

COLUMN: BOOK REVIEWS

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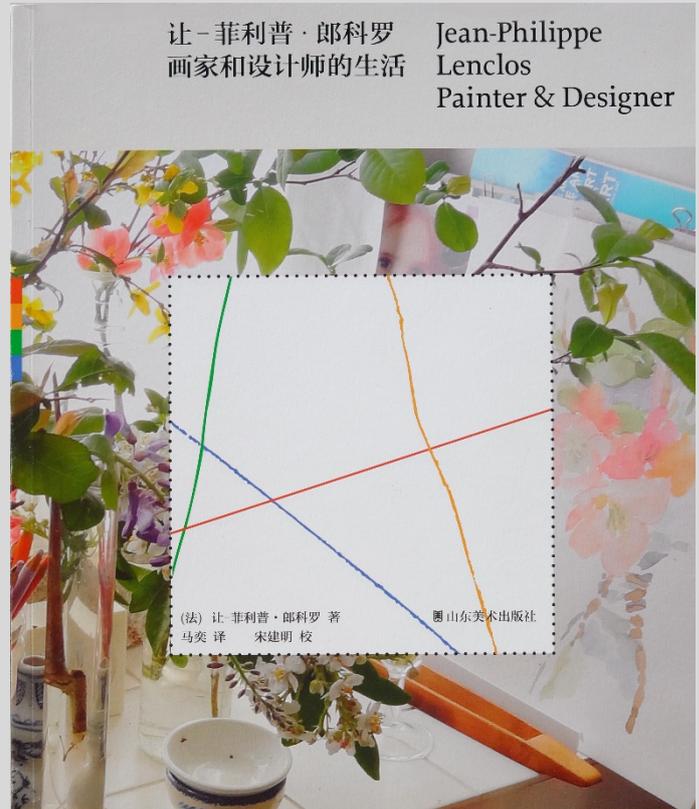
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These reviews of three books – Jean-Philippe Lenclos: Painter & Designer (2017), Colour Strategies in Architecture (2015), and Farbraum Stadt: Farbkultur in Winterthur (2019) – address colour in urban and architectural design.

Jean-Philippe Lenclos: Painter & Designer (2017)

The cover of this book shows a glass vase on a table with a bouquet forming a natural colour palette including bright yellow forsythia, purplish wisteria, branches of an orange-red flowering Japanese ornamental apple tree and of a white blooming cherry tree, and black-brown shoots with green leaves. On the right, a watercolour depicts the colour harmony of the natural floral arrangement. At the top, the word 'art' repeated on a sky-blue background is perceptible as well as the photograph of a young person whose eyes enigmatically peer in between the leaves. In the centre, a rather dominant white square pierces this picture like a window which – according to ancient Feng Shui beliefs – clears the path for the dragon, symbol of positive energy and good luck. Four threads or lines cross in the opening to represent the intersection of different spiritual forces: red stands for design, blue for research, green for teaching, and yellow for art. These are Jean-Philippe Lenclos' four fields of activity that comprise the four main chapters of the book. They are preceded by a chapter on his biography (childhood and youth) and followed at the end of the book by a chronology of events.

The graphic design and layout were realized by the Chinese graphic designer Yuan Youmin, Professor at the China Academy of Art. The preface is by colour designer Jianming Song, who was Lenclos' first Chinese student at the École nationale supérieure des Arts Décoratifs (EnsAD) in Paris in 1985 and who published the first book on Lenclos' work in China in 1988. Song's wife Di Yin, who also studied for one semester with Professor Lenclos, founded her own agency Plough Color Research Co. Ltd. in Hangzhou and financially supported this publication. Cloé Pitiot, Curator at the Department of Design, Centre Georges Pompidou, who since 2018 has been a curator at the Musée des Arts Décoratifs de Paris, wrote the introduction.



Jean-Philippe Lenclos: *Painter & Designer*. 2017. Text by Jean-Philippe Lenclos. Preface by Jianming Song. Introduction by Cloé Pitiot. Jinan: Shandong Fine Arts Publishing House. ISBN 978-7-5330-6201-9 (Chinese/English)

Translated into English and Chinese, the main text is by French colour designer, researcher, artist, and teacher Professor Jean-Philippe Lenclos. The book is beautifully illustrated with approximately 730 images.

In the first chapter, we learn that he studied at the Art School in Lille, then cabinet-making at École Boule in Paris and also at EnsAD before sailing from Marseille to Japan where he enrolled at the Kyoto School of Art for two years – a crucial, shaping experience in his biography.

