

Why/How/Where do we need colour in our cities?

(13/06/2023)

Every single time I type the word "maps" on my browser, explore a few cities around the globe and dive deeper using the 3D mode, I keep seeing bland cities, places that lack any kind of life, excitement, and joy. It is incredible the role colour plays in our societies. In branding, colour is absolutely everything and is key to determine the success of a product, yet for some reason when we want people to come visit our cities or even to live in them, we do truly little to implement colour. Sure, we present exciting new buildings, projects and urban developments that will shape positively the city forever for the most part, but most of these buildings consist of monochrome lackluster hues. This is not to say that timber or metal or glass buildings are bad, in fact they are astonishing pieces/advances of human innovation. The only difference is no matter how beautiful or functional an urban project is, like the effort Paris is committing to becoming Europe's greenest city by 2030, to me it just looks like some trees sitting on a straight line, lots of timber here and there, and lots of simple buildings with windows laid out in grids. The only way to add life in addition to nature and parks, is through colour. I shall add that there are exceptions like the Eiffel Tower, as being a landmark overlooks the fact that it is plain iron with a few coats of paint. I will give you some great examples: in architecture, the Biomuseo in Panama designed by Frank Gehry and in art/sculpture, Puppy at the Guggenheim in Bilbao by Jeff Koons. Both bring an immense joy to the visitors and citizens, and as someone who first saw the Puppy as a kid in Bilbao with a very carefree mind, it still struck me by how beautiful it was, and it takes a lot to stop a kid to reflect on something for a few seconds. Now both examples are set in perfect environments, as Puppy sits next to the Guggenheim in Bilbao which is an area full of metal, parks, white and beige, and same goes for the Biomuseo which is sat next to the sea and surrounded by nature, making it truly stand out. The logic behind this can be very easily explained through an analogy I call balance: if a room is 100% white, you'll feel isolated and truly disorientated, but if the room is completely red you will go insane fast and your eyes won't be able to keep up with such a bold colour. That is where balance comes in, because by balancing out colors, you get a fantastic result which feels alive and not disturbing at all. Picture this, a street in NYC is made up of many tall white/greyish buildings and sitting in between is a small park with a big fat red sculpture made out of metal; colour and metal together make up for such a strong combination. We need these kinds of objects/sculptures in our cities, not just in one museum or in one important square, I believe one of the keys to success in urban design and quality of life is bringing colour through art and sculptures, everywhere. It might be a huge mural, a huge painting in a museum, a bold car in the parking lot or a big sculpture in a park. No matter the medium, they are all essential to our wellbeing; they make cities worth visiting even more. The Guggenheim in Bilbao was lots of fun to visit, but I would still love to go there for a second time, mainly just to see Puppy. This is a substantial opportunity for cities and countries to bring in even more visitors each year. Arts and culture connect and relate to people so easily because they can make us feel good, amaze our eyes, and produce outstanding experiences. Open your browser, type one of the two names I listed before and stare at them for a few minutes, try it. Art needs to be everywhere, in any shape or form. I personally love sculptures and genuinely believe in the vision that one day many parks, many more than now, will be centred around big bright bold sculptures. In addition, did you notice that the argument I just made starts at an incredibly youthful age: have you ever seen kids playing with LEGO bricks, have you noticed how DUPLO or standard system pieces are so bright, colourful, and cheerful. I remember playing with DUPLO bricks and you cannot imagine the joy that came out of me. Talking

about children, they love to play and mess around at playgrounds, especially those with huge slides, fun obstacles, climbers, swings, spinners and more. They are an essential part of the world; kids bring us joy and we shall reward them by bringing to life beautiful colourful parks or spots to hang around and enjoy the day. To conclude, just remember how powerful and beautiful art, colour and people can be when they come together for a better future.