

Colours and Cities

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Abstract

The color image of the city is rooted in its geographical space, but changes over time: its modifications have always been due to the evolution of architectural and urban planning of the city and is still constantly changing. If all the visual elements of urban space and land territory compose the integral image of the city, the color remains an essential part of the architectural, cultural and social heritage. Today, a city, a town, aspire to offer their inhabitants a high quality of living environment while respecting its geographical properties, landscape and architectural culture of their own. This is why the debate on the sustainable town must include a chromatic environmental strategy. At present, designing color in the towns & cities is part of new planning ideas and urban innovations.

Introduction

The harmony of color is a universal, transcultural phenomenon. Whether the creation of images, the invention of drawings for the design industry or the construction of urban spaces, it represents a system of coded messages of the visual world that helps us to apprehend, evaluate and act in different contexts.

On the other hand, the harmonies of color, with its many nuances and complex combinations, form a synthesis of knowledge and understanding of the environment. Created or appropriated by man and full of subtleties, they affect all human activities for centuries, even millenniums ... They influence us, surround us and create a pleasant or depressing environment, and they affect our mind, change our mood, our influence or behavior. Today's Fashion and industrial design, Urban Planning, Architecture and Visual Art - all aspects of creation are concerned. That is why our working method is at the crossroads of artistic, historical and scientific reasoning and it help to do the imaginary trip through time and space to explore the infinite universe of color harmonies in different cultures and cities around the world (Figures 1, 2, 3).

Method

The intelligence in the choice of color codes and chromatic harmonies can revitalize urban space by promoting a sense of security and serenity among citizens. It results to the ecology of color as a major constituent of the environmental project to be included in the global project of sustainable development of the town & city.

This approach earns the esteem of architects and designers for whom it seems obvious. It allows updating of knowledge on the visual qualities of the city and its local characteristics with the "in situ" study of existing colors, their synergy, also through the analysis of key harmonies of each place, and environmental design that study a color interaction with architectural forms and urban composition. It identifies the "genetic heritage" and create visual pallets respecting the "spirit of the place".

This approach is also social because it takes into account the preferences of the population of the city. The harmonization of city centers with their peripheral and industrial areas and their landscape, the development of their dominants or visual accents can break the feeling of isolation and of disproportion. This environmental strategy allows the continuity in the perception of the town or city: to analyze the overall image of the city and of each of its neighborhoods, and of its districts and their buildings, and even the design of street furniture, landscape qualities and setting of artificial lighting. All this should have a color consistency in order to form a harmonious urban area. As the image of an ecological system, this strategy will prevent cases of visual pollution (which makes no less damage than those of air, water or noise pollution), but also this program will help restore some past mistakes and to upgrade the ancient heritage by harmonizing it with contemporary interventions. It will create an environment of good chromatic quality for new neighborhoods by integrating new national and international cultural contributions, and therefore leaving the door open to creation. Urban color, rich and complex, lively and full of meaning will participate in the image of the town/city of the XXI century, thus becoming more sensitive and human.

Chromatic study of inhabited spaces as well as knowledge of the local historical heritage are fundamental to developing a strategy in reconstruction, restoration or rehabilitation. The method and the results of investigations devoted to the color image of the city will be an indispensable part of the training of architects, urban and landscape designers and artists. The mission of the colorist is to conceptualize a chromatic scale plan of the city that responds to the request of the town center revitalization and allow the renovation of the existing façades that respects existing geographical and landscape context. The proposed color palette will reveal a specific local character of the territory and take into account the architectural features of previous epochs. It will become an important complement to the revision of the Local Plan of Urbanism with the obligation to use existing local materials while strengthening the characteristics of the place.

This mission includes three main areas:

- 1.1. Analysis of urban and historical part of the city.
- 1.2. Regional and landscape analysis.
2. Conceptualization of urban morphologies: Operational Plan.
3. Definitions of chromatic harmonies and presentation of the work.

The search for a visual balance on image of the city provides a specific identity, context and an atmosphere that are able to create a unique image and make the city attractive. The analysis of

visual ecology and colors of environmental strategy will be part of an overall investment program in the development of territories and enhancement of the urban fabric as a whole.

Results

The results of chromatic study on the entire territory of the city carried out in sectors in the different neighborhoods based on the environment of urban and landscape analysis will:

- Improve the quality of architecture in the growing development of the city;
- Help architects, designers and investors understand the wishes and objectives of the Region and its people regarding the qualities of the new developments;
- Provide a database, tools and means to make an analysis of the existing state and to make proposals to improve the quality of environmental design and ensure more effective urban planning;
- Maintaining in the long term this planning.

An urban colour reflection will allow not only a global vision of city's territorial but also the harmonization of its centers with devices and industrial areas. The harmony of the urban landscape and its color consistency will be composed of various elements - architecture, landscape features and the "fifth facade", street design and lighting at night - to form an entity. The synthesis resulting from the chromatic study of the city will offer specialized and streamlined palettes and become a simple and fundamental tool of work to be able to form a harmonious whole while respecting freedom of expression and the choices of the owners. The determination of chromatic harmonies as an essential stage in each project will offer to architects and residents a wide variety of solutions whenever new diverse ideas and proposals will give a creative, innovative and personified character to the image of the city.

The colour in the townscape along with scale, form, light and texture plays a significant role in the acceptability and success of its development. Using colour with rigour and subtlety in the domains of the chromatic restoration of the urban heritage as well as in the contemporary architecture can help to alter perceptions of scale and mass and assure the integrity of surrounding buildings, streetscape and public places.

The knowledge about existing "environmental colour strategies", about different colour group and visual harmonisation, needed to make urban space more comfortable and visually balanced, is an important theoretical base for practical experience.

Colour harmonies and its classifications considered as indispensable for colour study of the urban space: buildings, equipment, and the transport infrastructures. An environmental approach of urban colour design should not be seen separately but simultaneously with other design principles: townscape character, public realm, movement and legibility, sustainable development, diversity and adaptability.

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