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## THE REALISTIC COLOURIST

Sahra Lysell knows she has an unusual job. After all, there can't be many optical companies who employ a full-time Senior Colour Designer, let alone for over twenty years. But it's a testament to just how seriously Copenhagen-based eyewear company Ørgreen take the subject of colour that not only is Sahra one of the longest serving members of staff but she is an central and indispensable part of the whole design team.

Flashback a couple of decades and Ørgreen were establishing themselves as Scandinavia's first sunglasses and opticals brand. Run by a bunch of friends with little experience in the field but a huge amount of enthusiasm and style, Ørgreen realised that their USP was to offer coloured frames for men. At the time, most eyewear for guys was very classic. Or totally crazy. Sensing that there was a customer out there who wanted something a bit more interesting than a pair of tortoiseshell specs but wasn't quite willing to go the whole Elton John, Ørgreen started experimenting with colour. Taking a cue from mens tailoring, they kept the outside of the frame relatively sober but made the inside a stronger shade - much like a Saville Row business suit can be opened up to reveal a red, turquoise or emerald green silk lining. With her background in fashion and her strong understanding of the real side of the business, Sahra was the perfect person to join the team and advise on what colour combinations worked, and an (unusual) career was born.

So, what exactly DOES a Colour Designer do? Images of rainbow wheels and technicolour spring to mind but in fact it seems that for Sahra, the starting point is more internal. 'Colour for me is emotion' she says 'I don't deal well with routine so I approach it differently every time.' Taking inspiration from anything from a walk past a row of painted houses in Copenhagen or a film, to a photograph of a Mexican graveyard or even a musical playlist, Sahra gradually focuses in on colours - and very importantly - combinations of colours that she thinks will work. Longevity is crucial, especially considering the high quality and cost of Ørgreen spectacles, so she is careful not to get too involved in fashion trends, relying more on instinct and - back to that sense of realism - her deep knowledge of the company and market.





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'Design and colour have to be part of society' thinks Sahra. 'There are huge cultural differences between what people want in one part of the world to another' This is very important in Ørgreen where their market is truly international. She cites the metallics used for the temples: the Chinese market prefers a hint of red in their gold - a reference to Chinese imperial history - whilst Scandinavians like a whiter gold. It's also important that skin tones are considered - after all spectacles lie directly on the face and frame the eyes. In a huge turn-around from the days when dowdy secretaries in the movies would throw off their specs, eliciting cries of 'But you ARE beautiful Miss Smith!', glasses now are seen to actually enhance beauty and even replace make up as a complimenter of eyes and complexion. For this reason, Sahra often looks to eye make-up colouration for inspiration as the coloured frames very much fulfil a similar role.

Of course, all this theory has to become reality and for Sahra, the next, more technological part is one of the most exciting. Ørgreen titanium frames are individually hand-painted and it's crucial that the paints used are durable against the skin and comply with multiple legal and environmental regulations as well as being exactly the shade Sahra has envisioned. Luckily she works very closely with her factories and the collaboration has brought them closer over the years. Ørgreen uses factories in Japan as they are the very best in the world at titanium frames. The frames are individually hand-crafted with great expertise and precision, going through up to 100 separate processes before completion and it's extremely important that the final painting reaches the same very high standard. Sahra's very patient collaborators there are used to being sent a striped feather or a Christmas bauble with the instructions to turn those colours into reality 'They think I'm the most annoying woman on the planet' she confides, perhaps with a hint of pride 'but the results are great'.

So what does the future hold in Ørgreen's colour story? Sahra is clearly excited to be faced with a whole set of new materials to play with. The company's success has very much been based on titanium frames but in the immediate future they are moving into more classic acetate which has opened up a whole world of new possibilities for colour combinations, involving more graphic sectional work and sandwiching together different colours. More futuristic is the use of 3-D printing in the Ørgreen's Quantum collection with cutting edge technology being used to make polyamide frames supported by titanium temples. The manufacturing of this material is so new that Sahra finds herself on the very front line of development as she works with factories to produce colours and techniques they have never tried before. Seems like that unusual job has quite a few more years in it yet.





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Less is more is the mantra behind Ørgreen's understated approach to elegance. Innovative colours, discrete details and exceptional materials are the signature traits defining a forward-thinking company driven by relentless curiosity and a profound desire to do things differently.

Designed in Denmark and impeccably handcrafted in Japan, Ørgreen is a high-end eyewear brand with a global following. Established in Copenhagen in 1997, Ørgreen is currently sold in over 50 countries worldwide.

For more information and imagery, you are welcome to contact:

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