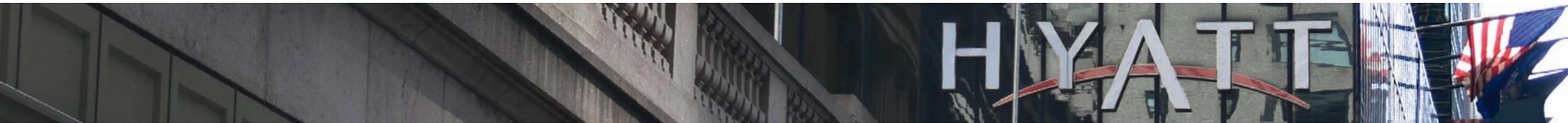


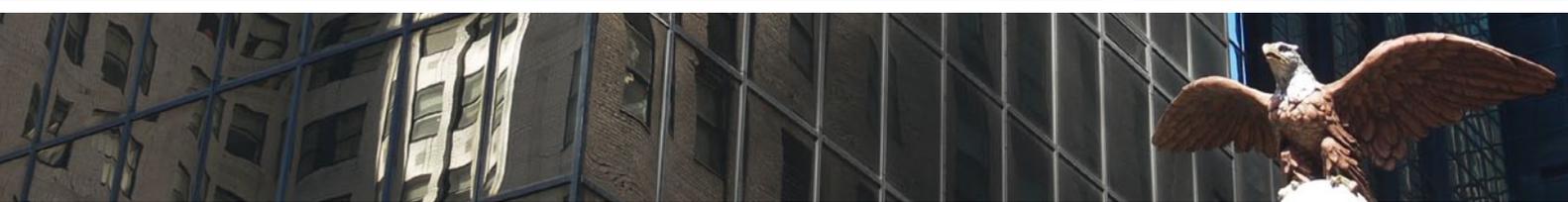
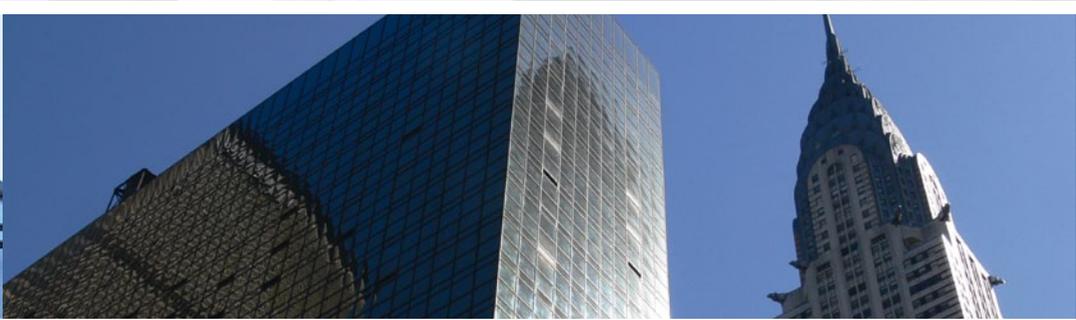
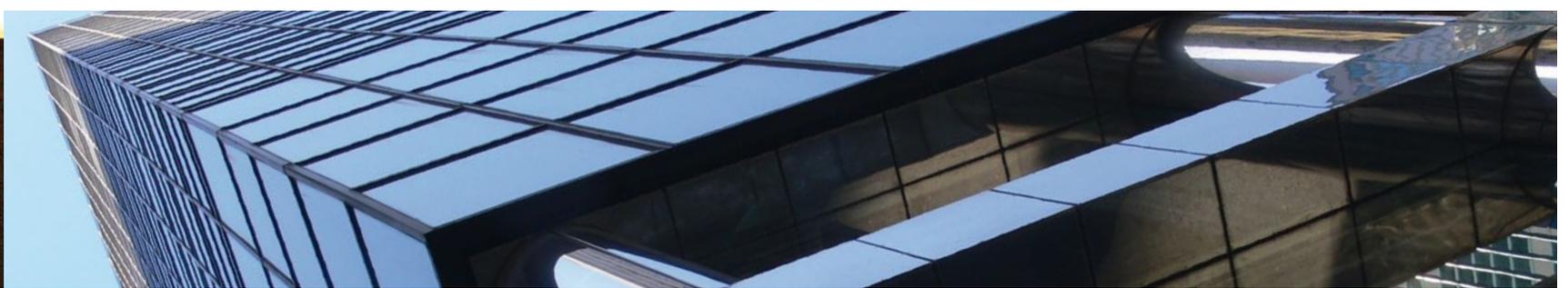
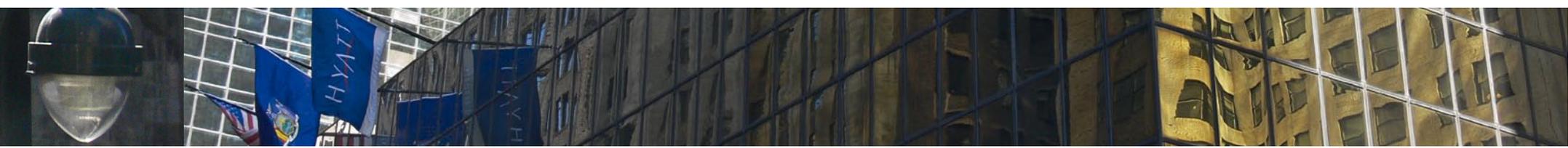
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The Walking Horizon

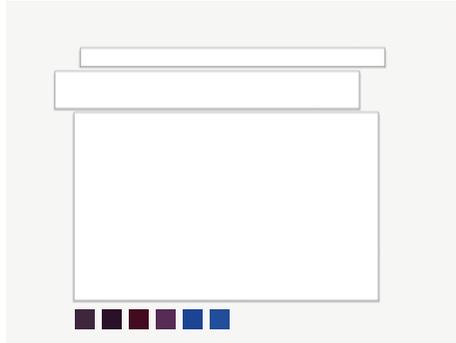




The Walking Horizon

Art concept for Grand Hyatt New York's conference area and event space, Gallery on Lex

by Burghard Müller-Dannhausen in collaboration with Bentel & Bentel, Architects/Planners AIA



The Walking Horizon – an Example of Art in Public

When a work of art connects with an architectural interior – and defines itself through that very connection – it makes sense to examine the social aspects of their relationship.

To do so, we must first examine the differences between public art and art in public. Art always addresses our perceptions. It connects people. It communicates. So, it follows that art is *per se* destined to be public. In artistic terms, every place where art and an audience might meet is public, including private rooms. Other platforms exist solely for the purpose of providing artistic experiences. Museums and exhibition rooms, for example, display art in public. That is what they are designed and equipped

to do. Their architectures are subservient to the act of artistic perception. Likewise, the public focuses on the art, not on the buildings. This is what we mean by public art.

