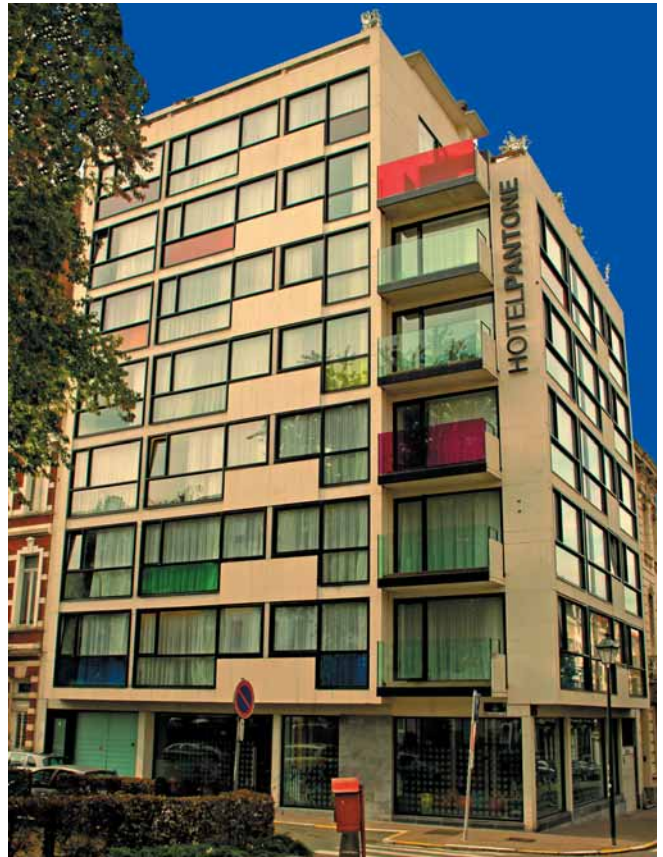


Imagine a hotel where color is not only prominent but the use of color itself is an essential element in the design. This is the idea behind the Hotel Pantone, located on Place Loix in Brussels, which offers a unique experience in color. It starts from the moment you enter the lobby, where you are greeted by a cheerful staff member at the front desk sporting a bright Pantone-color shirt. It extends to the guest rooms, where large Pantone color chips are mounted on the wall showing the exact tones used in that room's design. This hotel is not just colorful but is about color, with unique tones used for each of the seven floors and all of its 56 rooms.

Hotel Pantone is the brainchild of Michel



The Hotel Pantone in Brussels uses Pantone colors as the design focus both inside and out.

Hotel Pantone

By Michael Pacitti

Where the elements of design meet the principles of color

Pennmann, a noted Brussels hospitality designer. And its location is no accident because it sits in the middle of Brussels' fashion design district, which has gained it attention and the appreciation of its design-conscious neighborhood. Hotel Pantone's design also uses clean lines and forms reduced to their essentials, due both to limited space and to allow pure color forms to dominate the interior look. The design looks as if it could be a stylistic descendant of Mondrian and the De Stijl group—but with a full range of Pantone colors.

This look led to using only gallery-wrapped canvas artwork throughout the hotel—not because of any design trend but to keep from interfering with the spare but colorful design, which makes entering the hotel like walking through a life-size Pantone color

Brussels hospitality designer Michel Pennmann came up with the idea from the satchel of Pantone colors he carries with him for his design work.



swatch book. Pennmann also wanted the photographic images to be as large as possible within the confines of smallish guest rooms.

Pennmann uses a Pantone satchel every day in his design work, and that's what gave him the idea of using Pantone colors as the basis for a hotel design. On first approaching Pantone in New York with the idea, however, he was turned down. So he set to work fleshing out his concept in more detail, and then resubmitted his proposal along with images showing how color would be used in his design. He showed how separate colors would be assigned to each floor and how different color themes and photographs would be developed for each guest room. He even had props made for sample room settings. This time, Pantone was impressed and give him permission to use Pantone colors for the project.

Along the way there were also architectural modifications during renovation by architect Oliver Hannaert, such as coating the lobby with a sound-absorbing material to provide a more soothing ambience. Coupled with the photographic art of Victor Levy, the hotel is bursting with color and originality without being overpowering.

“Seven different color palettes were used throughout the hotel, all with messages about the basic principles of color,” says Pennmann. “Each of the seven floors in the hotel is dedicated to a specified color palette that expresses a unique personal social style that suits the mood of each arriving guest.”

While a common pattern for such a hotel project might be to start at the ground floor with hues of brown to represent the earth and finish with tinted and toned blues on the higher floors to represent the sky, that was not the idea behind Pennmann's design. He wanted to turn the palette completely upside down, starting with blues on the ground floor and traveling up seven floors through brown, orange, purple, green, yel-



Each room is focused on a photographic detail of Brussels printed on a backlit canvas. Large swatch reproductions are hung on the wall to show the Pantone colors used in that room, which are based on the dominant hues in the photograph.



This “Triage” in the lobby has three images that rotate as three separate images, all based on Pantone colors.



In the lobby, modernist chairs and tables sport a variety of Pantone colors.

low, and violet—somewhat like thumbing through a swatch book.

The theme of each room is embodied in a large photographic image portraying a colorful detail of Brussels' architecture and settings. The large image in each room was analyzed, and the dominant Pantone colors in it were determined. These were then used to create the overall color scheme and decor. It was like the old cliché of choosing art to match your sofa or drapes—but in reverse. The large images are abstract-like blowups of larger scenes, such as a close-up of a graffiti-covered wall. The full original image is shown in smaller size alongside the Pantone chips mounted in each guest room.

There was also a great deal of attention spent on the control of light and space at the hotel. For example, each of the white walls in the guest rooms has a two-tone matte and gloss finish. The top portion has a whitened gloss finish while the lower half has a matte white finish. This helps the eye visually balance the art with the surrounding room design.

The hotel lobby offers a unique display of color through its furnishings and a tri-panel mechanical billboard, with chips that turn to show different Pantone colors. The result is an overall feeling of simultaneous cool and warmth. The colors on the lobby's pillars can also be easily changed to represent a different color theme in a matter of minutes by simply removing magnetic color strips and replacing them with new ones. This is typically done once a month to give the lobby a new look.

From souvenir cuff links to folding chairs to sipping tea from a purple Pantone mug, the Hotel Pantone lives and breathes color. Plans are even underway to conduct color seminars for those who want to learn more about the language of color and to experience its place in the world of design and in everyday life. In the meantime, all you have to do to understand the role of color in hotel interiors is to stroll through the lobby and visit the guest rooms of this fascinating hotel. ■

Michael Pacitti has worked in the framing industry for more than 25 years, holding management positions with various moulding and mat-board companies, while consulting with Fotiou Frames. He is currently associated with the Color Marketing Group, the Color Association, and IDEC, where he has been teaching seminars on color and design to framers throughout North America, Europe, and China for a quarter century. He has also written numerous articles on color and design and often visits facilities noted for their designs, such as the Hotel Pantone.



Even a simple table and chair set captures the Pantone color aesthetic of the hotel and the use of color as a style statement.



Another guest room shows a different photographic canvas and the furnishings based on the colors in that photograph.



Folding chairs were designed to look like Pantone swatches, right down to the Pantone color number.