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Abstract

Colour Energy and Wellbeing: the Lessons of the Orient

Colour energy and wellbeing in the context of architecture and design are underestimated in terms of the value they bring to design, branding, and real estate development in all sectors ranging from residential to corporate projects, including the hospitality and luxury industry. Colour, with a particular focus on its latent energy, has not yet been sufficiently explored, and although continuously researched and discussed, colour remains one of the great mysteries of perception. Feeling colour is essential for life and survival. Colour energy reaches far beyond art and the decoration of space. The sensation of colour, as an expression of the sense of sight, influences wellbeing and is connected to deeply embedded themes and patterns, either on emotional, cultural, or personal level through which it impacts wellbeing, health, and decision-making in essential ways, not least because vision has replaced odour as the most essential sense for survival. The majority of all conscious and unconscious decisions are affected by notions of colour, a discipline of constant debate in both, art and science. Architecture is somewhere in between, and practising architects are expected to provide the client with individual solutions based on informed decisions. When they do this, however, basing their decisions on experience, unexpressed knowledge, and intuition, they are often perceived as arrogant. Architecture and the design of space are a constant concern for everyone. The desire to build a home, a temple, or a public building in a three dimensional environment is a fundamental urge and as old as mankind itself. Yet perhaps because of these strong impulses, the complexity of creating space is often underestimated. Our body records millions of impressions per minute across all five senses. The five senses keep us alive; they warn, nurture, and alert us, and human perception is based on receiving the vibrations caused by energy fields. These sensory vibrations are directly linked with the human body and it is through them that experiences like “I am feeling good in this space”, and even unconscious memory are triggered.

Clients may expect the architect to know everything about the perception of space. Architecture, however, is a very complex matter, and in most academic programs there little or no time is allowed for the in-depth study of perception, psychology, colour energy, or wellbeing. Even architecture and



interior design are often conflated, and treated as one combined subject rather than two complimentary disciplines. What is most striking is that colour is often ignored in Western architecture. Furthermore, there is a bias in the literature and education of the West when compared to the holistic approach in the East. In the Orient, holistic means body, spirit, and soul. In the Occident, in contrast, it means body, mind, and brain. Spirit and soul are missing. And although the sense of something missing becomes more evident in the West, research fights shy of spirit and soul and leaves unaddressed questions like:

1. What is the relation of colour energy, wellbeing, and space in Occident and Orient?
2. Why is colour not used more often and more instrumentally for improving wellbeing?
3. Where do the inhibitions and obstacles come from that prevent occidental architecture and design from reflecting and applying ancient oriental knowledge and belief on colour healing, health, and wellbeing?

As a colour theorist, architect, and designer I propose that colour energy offers effective principles that provide an invaluable source for informed architectural decisions, which are genuinely independent from subjective taste or contemporary fashion trends and that enable a truly holistic approach. This research proposes that wellbeing is both timeless and priceless and that wellbeing, health, and perception can be stimulated by colour energy.