When we step outside these vehicles of artistic experience, we enter the limitless space of public life. Fortunately, we encounter art here too. If art is indeed always public, it should not be severed from life by institutional platforms. Hence, we enjoy art in public too.

The difference between public art and art in public is apparent: in the case of the former, we may ask whether all conditions have been met so that people can access the art in the best way possible; in the case of the latter, we may ask what contribution art can make to public life, whatever form this may take. Either way, art always re-

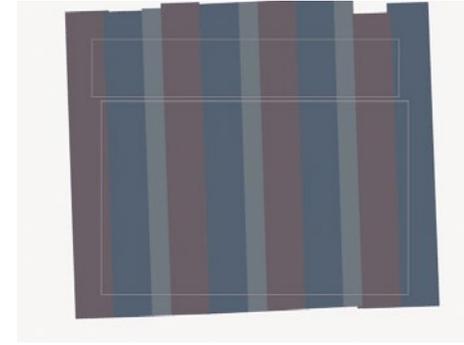
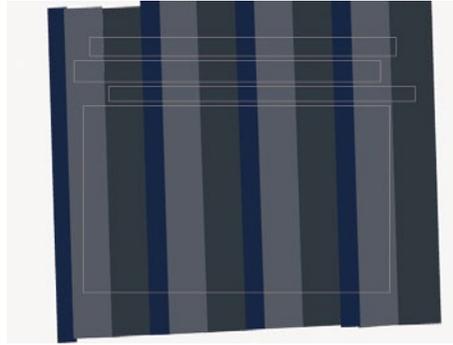
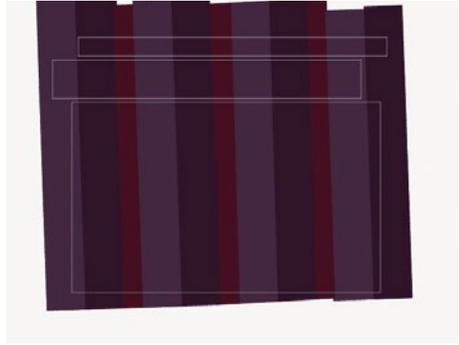


mains true to itself. Its underlying significance, its communicative power, its ability to tap into depths of perception, are always present and always effective. The only thing that changes is the role art plays – public art, or art in public.

‘The Walking Horizon’ is an example of art in public. The concept is designed for the social event spaces in a hotel, and it contributes to the public life that takes place here. What goes on in these spaces? Large numbers of people come together, then go their separate ways again. Since every meeting is a special occasion for those concerned, the personal exchanges involved are intensive. Initially, these aspects have nothing to do with art. Art is just one of several ‘external’ factors that add a positive touch. If successful, art can enhance both the social event spaces, and the events that take place there.



The concept in question aims to provide precisely this kind of enhancement. There is, however, a difference between adding value, and distorting values. Tempting as it may be to turn social event spaces into museums or galleries (and bask in the reflected glory this imbues), this can never do justice to their function, purpose or dignity. It would simply not be fair on the people who meet there – neither to the visitors, nor the hotel staff. Both groups are in a defined situation; both have specific expectations and interests, and both deserve our respect. Art should neither detract from – nor distract them from – their actions and emotions. On the contrary, it should serve to deepen them. This is the role of art in public. On the factual level, a hotel is a unit of infrastructure. On the perceptual level, it is an experience. This is what

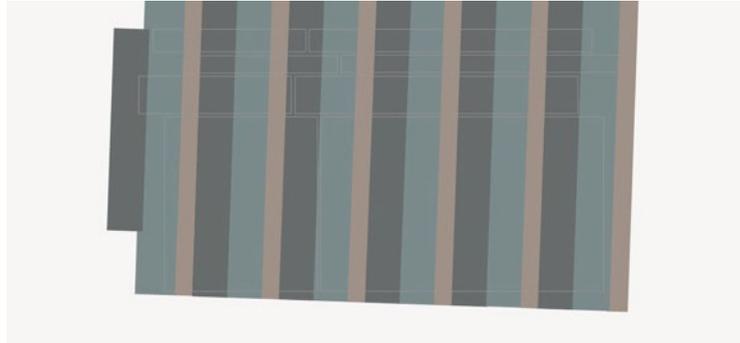


Matthew Adams, Vice President New York Area for Hyatt Hotels & Resorts, means when he says, “our new look and feel will exceed expectations ..., bringing a fresh travel experience to our New York landmark.” In this sense, the space we are concerned with here provides not just a comfortable framework for social events, but an emotional benefit too. It offers a *guest experience* against a background of a *travel experience*.

Guest experience means more than just a warm welcome, a sense of well-being, or a source of entertainment and respect. It involves the guest’s awareness of what is near and far away, what is familiar and new, the events that surround their arrival and departure. The guest experience is one that occurs within a community and allows us to share these experiences with others. All these factors join forces to make the guest

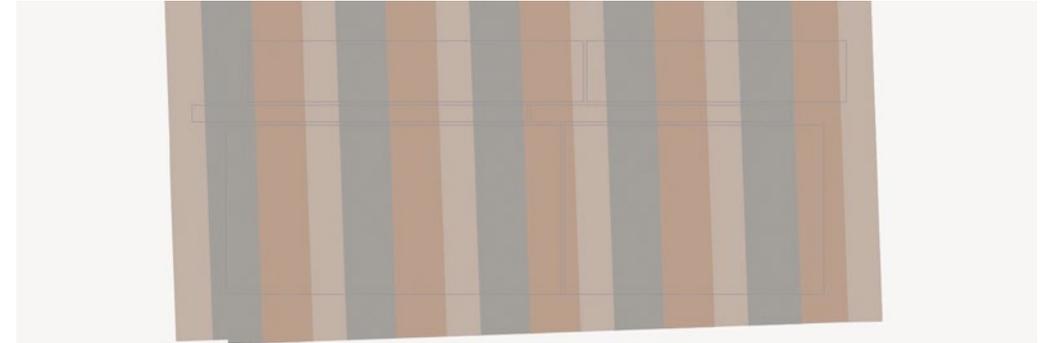
experience a moment to be treasured. This process is what needs to be enhanced. When guests perceive a work of art, their perceptions reflect their own emotional situation. The act of perception adds resonance – an extra dimension of internal processing – to their experience. By enabling sensory experiences to transcend into the contemplative, the guest experience unfolds in its full potential.

In addition to heightening people’s sensitivity and perceptive powers, this process of enhancement also involves creating a specific, memorable context. A unique work of art makes for a unique space, and hence a unique experience. When this happens our guest experience is no longer generic, but specific to this very place, this very moment. It becomes a reference point in our memory. As our experience becomes



individual, it is enhanced and becomes more defined. Of course, the guest experience is as much about the host as it is about the guest. When spaces are unique, they encourage the people who work there to identify with them. When staff develop a feel for ‘their’ social event spaces, they feel even more at home. Since identification always means motivation, this reflects back onto the guests, who see the staff in the context of a backdrop. And since perception is always holistic, guests make the connection between the two elements. The active presence of staff also contributes to the unique nature of the situation by adding vitality to our perceptions of art.