The second chapter focusses on his work as a designer. For ten years he was artistic director of the paint company Peintures Gauthier before creating supergraphics and founding his own agency Atelier 3D Couleur in Paris in 1978. The Atelier's focus was on colour design in urban planning, architecture, and for industrial sites. Another important focus was on research on colour, materials, and new technologies in industrial

design including products, cars and textiles. The third chapter is dedicated to his famous concept 'The Geography of Colour', a systematic methodology he developed to study the colours of a village, town, or region. The fourth chapter is about his thirty-five years of teaching colour at EnsAD and includes his students' work.

The absolutely remarkable and longest chapter is the fifth, which describes his artistic research. He explores the properties of colours through his drawings, watercolours, and oil paintings. His artistic work creates vibrant optical patterns that capture light, rhythm, and movement similar to reflections on the surface of water. He deals with the fragile chromatic transformation of natural objects over time, beginning with very concrete examples and going beyond to the amazingly abstract play of colours and forms. Fascinating secrets are revealed by this formerly unpublished material.

As a conclusion, there is a timeline of his professional activities such as talks, publications, and exhibitions.

This is a splendid book on the work of Jean-Philippe Lenclos who not only furthered the profession of colour designer by creating a new dimension, but also influenced researchers, scholars, artists, and designers beyond France on an international level while serving as a leader and mentor, which is still true today.

Fiona Mc Lachlan et al.: Colour Strategies in Architecture (2015)

Colour Strategies in Architecture is the outcome of a fortuitous encounter of three of the authors who initially crossed paths at the Midterm Meeting of the International Colour Association in 2011 in Zurich. As a result, Haus der Farbe (House of Colour – Professional School for Design in Craft and Architecture) in Zurich and the University of Edinburgh started a four-year interdisciplinary research project that investigated the strategic use of colour within architectural design practice.

Any material decision in architecture is tacitly a decision about colour, but the use of colour is not necessarily a strategic one. Most of the time people are not aware of how different colours shape a building in a distinct way. Colour has its own inherent qualities and is a key factor in creating the specific aesthetic and spatial experience of space. Whether natural materials, pigmented layers, or finishes are applied, they define the relationships between planes, volumes, and details contributing to a particular atmosphere.



Colour Strategies in Architecture. 2015. Texts by Fiona McLachlan, AnneMarie Nesper, Lino Sibillano, Marcella Wenger-Di Gabriele, Stefanie Wettstein. Preface by Iain Boyd White. Basel: Schwabe Verlag in association with Haus der Farbe Zurich. ISBN 13: 978-3-7965-3421-8 (English)

The research method was based on the discursive analysis of hand-painted samples (around 380) as well as on the development of an accessible way of communicating and disseminating the different approaches and findings. More specifically, the closely observed colours were studied and interpreted with the aims, first of all, of understanding and identifying the colour characteristics of a building or part of it; secondly, studying the colour strategy applied; and, thirdly, describing and discussing the context and approach in an illustrated essay.

The book includes a selection of six different architectural practices that constitute the six chapters of the book and are titled the same as the essential aspects of the six depicted colour strategies:

Painterly Promenade is the colour strategy attributed to the work of Lux Guyer (1894–1955), a pioneer female architect based in Zurich;

Holistic Interplay is the implicit colour strategy captured in the Philharmonie and Staatsbibliothek in Berlin by Hans Scharoun (1893–1972);

Tectonics Clarified is the colour strategy illustrated by two Edinburgh housing projects by Basil Spence (1907–1976);

Immersive Pop is the colour strategy identified in the design of several underground stations in West Berlin by Rainer Rümmler (1929–2004);

Hushed Tonalities is the colour strategy of the subtle and timeless approach of Reiach & Hall Architects, whose firm was established in 1965; and,

Second Layer is the colour strategy exemplified in two housing projects in Zurich by contemporary Swiss architects Knapkiewicz & Fickert.

The findings of the fourteen case studies are summarized as a 'colour portrait' (tableau) and the colour strategy is visualized in a second larger unfolding plate. Such plates recall the 2010 publication *Farbraum Stadt: Box ZRH*, which includes ninety-six colour portraits of selected buildings in Zurich built over a century.

In the conclusion the authors write that their expectations will have been fulfilled if the study encourages the strategic use of colour in architecture.

The essays are highly interesting colour-centred analyses of architectural spaces. Professionals will prove if the methodology developed in the book becomes the key to successful colour strategies in architectural practice.

The plates are also currently travelling through Europe as an exhibition.

