

Ciba Inc.
Klybeckstrasse 141, P.O. Box
Basel 4002
Switzerland

Tel.: +41 61 636 49 16
Fax.: +41 61 636 25 59



Spotlight

The Business of Color at RENOLIT

Spotlight

10. Oct. 2008

By Ania Dardas

Color preferences for housing and furniture are strongly based on geography and climate – at some deeper level we are all aware of this. When on holiday, it is with pleasure that we greet the shift to the blue shutters of southern France after traveling through the northern European dark greens and blues of the windows and doors. We immediately identify light pine shades with the Alpine countries and the darker wood types like mahogany with Great Britain. Each country has its traditional colors. Factoring in these traditions and understanding how the market for color and wood imitations is developing from season to season is one of the main tasks that faces **RENOLIT** – an international leader in the field of thermoplastic films and products.

RENOLIT, based in Worms in southern Germany, has been making thermoplastic films for over 60 years in its more than 30 production sites worldwide. They justly enjoy an excellent reputation for technical expertise, top-notch service, great product design and innovation.

Changing colors

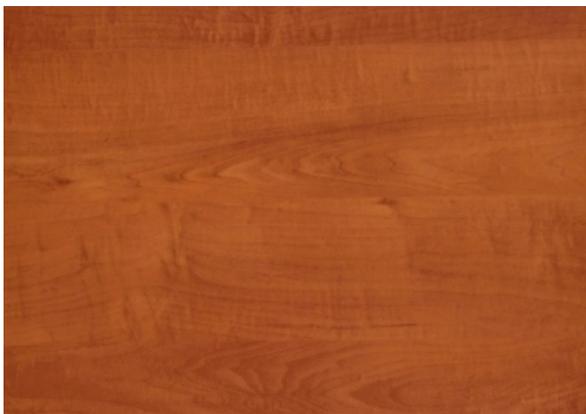
More than 30% of **RENOLIT**'s annual business comes from the color films they manufacture for furniture frontages and color is an annual, if not seasonal business. Each year the Head of Corporate Design Management, Monika Fecht, goes out on the hunt for indicators of the trend colors for the coming seasons. She draws heavily on the fashion industry as well as visiting all the major furniture shows in Milan, London, Cologne and Paris, among others. She assembles a picture – a collage of colors, patterns and textures that experience - as well as her many contacts in the industry - tells her will be with us for a while. Before she can present her selection to potential buyers, she has to translate the colors she has gathered in the form of strips of paper, pictures, and material swatches into viable recipes for individual shades. For that she turns to Albert Dobrowolski, the Head of the Color Laboratory – Research and Development.





"Sulphur"

"We make life difficult for Mr Dobrowolski. In the past I've given him as little as a short strand of wool as his color swatch and he has matched it. He matches it every time," laughs Monika Fecht. Albert Dobrowolski has been creating color for a long time. As he points out the latest additions to the **RENOLIT** family of films, he rolls their names with relish – 'Calvados' is clearly a favorite. "We do all our research here in Worms and then pass out the results to our production sites around the world. We have about 1,500 recipes that we turn to frequently and around 8,000 further recipes in our archives. Whenever we get a request either internally from Ms Fecht, for example, or from an external customer, we turn first of all to our active recipes to create the new color. It's a case of very practiced trial and error – first of all, we achieve an approximation of the desired color and then it's all a matter of fine-tuning. We have around 200 to 250 pigments and pigment preparations in-house and this represents the pool of pigments from which we create new colors."



"Calvados"

Going for effects

New additions, however, are mostly not simply colors, but also include new effects or properties. It may mean the addition of a discreet sparkle to a granite or marble imitation worktop, or a satin finish for bedroom furniture. One of the benefits of working with Ciba are the innovation workshops during which potential customers are shown the latest products in development and which they can take away for testing.

Albert Dobrowolski says, "It's a partnership – I have the opportunity to test new products early on and see how they could be used at **RENOLIT** and then I pass back the results. For example, we were able to test the new brilliant orange, Ciba® IRGAZIN® DPP Cosmoray™ Orange, as well as the Ciba® XYMARA Nordic™ range. Recently we discussed a deep, black pigment with a satin effect – Ciba® XYMARA™ Satin Black Pearl - dark shades that stay cool are an important area of research for us. The satin effect like that offered by the XYMARA™ pearls is important to us as it offers a gentle gleam that imitates the finish of wood that is sawn to expose the spiral grain. These effect pigments are also important when trying to imitate material swatches like the red satin blouse brought to me one day by a client who not only wanted to reproduce the color and flow of the material, but also wanted her blouse back unharmed at the end of the exercise."

Ciba is **RENOLIT**'s main supplier of pigments and the two companies have been working together for more than 30 years. One of the reasons why they work together is that Ciba is one of the three biggest suppliers of ready-to-use pigments and **RENOLIT** knows it can rely on Ciba products. "They show great light- and weather-resistance and also dissipate exactly as they should. But it's not just the products, it's also very much the service Ciba offers."



"Blackberry"

The colors for 2009/2010 are in and Albert Dobrowolski will soon have the task of matching the new shades and textures. Each year's colors can start with up to 80 different shades that are gradually whittled down to a dozen or so. The colors of last year centered on spices of the Far East and this year's focused on minerals. Two years ago the trend color range included a particularly shrill, new-sulphur green about which everyone initially had doubts, but which turned out to be an absolute winner once it was clear how it could be combined with other colors and wood surfaces. This year's colors include textured surfaces and patterns, which, as Albert Dobrowolski points out, are always challenging to imitate. He will use a blend of effect pigments and over-printing.



"Collage of Blackberry"
(please click on the picture to enlarge the view)

There is a dreamy quality about the spring and summer colors for next year that include transparent, cool teal and blue-gray; a touch of green and muddy surfaces with a herringbone pattern. Combined with these ethereal images are the sepia tones associated with memories and reflection; warm colors, pale antique rose, slightly washed-out tones with yellow accents, surprising checks and stripes. Winter takes up the black and white of previous seasons and adds deep, ox-blood red as a detail color. Mulberry, aubergine and violet each have their place. But it's still open as to which will make it into the final selection.

Monika Fecht assures Albert Dobrowolski that he will not be asked to perform any miracles for the coming year's colors as his miracles of previous years have already prepared the ground very well ...

More Information

- [RENOLIT website](#)

Comments on this article

no comments available

Send a friend

send a friend

From To

Message