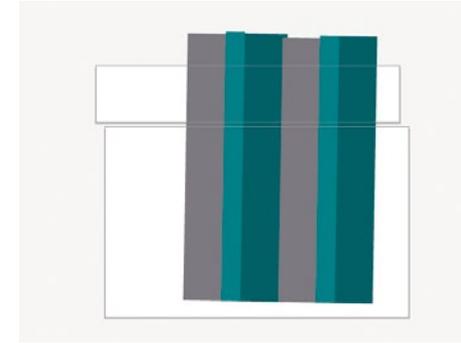
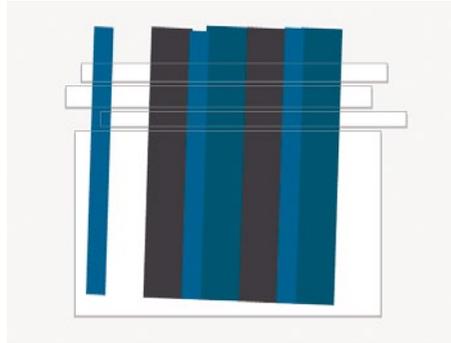
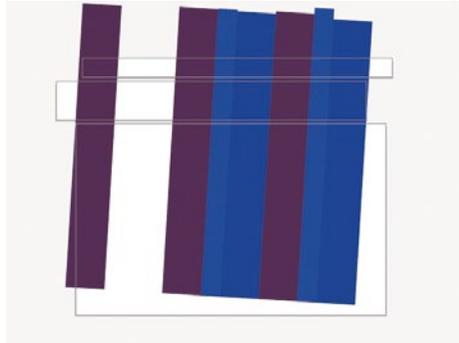
‘The Walking Horizon’ is an integral part of the multi-level scenario of a unique guest experience.



The Walking Horizon – a cooperation between interior design and painting

The social event spaces at Grand Hyatt New York were designed by architects Bentel & Bentel. The artistic concept is part of the overarching architectural concept; architects, interior designers and the artist all worked together closely. Without the intensive dialog with Paul Bentel, Carol Bentel and Laura Hanshe, ‘The Walking Horizon’ would not be what it is today.

The lynchpin of the mutual concept is the question of direction; direction of motion, and direction of viewing. As a rule, guests enter the social event spaces through the main entrances on the south side. Upon entering for the first time, they are confronted with an unfamiliar environment that they must first register, process and



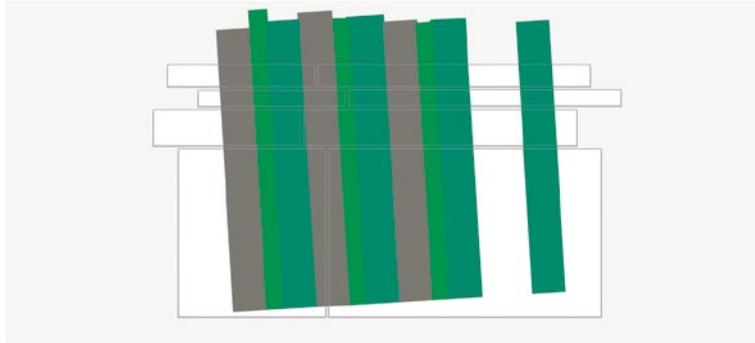
absorb; during this spatial experience, artistic perceptions play no part. For the guest experience, this dramaturgy is a defining factor. Guests arrive at a place, not a work of art. Art was not their destination; they have not come to a museum or an exhibition.

Our guests' arrival is an antithesis of what they behold, and what they leave behind. They establish a relationship between the two: Guest experience connects with travel experience. In this moment, guests have something ahead of them, but also something behind – something they will not see until they turn round, or until they depart once more.

The panels of 'The Walking Horizon' are arranged on the walls guests have behind them when they enter. This means the walls are present to guests before they are even

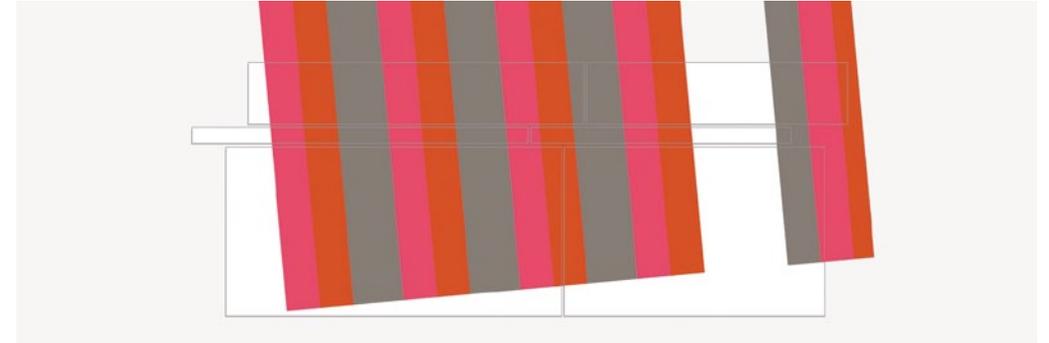
discovered. Thus, they lend the guest experience a dimension that goes far beyond the transitory, the exciting, the enticing, the comforting – and also the insecurity that may be present in the current situation. In this way, the work of art expresses the potential that distinguishes it from decoration. Decoration makes rooms more attractive, more pleasant, more elegant, and may thus enhance their popularity; art makes them more significant and rich in experience by opening a window onto a different level of heightened awareness.

Only when guests have truly arrived in the social event spaces, and are familiar with their surroundings, do they look round and discover the art behind them. When they do, they see that without realizing it, they walked between the panels on their



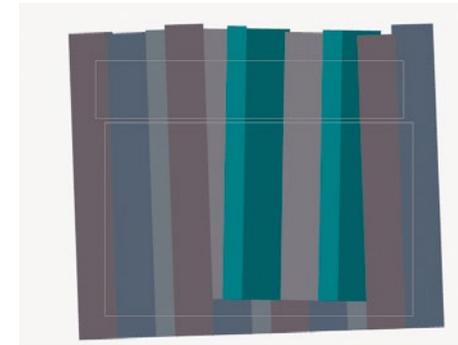
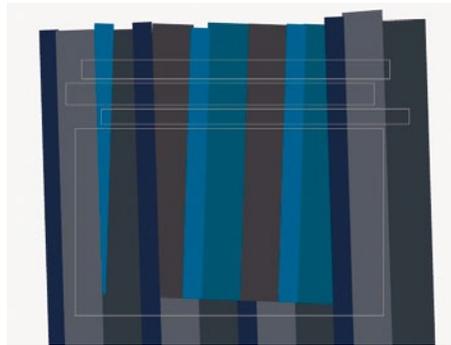
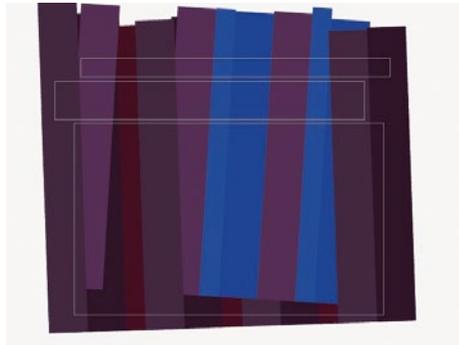
way in. They sense that the panels they left behind them are more than just walls, for they form a pictorial narrative and create an imaginary sense of depth. This depth exists only in the direction from which guests entered, and in which they will leave. So guests will depart into that from which they came – namely, into the distance. During the brief interlude, they are guests; their guest experience is part of the travel experience.

