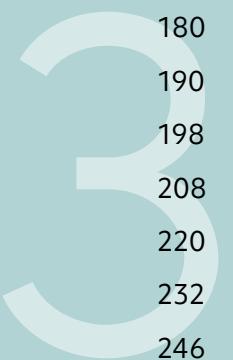
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INTRODUCTION

Grandma's faded lilac housecoat, the bright screaming blue of my first new car, the faded pastels of the satin Pucci dress she was wearing when I first laid eyes on her – all colours that have a profound meaning in my own life. Every time I see a similar hue, it elicits an emotional response, and that's half the job. In interior design, colour is one of our most potent instruments and – when wielded correctly – transforms any space into a vehicle to tell a story. If the client loves artwork, give them white walls and let the art do the talking. For clients expecting a baby girl: soft neutrals and splashes of powdery pink. An executive office for a very powerful entrepreneur? Dark colours, wood finishes and touches of bronze. Colour is a tool to be used responsibly, never just for the sake of it, and always with purpose, research and – of course – lots of fun.



The homes in this book are the fruit of many minds, hours and hours of discussion, and an unimaginable number of paint swatches. The approach by the designers and architects is fiercely individual and comes from a place of personal development and training, but magically, when we see their colour designs on a page, they just make sense. This is because colour is a universal language, one we all speak fluently. There is a reason stop signs are red and your shampoo bottle is fruit coloured – these objects tap into our innate understanding of hues and shades. In our homes, we can use colour to make a statement about who we are today or who we see ourselves becoming tomorrow. Choosing paint samples can be one of the most stressful parts of a build, or equally a chance for meaningful discussion with your loved one, only to end up going with whatever one of you had your heart set on all along.

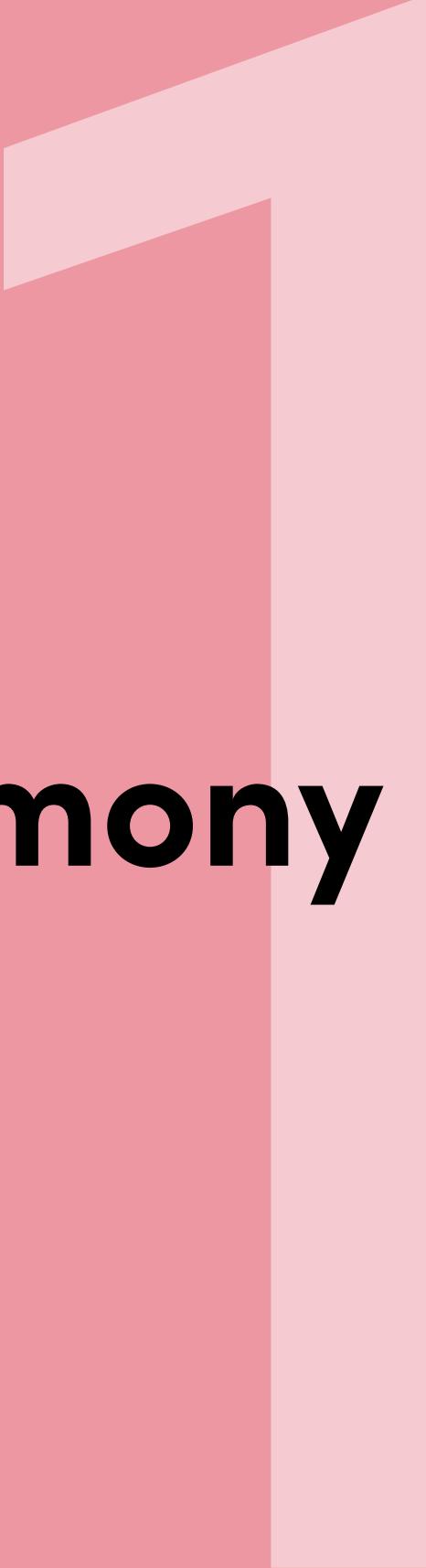
When I first graduated design school, I remember being so afraid of colour. It appeared so daunting – so permanent, as if paint on the wall was forever. It took time, as a professional, to feel confident in my choices. A pat on the back from a satisfied client can do wonders for your self-belief. Today, I feel that colour selection is one of my strongest points. It took many do-overs and a lot of admitting to mistakes to get to where I am today, but just as I learned, you can learn too. Like most things in life, self-belief goes a long way, so the next time that big white wall is crying out for a new lease of life, look inward: you already know what you like and what works for you. And if you mess it up, have the courage to admit you were horribly wrong and get it repainted before your partner gets home.

