



# FULL CIRCLE

DUTCH DESIGNER COEN VAN HAM GAVE AN EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION OFFICE IN THE NETHERLANDS A corporate identity by using colours as a primary medium. He developed individual models for sixteen business units, layering varied materials, art and furniture, through the entire office building



**T**he MBO Raad in Woerden, in central Netherlands, is an organisation for vocational and adult education. Ijsselstein-based architects Fred Forest and French Alkemade, known for their deft handling of spatial dynamics, light and colour, played a vital role in the overall design, developing a Y-shaped office within 2,752 sq m. With bureaucrats, directors, faculty and students occupying the complex, this was supposed to be a high density area. It had to retain flexibility and an informal ambience, yet enhance efficiency.

The architects planned an open and spacious office with different departments connected to each other and ample daylight streaming into the interiors of the building. There are no corridors here; all the rooms flow into each other. The building houses single work stations, conference

**An open plan helped to decongest the high-density office, sans corridors, with rooms flowing one into the other**



Among the eight colours chosen to represent the brand, some were used for the entrance gateway as a prelude to the interiors



and consultation rooms and offices as well.

Dutch designer Coen van Ham was called in to give the brand an 'identity layer'. He calls himself a 'total designer', one who not only crafts interiors, but also designs products, creates corporate identities and draws up artwork for his clients. The Eindhoven-based designer says that most organisations or companies communicate their identity through office stationery and rarely through the way their interiors are fashioned.

On the outside, a five-metre high coloured 'gateway' announces the entrance to the office. For Coen, the challenge lay in conceptualising the work spaces within, giving each unit its individual flavour. So in came colours, materials, patterns, art and furniture. He chose to interpret the essence of the organisation through eight colours—white, brown, orange, yellow, green, blue, purple and black—that would exude clarity, freshness, warmth and diversity. He added another layer with various



**The digitally-printed wall coverings, along with the furniture, artwork, lighting shape the corporate identity of MBO Raad. The clients found it brought authenticity to the brand too, while the design detailing made for an inspiring day at work**

**The wall covering worked for the acoustics of the office even as it teamed well with the modular ceiling and flooring design**

artwork spread across the building. For this, he teamed up with students at MBO, allowing each department to ideate in black and white prints. Since the secondary vocational education is divided into 16 domains, Coen was in a quandary to represent the various professional fields. How do you interpret trade and entrepreneurship? Or represent building and infrastructure?

Vescom was the answer. He used digital wall coverings from this European brand in a variety of prints to dress up over 300 sq ft of wall space, employed different motifs for each section and colour coded rooms based on moods. For instance, since purple is associated with leadership, the areas where the senior management sat were covered in purple digitally printed wallpaper. The wall coverings also

worked perfectly for the acoustics and blended well with the Rockfon modular ceilings and the Interface modular carpet flooring. So while healthcare and welfare units sport a different look, retail and business feel different too. These colour echoes are further taken into the furniture, lampshades and even on tabletops.

Allermuir, Tedes and Ahrend have lent their collection to the office furniture while Coen has designed furniture, mostly in white to offset the many colours doing their rounds in the interiors. The board rooms though are prominent with their dark wood hues in the table and chairs. Lampshades reinforce the colour theme. Coen purposefully had ceiling lamps fitted with motion detectors, all over the office, making it a user-friendly space.