The aspect of direction plays a role in the interior design too. With their diversity and rhythm, the individual walls that belong to the artistic concept form a living pageant. Seen from left to right, the result is a clear and mounting sense of direction. Thus, the conceptual base of 'The Walking Horizon' is already present in the architecture. Guests do not just see a pictorial horizon before their eyes, they also follow a pro-



cess that moves forward in parallel to their roving gaze. The architecture defines the dramaturgy of the artistic concept as follows: The walls stand on two clearly distinct spatial layers. The front layer begins on the left with an individual panel. After a gap, this layer is completed by two neighboring walls of the same size – a double wall corresponds to the single wall. The second layer begins at greater depth with two much larger walls. To add impetus, the second of these walls is slightly wider than the first. As a result, both size and depth increase as our gaze moves along the horizon. This is the outlook for guests who are about to depart.

Having entered into dialog with the paintings, the architecture adds further depth by means of formal statements such as the use of verticals. Generally speaking,



interiors are defined by their vertical and horizontal coordinates; in our case, it is the verticals that dominate, due to their strong presence in parallel clusters. The paintings take up the dialog and vary the vertical theme by adding slight deviations. Rather than repeating them as stereotypes, the painted panels encircle the verticals in a lively fashion that affirms them all the more strongly. Another formal statement is the use of staggered shapes from the ceiling's lighting elements – a principle that is continued in the paintings.

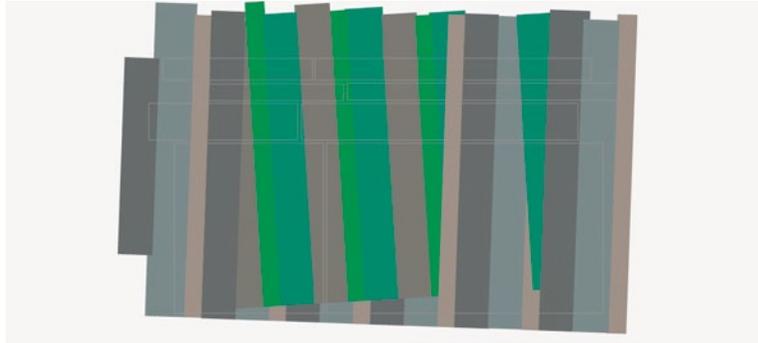
The architecture also brings the aspect of color climate to the dialog. All materials used in the design of the room and its furnishings are infused with a subtle color harmony that likewise provides the basis for a painterly color concept. This concept works

on three levels: It ties in with the room's existing color climate; it extends it by adding new variations; and it responds to it with stark contrasts.

'The Walking Horizon' is a concept that draws its vitality from the combined potential of architecture and painting.

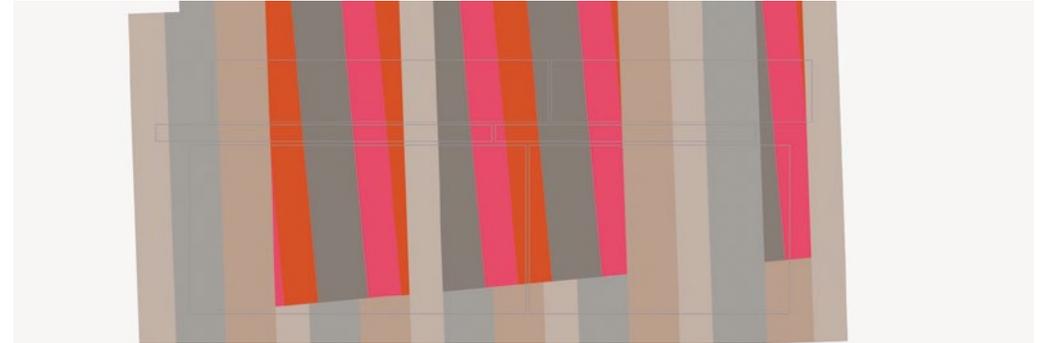
The Walking Horizon – an image-immanent implementation of a spatial concept

Together, architecture and paintings create a mutual approach to the artistic concept. This approach is taken further with painterly tools, based on a number of decisions that are intrinsic to the images concerned. Five walls each bear a single image that appears as a combination of several elements, not a compact rectangular



panel. This principle, which applies to all the walls, reduces their significance considerably. They cannot even claim to be frames for the pictures that dominate them so entirely, or the imaginary depths into which they open out. The paintings cover the entire surface of the walls. They occupy the full width and practically touch the ceiling; on the last two walls, they reach down almost to floor level too. Nevertheless, they never overload the walls. The loose combinations of individual elements reveal gaps – and these very gaps serve to break the resistance of the walls, which are ‘domesticated’ as pure backgrounds.

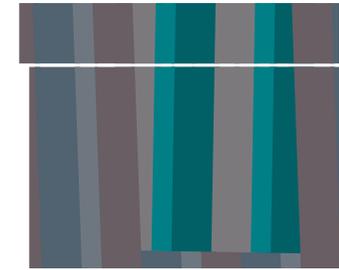
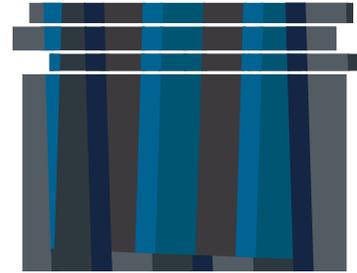
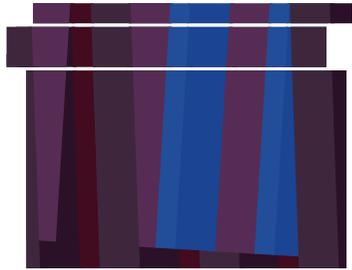
The combination of elements that comprise the images emphasizes the horizontal progression, and hence the horizon. Several areas (long strips) are arranged on top



of each other. The process of progression is augmented by several decisions.

First, the principle of staggered oblongs has been adopted from the architecture. Areas of the same width within a combination are staggered sideways, not set flush. This adds more dynamism to the lateral movement.