Andres Betschart et al.: Farbraum Stadt: Farbkultur in Winterthur (2019)

The history of the city of Winterthur goes back to the Roman era, but the city itself was granted borough rights only in 1264. As in most Swiss cities, the ancient city core is colourful. Each building façade is a different colour and this contributes to the creation of the particular ambience of this public space. In the preface, Winterthur's Mayor Michael Künzli claims that the book *Farbraum Stadt: Farbkultur in Winterthur* (Colour Space and City: Colour Culture in Winterthur) and its colour charts are useful as a basis for discussing colour, making sound colour decisions, and drawing attention to characteristic colour features and local colour traditions.

Released as a boxed set, the publication contains a book, a folded leaflet, and three folded posters. There are several essays in the book. In one, architect Stefan Gasser claims that colour regulations are important and describes how a façade that was recently painted vibrant



Farbraum Stadt: Farbkultur in Winterthur. 2019. Texts by Andres Betschart, Stefan Gasser, Basil Marty, Marcella Wenger-Di Gabriele, Stefanie Wettstein, Jasmin Widmer. Preface by Michael Künzli. (Neujahrsblatt der Stadtbibliothek Winterthur; Bd. 356.2019) Winterthur: Stadtbibliothek Winterthur, ISBN 978-3-908050-44-5; Zürich: Chronos Verlag, ISBN 978-3-0340-1509-7 (German)

orange prompted immediate criticism from many inhabitants. (In his essay, the author, however, does not mention whether or not the owner was forced to repaint the façade.) Gasser also describes how in 1943 Winterthur's city core became a protected zone – including in terms of colour design – and that the Urban Planning Act of 1975 states that the overall colour character should be preserved in the old city centre.

In another essay, art and architectural historians Basil Marty and Jasmin Widmer point out that colour regulations are not a contemporary invention citing a dispute in 1629. The authors examine additional archival documents from 1648, 1810–1818 and 1926 discussing the historical development of colour in urban planning and social impact of colour on architecture.

In a third essay, historian Andres Betschart explores the 1910s and 1920s colour movement launched by Bruno Taut in Germany and how the 1926 exhibition *Die farbige Stadt* (The Colourful City) at Winterthur's Gewerbemuseum was immensely popular. Betschart includes reproductions of autochromes by photographer Hermann Linck as well as the 1926 colour design proposal for one of Winterthur's main streets by artist Willy Dünner, whose mixed technique colour plates constitute the folded leaflet of the published set.

The main chapter – and purpose of the book – is presented by Marcella Wenger-Di Gabriele and Stefanie Wettstein, who studied different districts to establish

colour charts as visual means of communication. These colour charts are included in the publication as folded posters. The first one relates to the old city centre and the urban core of a selected district. The second poster presents the colour charts of two heterogeneous districts. And, the third summarizes the colours of two garden cities. As directors of the Haus der Farbe in Zurich, the authors developed a methodology and criteria to identify 'good quality' colours, i.e., colours that are typical and also well-fitted to a particular context. The colour charts represent a selection of the existing colours. As cultural and aesthetic judgements evolve over time, new additional colours can be chosen on the basis of and in harmony with the colour charts. The charts seem to represent the immediate appearance of the different colours on the façade surface (page 82, Fig. 7). This raises an issue explored by Karin Fridell-Anter in her study of 2000, whereby she demonstrated that façade colours shift greatly in terms of lightness and chromaticness when seen from a distance, as is usually the case. A further issue is that some of the colour charts include not only the colours of paint or plaster, but also of stone and of natural and varnished wood. Are the authors correct in suggesting that dark brown could be applied on a plaster façade? Under the keyword 'façades', the nature of the material associated with each colour is not explicitly stated. In one of the charts there are browns, dark browns, dark greens, and almost blacks, which are extremely somber colours for a façade and are generally responded to with harsh criticism from local residents. The colour charts are also problematic insofar as there are no reference numbers and dark colours are difficult to discriminate. Concerning the colour charts of the heterogeneous city quarters, colours of natural materials, textiles, concrete, and paint fuse together. Does the printed version make them appear harmonious? Including the turquoise blue colour of existing buildings (pages 106–107) makes no sense as it would actually destroy the intended harmony. If these colour charts should be the basis for discussing colour, how do we deal with such colours? In sum, a useful colour chart for practical colour application entails much more than just analysing and summarising existing colours.

The conclusion is by city architect Jens Andersen, who deals with the colour charts in daily practice.

The book is nicely illustrated with contemporary photographs by Michael Erik Haug.