KURT STAPELFELDT









Harmony





CHAPTER ONE

When colours whisper together

There is something quietly powerful about a room that knows when to hold back. In homes where harmony reigns, colour isn't shouting for attention, but is in conversation with itself. These are spaces where hues sit beside each other on the colour wheel like old friends, and where tones layer gently to build a sense of ease, intimacy and calm. Whether it is the soft shift from sage to olive in a living room, or a bedroom bathed entirely in shades of dusty rose, harmonious interiors rely on restraint. But they never feel dull. In fact, their quiet confidence often leaves the strongest impression. This chapter celebrates the art of subtlety through homes where colour is used not to impress, but to soothe, balance and belong.

Colour on the canal

Venice, Italy

HOMEOWNER

Private

DESIGN

Eligo Studio

Who wouldn't want to live in a floating city? Venice is one of those places that needs to be experienced in two ways. Firstly as a tourist: shoved into crowded water taxis, sold a plastic model gondola, and ridiculously overcharged for a coffee and a water on Piazza San Marco. The other way to get to know the city is by accompanying someone who lives there, who avoids the tourist traps like the plague and even goes to the restaurants with two menus – one for locals and the other for tourists. The family who owns this 165-square-metre attic apartment, situated in the Cannaregio district high above the Grand Canal, can enjoy the best of both worlds. With various other homes, the family entrusted the restoration of this attic to designers Alberto Nespoli and Domenico Rocca of Milan-based Eligo Studio, who had done numerous projects for them in the past and were therefore familiar with the family's tastes and desires. The guiding principle is that the interior must relate to its surroundings, and with big picture-frame windows to bring the outside in being in short supply, the architects would have to come up with some interesting solutions.

The 16th-century attic would have to be approached like a dialogue between the past and the present, using traditional materials and local artisans while inserting contemporary bespoke elements and solutions. The floor plan was completely redrawn, making the most of the higher ceilings on the courtyard side, which have now been converted into two bedrooms and a master bathroom. On the side facing the canal, there is a series of free-flowing living spaces – TV lounge, breakfast area, open-plan kitchen with a large oval dining table and, at the very back, another lounge. To combat the sloping roof that limits the panorama to a few dormer windows, the studio responded with a striking feature. As the architect explains: 'We positioned a circular, rotating mirror beneath a round arch between the entrance, kitchen and living room. It was inspired by the Venetian architect Carlo Scarpa, who was known for his circular motifs. The mirror captures and redirects daylight from different angles, animating the space with shifting glimpses of the city outside.'

While every modern convenience has been accommodated, the home is filled with references to the magical city just outside. The most notable are the exposed oak beams and terrazzo floors, which are left visible to celebrate the palazzo's historic nature. Then there is the *stucco Veneziano*, a rendered plaster applied to the walls by hand, the trowel of the artisan creating the undeniable textured pattern in colours chosen to represent the bright red, yellow and green shades of the local homes in nearby Burano. Much of the furniture was custom-designed by Eligo Studio, like a convertible sofa, sculptural coffee table, long glass bench to display Murano glass rarities from Barovier & Toso and discreet wall shelf whose stainless-steel fronts conceal a television. The home is a testament to the longevity of man, how when you build something to last, it might still be occupied four or five hundred years later. This home tells the story of a Venice long gone but also that of a modern family who sought a modern Venetian hideaway that looks outward to the city but also inward, offering a serene stage for everyday life above the rooftops of Venice.