All combinations possess a strong sense of up and down – a head-and-torso situation. ‘Heads’ are defined by one, two or three low oblong strips. ‘Torsos’ consist of a single area that occupies more than half of the entire height. The result is a contrast (or perhaps a correspondence) between a loose ‘up’ and a compact ‘down’. The lower parts provide a weighty base for the arrangements; the upper parts hint at floating, and at upward motion. All five arrangements use the same principle, where-



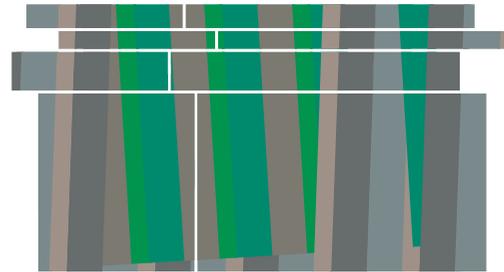
by rigid repetition is avoided in favor of living variations. The individual picture elements are separated by one-inch gaps. The result is a consistent system of horizontal lines that emphasizes both the principle of staggered areas, and the process of progression.

As a counterweight to these aspects, all of which serve to strengthen the horizontal, the pictorial structures assert themselves from 'top down' throughout to reconnect the separated areas on a pictorial level. This antithesis allows the staggered areas to slot into a kind of grid.

The pictorial structures have two characteristics that reinforce and dramatize the process of progression. First, the horizon advances in a series of small steps; these are formed by the iteration of vertical strips whose rhythm adds fresh variations to the

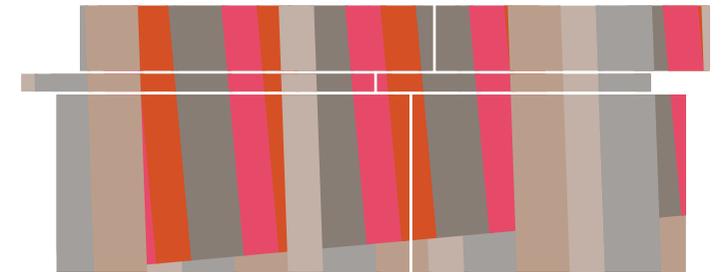
principle of the vertical. Second, the entire span of the horizon is subject to a pendulum motion that arises from the directional deviations. As a result, numerous small impulses and the unity of a grand swing overlap in the movement of the horizon.

The color concept uses two complementary principles to strengthen the effect of progression. It simultaneously emphasizes both the *unity of pictures*, and the *unity of process*. The former builds on the color schemes. Since these apply to one picture only, and hence serve to distinguish them, the process becomes visible as a series of distinctive steps. The latter builds on a basic principle of color application that is applied in every picture, albeit with different colors. These colors describe a continuous sequence from picture to picture.



The unity of pictures involves making sure the colors in any given picture do not recur elsewhere. The basic principle of color application defines three categories of color, and requires each picture to contain two colors from the first category, two colors from the second, and two colors from the third. The first category comprises colors that reflect the room's color climate; the second category comprises colors that extend the room's color climate; the third category comprises accent colors that are used sparingly to add interest and drama. This basic principle makes the individual pictures distinct, yet comparable.

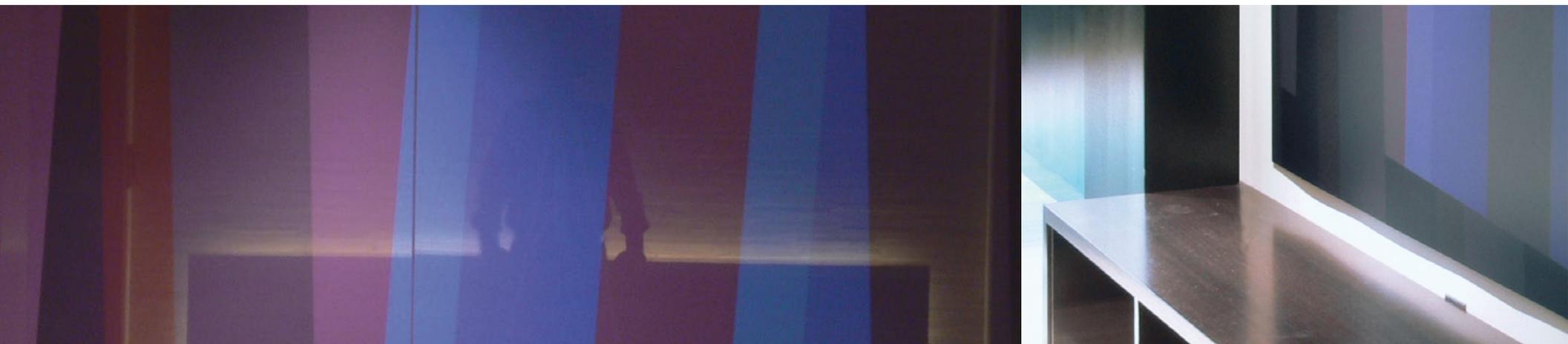
A final factor in the progression is the principle of intensification. This is justified by the walls' locations within the interior, which create the effect of a progression

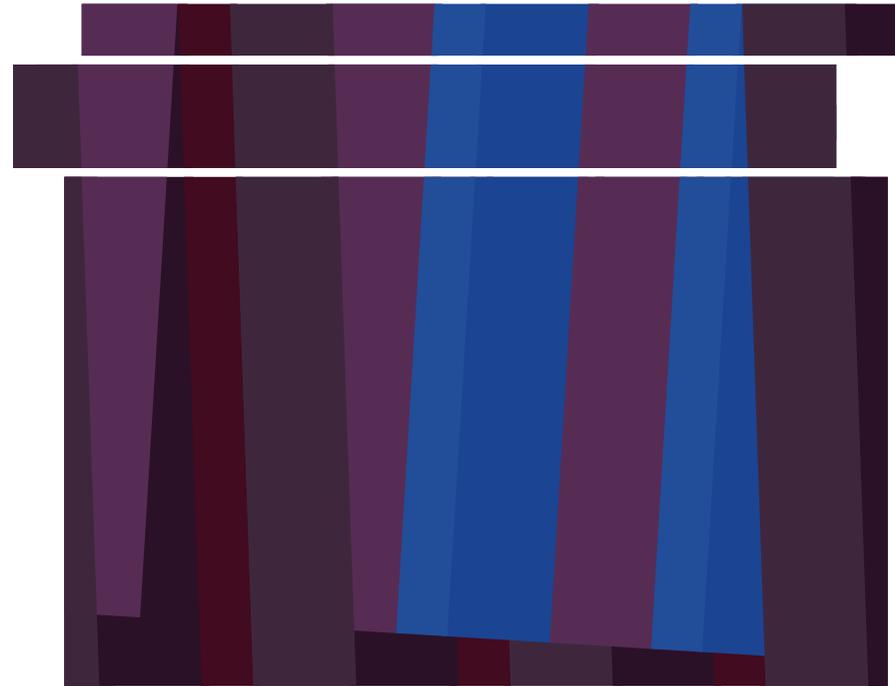


from smaller to larger. The paintings add further progressions, namely from dark to light, cool to warm and blue to red. These intensification factors are never rounded off. There are no endpoints, just a temporary highpoint; a 'beyond' is always conceivable and always tangible. This fact signalizes a departure into something new, an opening up into further dimensions. The guest experience gains a new perspective.

