



*When Green  
is not Green*



# WHEN GREEN IS NOT GREEN

Not all shades of green are created equal



# Introduction

With its abundance in nature, it is no surprise that in recent years both the word and the colour green have become virtually interchangeable with the idea of sustainability and the protection of the environment. With increasing importance placed on efforts to address concerns about the degradation of our environment, 'going green' has never been more fashionable. Widely used to represent environmental awareness in design, the colour green is often used to visually communicate a company's environmental or 'green' credentials. Green might be the new black but it does not always mean being green.

Printed material comprises a large proportion of the man-made colour we encounter in our modern world. Off-set lithography, four colour process and Pantone's Matching System have enabled us to paint the world in glorious technicolor ever more cheaply, over the last few decades. However, this has come at a price. In recent years the design industry has been gradually waking up to the environmental damage caused by our rainbow of printing inks. Through increases in recycling we now know that red-based colours are more difficult to remove from paper, using more chemicals and energy before it can be made into new. Petroleum based inks release volatile organic compounds, polluting the air and water supply, while damaging the health of those who work with them. In their book, *Green Graphic Design*, Brian Dougherty and Celery Design have compiled a list of all of the Pantone Matching System colours that contain high levels of barium and copper, hazardous metals, which can accumulate in the environment, contaminating water, soil, poisoning wildlife and threatening the health of communities.

This book showcases the colours from that list, in all their toxic glory, as a reminder to designers of the impact of specifying certain colours in design schemes. Among them are a number of green hues that contain Copper-phthalocyanine and are particularly harmful to the environment. Not all greens are created equal and some are little more than greenwash.





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WARM RED























PROCESS BLUE

















































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