

# European ColourDesignAward 2010 – 2011

## *Press release 2*

### **Colour: Main Factor of Identity Formation**

*Prof. Frank Werner, Member of the Jury for the European ColourDesignAward 2010 – 2011, is talking to Roland Aull*

*1. Prof. Werner, you were already involved with the first European ColourDesignAward competition – not just as a member of the jury but also with your lecture as part of the award ceremony. What has been your experience with this competition?*

Generally, my experience has been positive. The thing that surprised us most, from the jury's point of view, was the broad spectrum of the entries and the impartial yet genuinely excited discussion of every single entry. Normally, jury members are always short of time. Here, I felt that all controversial positions could be discussed in great detail and without haste – and I must say that this is very much to the advantage for the entries, because even those submissions that were immediately rated as lower works were discussed in depth.

*2. In your opinion, what is the difference between this award and that of other competitions?*

In my view, the European ColourDesignAward adds indeed value to the environment in which colour scheme designers, architects and interior designers work, since it is an interdisciplinary competition. By that I mean: that the invitation to enter for the award asks for colour theory concepts, architectural and interior paints, objects inspired by colour as well as artistic and experimental colour schemes. Such a wide spectrum is currently not available in any other European competition. Thus, the European ColourDesignAward competition covers all main areas of colour design and in particular artistic and experimental conceptions.

*3. The European ColourDesignAward focuses on colour as a factor. How important is this design element to the architect?*

Investors, planners and architects have learned to recognize that colour is not just any old attribute and therefore of lesser importance, but that it is a main factor for identity formation and development of a »unique selling proposition«, as they say. Colour is no longer an add-on to planning. In fact, it has become an integral part of positioning and communication of any type of planning in an urban and so-

cial context. Thus, colour has become economically important, not to mention its added value to our mental and physical health.

*4. For many years now, you have been an insider with regards to architectural history and are very familiar with preferences and trends in this area. Do younger architects perceive colour differently from their older colleagues?*

This is a difficult question. Difficult, because there could be so many quick answers which nevertheless ought to be investigated more closely and over a longer period. One thing however can already be said with absolute certainty; younger architects have a different attitude towards colour because they are no longer conscious of the ideological battles from the periods of modernism, late modernism and post modernism. They simply carry less baggage with them. On the other hand, at the latest the »digital turn« has enabled younger architects to generate architectural colours almost incidentally by clicking on a mouse. This has increased the sense of fun when experimenting quite considerably. Also, it is easier to find unconventional, more experimental solutions.

*5. What, in your opinion, is the significance of the European Colour-DesignAward?*

The European ColourDesignAward presents not just established colour concepts that have already been used in other processes, but also such concepts that are awkward, intellectual, speculative, experimental, sensitive or simply just »creative«. Thus the European Colour-DesignAward is for me something like a catalyst or – to put it more precisely – an important sensor for all collective and occasionally very disparate efforts in the area of colour scheme design.

*6. Is there any point in architects or interior designers participating in this competition, in particular since there is no opportunity to win any building contracts in connection with it?*

Of course there is a point, for the architect anyway earns his living by continuously participating in competitions without necessarily getting the contract. Quite apart from that, I do also believe that it has become well known within the community of experts how advantageous an award of the European ColourDesignAward competition can be.

*7. Is colour treated differently in Germany compared to other European*

*countries? In what way do the individual countries differ in their use of colour in architecture?*

At the latest, when the European colour chart was presented in the Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris during the seventies, we knew that even within Europe there are different, scientifically proven geographies of colour. Even within Germany it is possible to specify regional colour areas. On the other hand, it would be fatal to overemphasize national colour trends and to pitch them against each other. For even colour designers have long articulated themselves globally. Nevertheless, it appeared that the subject of colour has met with less prejudices amongst Swiss or British experts than in other countries. These countries picked up the issue much sooner. Here, the Berlin architectural firm Sauerbruch + Hutton stood very much alone with regards to the use of colour in architecture.

*8. Colour is often confused with colourfulness. Which role does colour play in architectural design?*

A tremendously important role. Colourfulness does not really have much of an impact, also it fades too quickly. But colour used consciously can give depth and plasticity to buildings and rooms, make them breathe organically, dull them down, make them shine with brilliance, indeed, sometimes even make them disappear within their own space. And if you have ever experienced the forces and magnetic fields that colours can set free in the inside of schools and nurseries, for example, you will never again doubt the stimulating, even liberating power of colour or lighting. With regards to external architecture, intelligently used colour can help to blend very large buildings into an urban environment. I could cite endless examples, not to mention the psychological power of colour which plays an ever greater role in everything that is being built nowadays.

*9. The competition wishes to advance consciousness for the potential of colour as a design factor. Our surroundings are anything but black and white. Is there at all a need for it?*

Oh yes, there is such a need. For the competition has once more opened our eyes to the fact that colour has almost become an »essential requirement« within architecture, if not already a »requirement for survival« for all areas of our designed environment.

*10. The European ColourDesignAward also includes an award for students. Does colour play at all a role in the study of architecture?*

Apart from courses at universities and technical colleges that specifically concentrate on the topic of colour, there has been a very low interest as far as institutions for higher education are concerned. Previously some of the few colour laboratories that existed in some universities were even closed down because of lack of interest. This, however, has changed fundamentally. Many faculties are engaging once again very intensively with the subject of colour, either in design, technology or architectural theory. And the award for the best newcomer, which the European ColourDesignAward grants to students who deal with colour technology, colour effects or colour atmospheres whether as part of an art course or of colour theory, is surely one of its highlights.

Contact  
Institut Farbe.Design.Therapie  
Roland Aull  
Wiesenfurt 26  
97833 Frammersbach  
Germany

Telephone: +49 9355 99780  
Fax: +49 9355 970 57 26  
info@farbe-design-therapie.de  
www.farbe-design-therapie.de

## **Frank Werner's curriculum vitae**

Prof. Frank Werner studied painting, philosophy and architecture at universities in Mainz, Hanover and Stuttgart. After graduating as an architect at Stuttgart University, he was appointed there to be an assistant lecturer in the History of Construction and Structural Survey. In 1982 he was appointed to be senior lecturer of History of Construction at the Department of Architecture at the State Academy for Visual Arts in Stuttgart.

1983 he became Scientific Director of the exhibition »IBA 1994/97 - Idea. Process. Result« at the Martin-Gropius-House in Berlin – together with Prof. Pierluigi Nicolin (Milan), Prof. Marco De Michelis (Venice) as well as Prof. Werner Oechslin (Zurich).

In 1990 he accepted an appointment at the newly created Faculty for History of Construction, Architectural Theory and Design History at the State Academy for Visual Arts, Stuttgart, specialising in architecture and design.

He accepted the second appointment as Chair and Head of the Institute for History of Architecture and Architectural Theory (AGT) of Wuppertal University for the Department of Architecture. Its main research area is Architecture and Urban Planning of the 19th and 20th Century.

From 1999 until 2003 he became Dean of the Department of Architecture at the University of Wuppertal (BUW). In 2002 he became a founder member of the European umbrella organisation for architectural theory and history of architecture »CoRa«.

For almost 10 years, Prof. Frank Werner has been an associate member of the PhD programme for Architectural Theory at the Technical University of Delft and the Berlage Institute in Rotterdam.

From 2005 until his retirement in April 2011 he was Dean of the Faculty for Architecture, Design and Art at the University of Wuppertal.

Frank Werner is the author of numerous books, scientific papers, essays and architectural reviews.