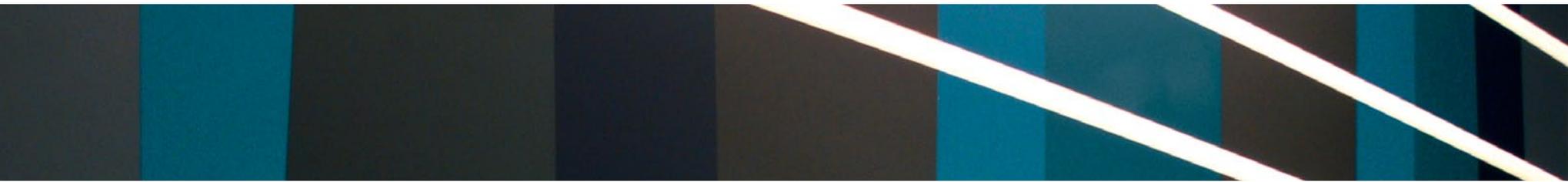
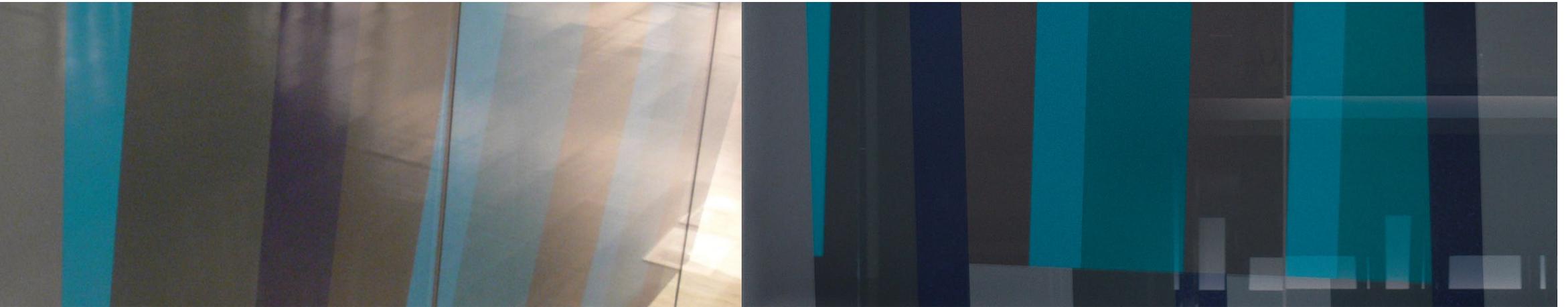
'The Walking Horizon' is an artistic concept that offers a mutual experience for people in the social event spaces at Grand Hyatt New York.

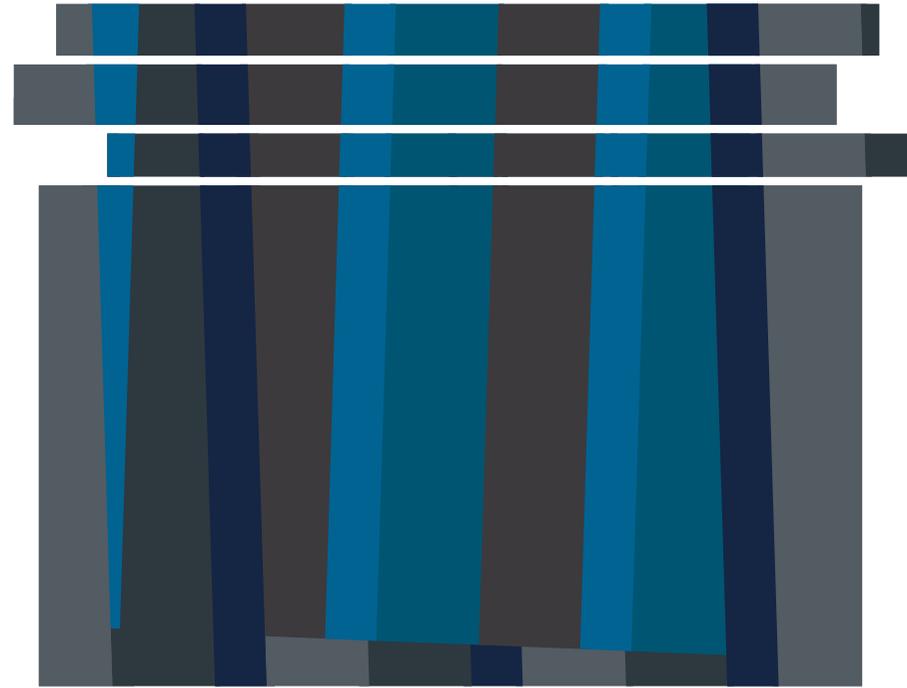
Burghard Müller-Dannhausen (translated by Paul Rahmat Batchelor)



