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PLAY WITH COLOURS.
MODERN STRATEGIES OF PLAY WITH COLOUR
IN ARCHITECTURAL OBJECTS

GRA W KOLORY.
WSPÓŁCZESNE STRATEGIE ZABAWY KOLOREM
W OBIEKTACH ARCHITEKTONICZNYCH

Abstract

Modern technologies so willingly used in the creation of image of the modern architecture strengthened the primacy of the vision above other senses. The elementary sensory feeling – the main attribute of seeing sensations – is the phenomenon of colour. Colour ideally corresponds to the modern activity of change – itself a factor with high dynamics and variation – it is both a value in itself and a value creating various special relations.

Keywords: colour; colour in architecture, modern architecture, multimedia

Streszczenie

Nowoczesne technologie tak chętnie wykorzystywane w kreowaniu wyrazu współczesnej architektury wzmocniły prymat wzroku ponad pozostałymi zmysłami. Elementarnym zaś doznaniem zmysłowym, będącym głównym atrybutem doznań wzrokowych, jest zjawisko koloru. Kolor doskonale odpowiada współczesnej aktywności zmiany, sam będąc czynnikiem o dużej dynamice i zmienności, stanowi zarówno wartość samą w sobie, jak i wartość kreującą rozmaite stosunki przestrzenne.

Słowa kluczowe: kolor; kolor w architekturze, architektura współczesna, multimedia

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The operation of play and fun in new contexts broadens the area of possible human experiences affecting the character of modern culture alongside other new practices. What is more, as claimed by Gadamer, culture without the element of play cannot be imagined at all since play is the basic function of human life [1, p. 25–84].

Play always requires participation, therefore, its feature is the action of communication. As shown by Gadamer, there is no distance between the one who is playing and the one who is watching the play. It is therefore possible to draw the viewer into the play. Such practice is showed by any modern art activity art aimed at decreasing or even doing away with the distance between the viewer and the work of art. The strategy of drawing into play with the work of art or architecture can assume essentially various forms where two are most common. The first is related to the mental contact with the work of art, so that it is contemplative in nature, and the other consists in the interaction with the work of art, together with the impact on its form, where one strategy does not exclude the other and vice versa. Both strategies are obviously based on the physical contact with the work of art but for the first strategy, the aspect of identity of the work of art is important and for the other one, its formal expression is in the centre of focus. Colour is a pretext here, as a dynamic factor of the environment and human perception of reality, it is a good reason for interpreting the two strategies in play with the work of architecture. The identity of the work is hidden behind its reproduction. It is always true that to see something you need to think something while you are seeing. Here the focus is on free play and not play that is targeted at any concept. This interaction makes us wonder what that thing is which through free play is created between the ability to create images and the ability to see and understand [1, p. 38].

To describe the first strategy, we need to refer to the identity of the work itself that provides this mysterious drawing of the viewer into the play of the work of art or the work of architecture. It is hard to play with inanimate matter that even has no desire to send a message to us. Works of art and architecture contain an element of hermeneutic identity in themselves, which entails that the message coming from the work demands that the viewer receive it. The challenges emanating from the work demand that the viewer respond, and who, if they accept this challenge, must respond to themselves. The afterthought is important here since it is the play of thoughts in every work that is the true challenge for the appropriate reception of the work. As stated by J. Pallasmaa: in the experience of the work of art, a peculiar exchange occurs. I lend the space of my emotions and associations and the space lends to me the atmosphere that stimulates and triggers my thoughts and experiences [3, p. 16].

The peculiar drawing into the space of colour is undoubtedly the case for the Rainbow Panorama architectural installation by Olafur Eliasson, built on the roof of the Museum of Art in Aarhus, in Denmark, in 2011. This centric tunnel built from coloured glass tiles introduces the viewer/player literally into the space of colour. In the colourful glass tunnel we experience the colours in two ways. The colour is perceived here as planar – in the colour glass tiles and at the same time appears spatially, so it is transparent and fills the three-dimensional space. Therefore, we receive the colour as substantial and spatial at the same time. The viewer “immersed in colour” perceives the surrounding reality of the city panorama, transposed through colour. Therefore, everything changes in its surroundings. The phenomenal effect of the rainbow is also discovered in the timely installation of the Korean artist Kimsooja, implemented in the Palacio de Cristal, Madrid. The surfaces of the palace glass covered by foil that refracts the light give inside a spectacularly colourful phenomenon. An example of confrontation of the colour with the art of architecture is undoubtedly also the

patio of the MUSAC Contemporary Art Museum of Castilla in Leon (winner of the European Union Prize for Modern Architecture – Mies van der Rohe Award in 2007). The inside of the yard of the museum built from great geometrical tiles of colour glass is a space of colour, art and architecture. The museum also employs the modern idea of building mutual relations between the work of art and its recipient promoting in its program the activity of the most modern art and a wide range of workshops, symposia, and other activities strengthening the interactive reception of art. The examples of colour, transparent architectural elevations are abundant: the Palace of Congress in Montreal, the Kayseri Ice Ring in Turkey by BahadırKul Architects, 2012, and all the above examples draw us into a game of light and colour building a certain unreal feeling of being in the centre of a colourful rainbow pallet.

