



Give it the green light

Renowned architect Gordon Moller shares memories about Resene paint colours and his friendship with Tony Nightingale.

“In the early 70s, I began what would become a long friendship with Tony Nightingale – the son of Resene’s founder, Ted Nightingale. I was aware of Tony because he was in a group I knew, and I’d met him previously at a party. Tony also had a Triumph TR2 sports car that he parked outside the Resene factory, and I remember being envious as I have always been a car enthusiast.

Tony turned up at my office with his rep. I think that they came to see us because Craig Craig Moller was starting to do some good work and we had won a couple of awards for interesting houses. Tony recalled our earlier meetings, so we had a good chat and he told us Resene was starting to make a range of paints using



above: The first three British Standard (BS) charts that Resene released – the 88, 2660:101 and 5252 collections.

the British Standard (BS) colour system. We knew about the BS system from architectural school and our office already had a set of BS colour cards. Tony said that Resene was intending to make the same colours in New Zealand, and we thought that would be the best thing ever.

The first paints from the British Standard system that Resene made were from the BS2660 range, and it was a beautiful palette for architects. From that point, we started specifying Resene and we’ve never stopped. In the early days, my colleagues reckoned I was so obsessed about Resene products they said that they thought I must have shares in the company – which of course was not the case. We were just so pleased that Resene was producing an excellent range of paints and colours. Later, they made a much more extensive set of colours using the BS5252 range, which we used endlessly.

Subsequently, the company created the Resene Multi-Finish range, which had some amazing colours that we used in our design for the new offices for Ernst & Young in the BNZ Tower around 1986. We specified a pale blue, a light mauve, a soft grey and many others. Our clients initially weren’t sure about putting all those different colours on the walls, but I told them that, if they didn’t work, I would repaint all of the offending walls. They

ended up looking great, and the most amazing thing was that all the staff started dressing differently! Not necessarily in the same colours as the walls but in sort of responsive colours.

I went to Europe in the late 80s and travelled across Italy, to Yugoslavia and down the Adriatic coast. I noticed that the creamy stone buildings – which you see a lot of in Italy and Yugoslavia – all had windows that were a very subtle dark green, and I thought it a beautiful colour. After our trip, I mixed up a similar colour using Resene Outer Space and Resene Holly which I used to paint our house, and it looked great. Somebody at Resene must have said, ‘We like that colour that Gordon’s got on his house,’ because they formulated a very similar colour and called it Resene Gordons Green.

Tony was like a teenager at heart who took a youthful approach to any issue, and he was a very engaging man. He used to have all sorts of wild ideas that he would tell me about. I told a story at his funeral about the time he said to me, ‘We’re thinking of making tiny little pots and filling them with our paint colours. Do you think it’s a good idea?’ and I said, ‘no, it’ll never fly.’ Of course, the whole church laughed because Resene testpots have proven to be a huge success and I rue the day that I gave out that throwaway line.” BW



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