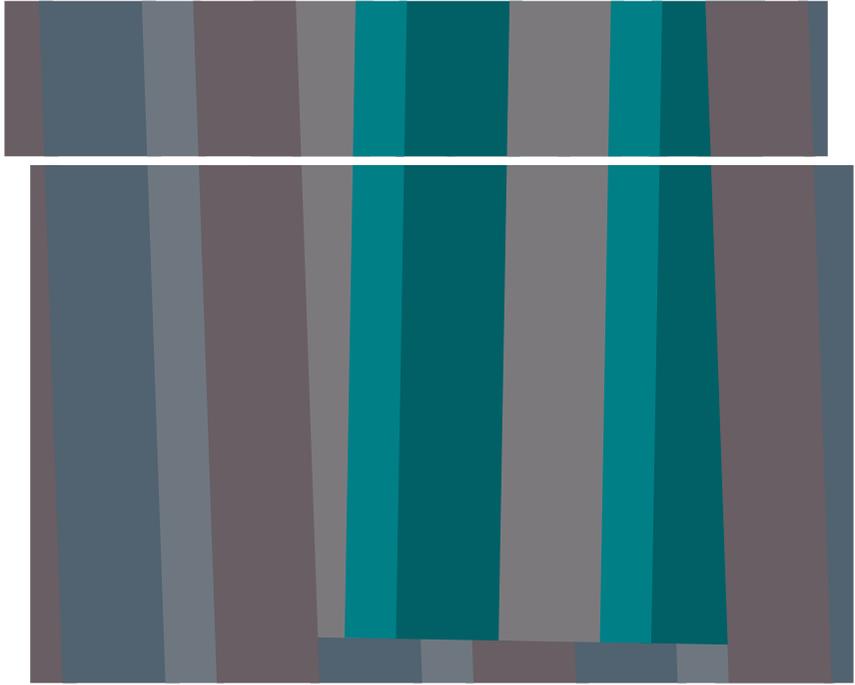


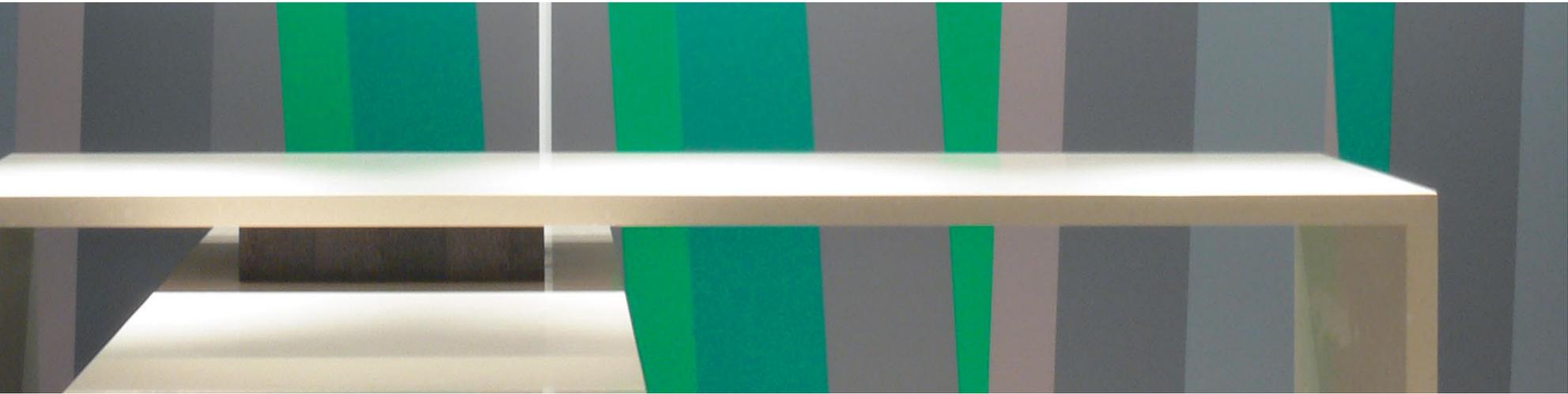
The Walking Horizon I

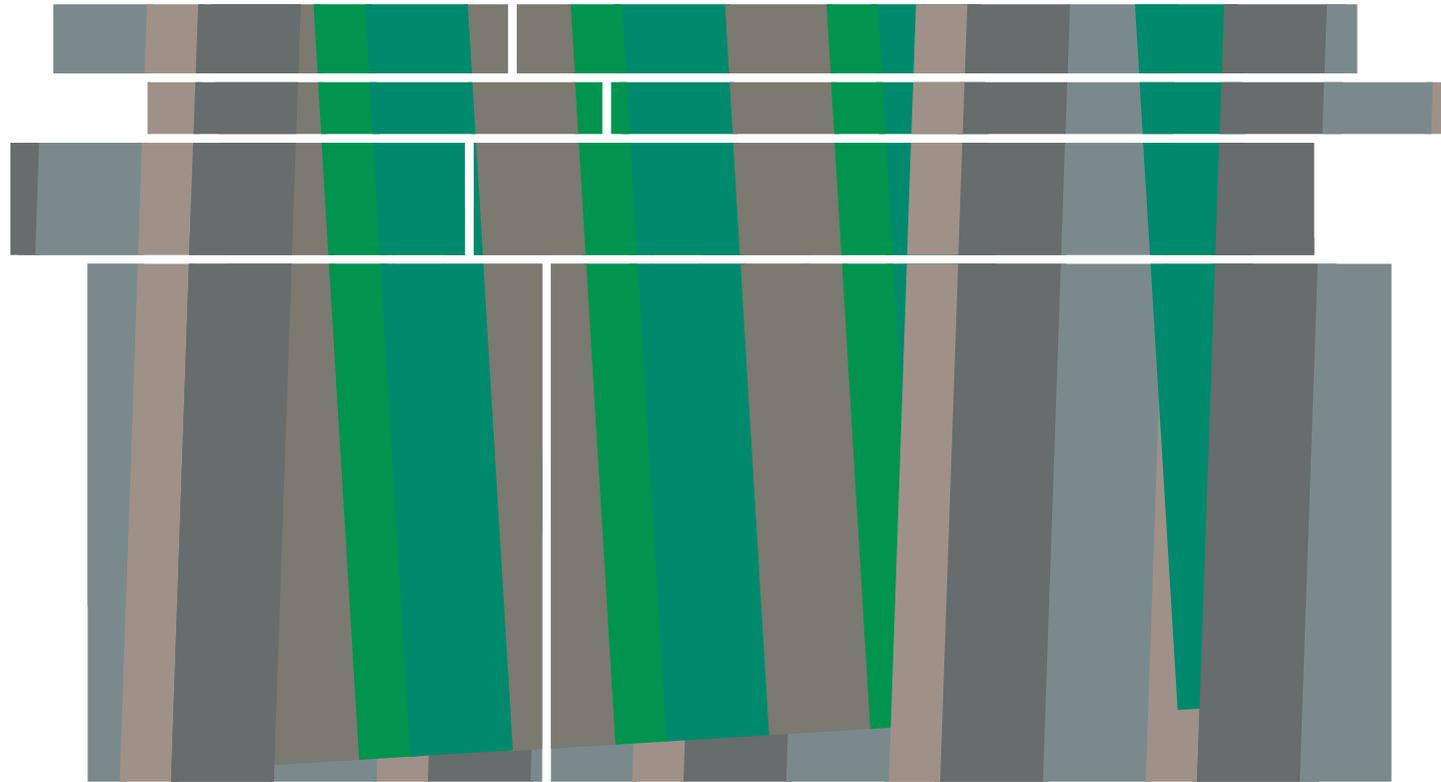


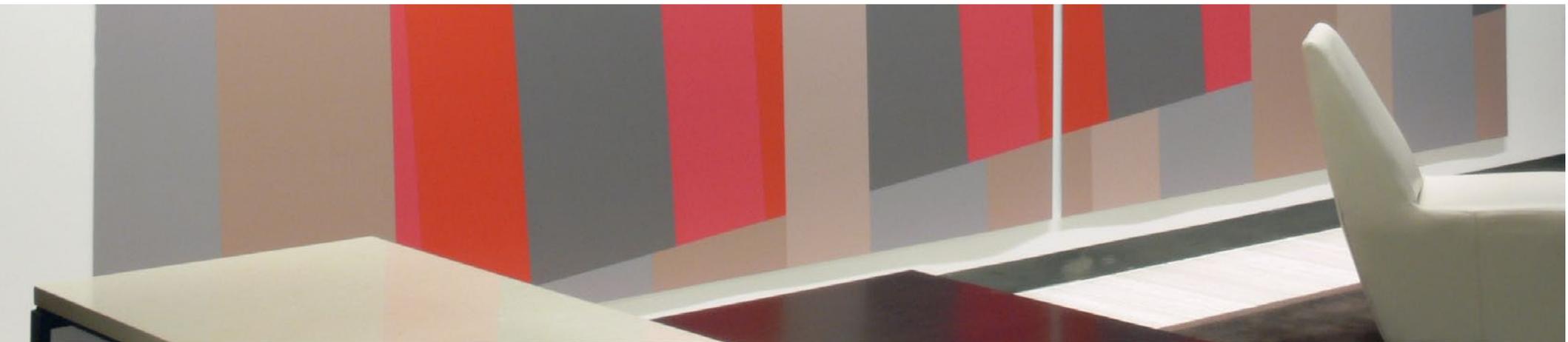