The other strategy of play with the work of architecture, based on the interactive co-creation of the work, full participation not only at the level of feeling of sensory sensations but also manipulation with the work itself, is best seen in the architecture of medial facades. The net communicative and media perspective is important here: important mainly due to the emergence of new media in the work of architecture. In this case the manner of formulating the message and the participating reception, which is called by Ryszard W. Kluszczyński the reception performance, are changed. The strategies of interaction between the recipient and the medium inherited from computer games are found in modern architecture [4, p. 40]. An important and even key element here is the colour which for the medial facades appears as a free colour with its own light, so it appears to us as a dynamic phenomenon. For the perception of colourful light, we are close to recognizing colour as a value detached from the quality or form of the object. It becomes an abstracted value close to the “ideal colour” and through the lucidity it is free from the form and value of the substance.

The literal transposition of play into the world of creation of the architectonic space is the Rubik Cube interactive façade by Javier Lloret. This student project that assumes manipulation with an interface in the shape of a Rubik’s cube providing for the change of colour of the building elevation, implemented in 2013 at the Ars Electronica Centre, Austria, is the best illustration of the second strategy of play with the work of architecture described here. Based on this concept, a phone application will be developed soon for free creation of appearance of the colourful composition of the façade. The projections in the architectural elevations, 3D mapping, are a new and more and more commonly shown display of audio-visual art implemented by video jockey environments that consist in the “animation” of the building facades. This phenomenon, based on spectacular multimedia presentations containing an element of play with colour, light and sound, is a kind of performance. The architecture assumes on one hand a stage scenery in these performances and on the other, such activities stress the hybrid importance of architecture bonding the physical space with the digitally generated space. Many are ambitious projects implemented with momentum and according to an interesting conceptual program. An example would be Augmented Structures v1.1: Acoustic Formations Public Artwork, a project implemented in Istanbul in Turkey in 2011 by AperDerinbogaz and RefikAnadol, where the multimedia operation arranged on one of the architectural elevations is a visual transformation on the specially designed surface or an interactive operation on the elevation: the project by the Portuguese-Belgian group Oculo, implemented in 2011 on the elevation of the WiliamHorzyca Theatre in Toruń under the third edition of the International Light Festival Skyway. This project allowed the players to generate an avatar – their own colourful fish – and add it to the virtual aquarium shown on the elevation.



Ill. 1. Rainbow Panorama, Olafur Eliasson, 2011 Source: http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Eliasson_Your_rainbow_panorama_2.JPG

The work communicates with us. The work of architecture speaks with the surroundings, with the user, and increasingly commonly it also speaks with the forces of nature, giving in to them and being shaped by them, as in the case of kinetic facades conversing with the wind – the best example of such projects are the kinetic facades by Ned Kahn or the Swiss Blur Building, sunk in the cloud, and beyond any standards of classification. The work of modern architecture responds to movement, light, sound, and variable conditions of the surroundings. Affected so, with the modern technology, it has the ability to resonate with the impulses coming from the surroundings. The work communicates with us with the language of colours, textures, shapes and often allows us to shape it actively. The colour ideally corresponds to the modern dynamics of change, as the factor with high dynamics and variability it is a value in itself and a value that creates various spatial relations. The Greek idea of colour (chroma) was associated with motion and change. This change was suggested by the process of photochemical transformation of the purpuric pigment popular at that time (obtained from murex), which in the process underwent a series of changes from yellow, through yellow-green, green, blue-green, blue and red up to violet. This phenomenon was so widely commented in the ancient literature that it solidified change as the main feature of colour. This instability of colour functioned through successive ages and translates into the understanding

of this phenomenon today as well. Modern science still encounters multiple obstacles on the path to the total perception of colour.

The mentioned “eye touch”, as our western culture has wanted since the origins of its history, led among the human senses. Our relation with the world is oculocentric, but this model of perception of reality is now subject to wide criticism. The modern overproduction of pictures means that the eye has become insensitive to the stream of visual sensations that flow through us, not engaging us emotionally. The hegemony of the eye is, as it turns out, a rather new phenomenon, although anchored in the Greek philosophical thought and optics. The increased meaning of the eye is parallel to the development of our western separation of the ego from the surroundings. The changes that occurred in our sensory and perceptive experience of the world are reflected in works of art and architecture. Modern works of architecture, aimed mainly at attracting the eye, fall into the stream of flowing images. The visual character of the work of architecture often takes on a purely scenographic nature. The latest architectural projects promote the type of architecture that is effective, derives the expressions from the strategy of advertising, and affects the viewer with persuasion. The attractive glowing, colourful and moving elevations try to draw the viewer into the play known from the mass media. The modern medial facades do not make us meditate on the work, and prevent or exclude the contemplative reception of its spatial values. The change itself becomes the value. The variation they offer to us is indeed attractive but means that the work escapes the continuum of time. The work of architecture ceases to continue to be. At the same time, as stated by M. Misiągiewicz, the changing reality determines the way of being in the world, where the models of valuation of culture are subject to constant modifications [2, p. 117].

The work of modern architecture is more and more commonly a body covered with an intelligent skin. It is a frightening composition, ideal in terms of technology and material, not affected by time, not aging, not covered by patina, existing beyond time.

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