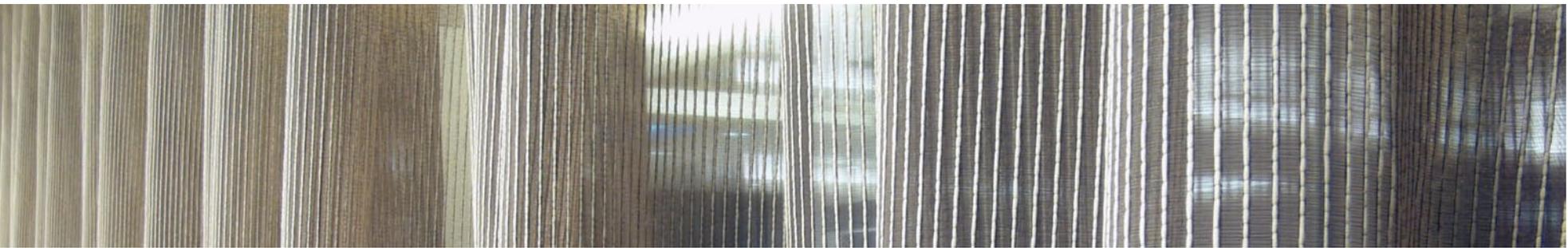
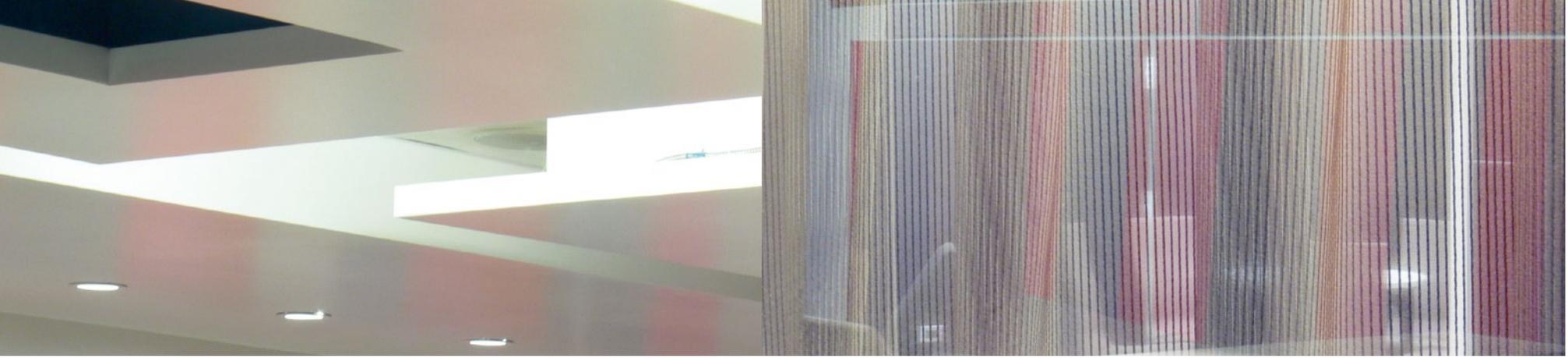


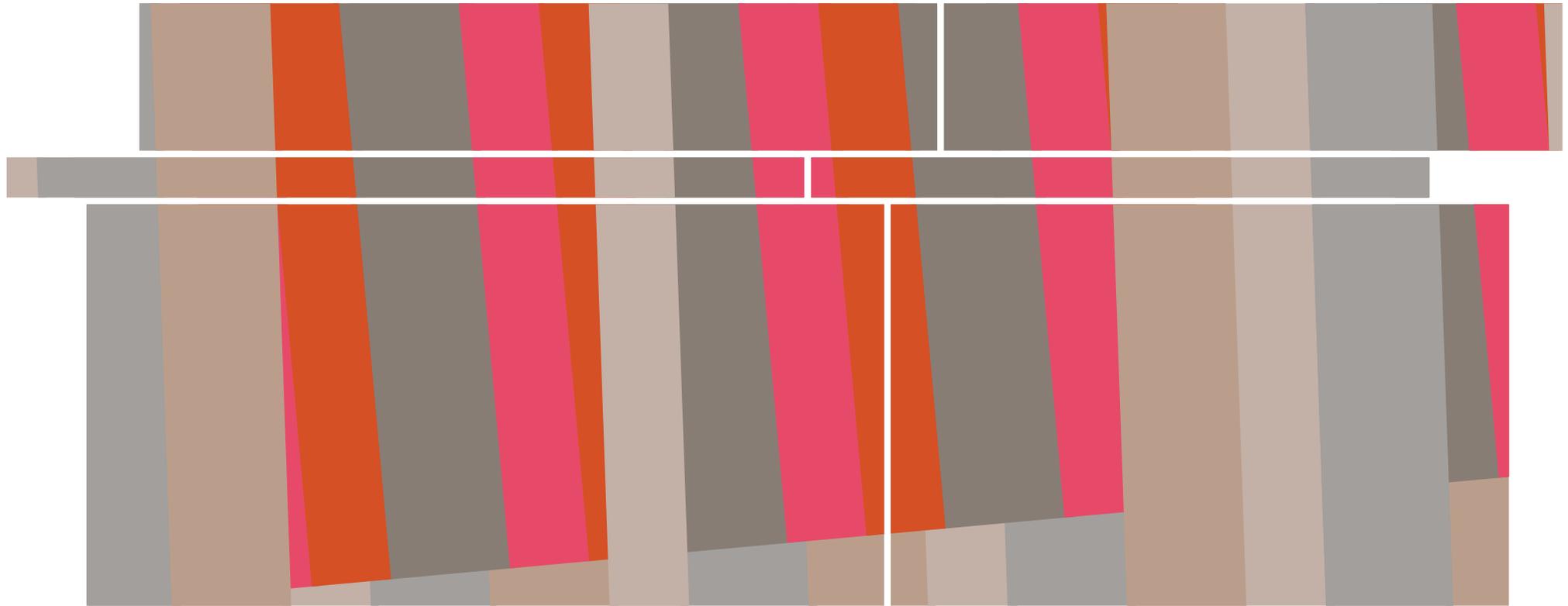












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