

# NEW COAT OF PAINT

I  
I want to invent colour relationships, and not limit myself by photographing only natural colours.<sup>1</sup> Foreign visitors to cities in socialist countries employed recurring tropes of unsightliness, greyness, and monotony in their descriptions.<sup>2</sup> Colour is, in other words, a complex visual language that combines subjectivist aspects to human experience with a system of shared meaning acquired through language.<sup>3</sup> With the introduction of monochrome, we witness the abandonment of conventional attributions for the 'meaning' of colour in favour of the pure materiality of colour.<sup>4</sup> An accountant has won €1,000 for his photo entitled, 'Colour your life', which shows a girl sitting on the asphalt, smiling up at the camera surrounded by colourful chalk drawings.<sup>5</sup> In the building up of a given surface by the ego, it is no longer so much the subjective experience that dominates, but rather the objective demands of colour.<sup>6</sup> Form without colour is like a body without a soul.<sup>7</sup> Is it conceivable that architecturally fascinating compositions would remain largely unaffected as far as their spatial quality is concerned if they were covered with different colours?<sup>8</sup> The simultaneous presence of two colours at the same place in the visual field is impossible.<sup>9</sup>

III  
Not distinct enough to be deemed a colour, grey is often defined as neutral or dull.<sup>15</sup> It is as though somewhere there is a vast hole through which colour and print is leaking out leaving an increasingly grey and black world that makes for a drab colourless environment.<sup>16</sup> We do not want to build any more joyless houses, or see them built. Colour is not expensive like moulded decoration and sculptures, but colour means a joyful existence. As it can be provided with limited resources, we should, in the present time of need, particularly urge its use on all buildings which must now be constructed.<sup>17</sup> Ancient empires, autocracies, despotisms, old and new tyrannies – all are monochromatic worlds, while democracy is multicoloured.<sup>18</sup> The range of pure unbroken colours again falls over our houses and delivers them from their dead-on-gray.<sup>19</sup> Finding the right colour combination is undoubtedly the crucial first step in making a city safer, healthier, cleaner and generally more user-friendly for its inhabitants.<sup>20</sup> Colour also has another role, it must bind together.<sup>21</sup>

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II  
It was the completest and most desirable bedroom ever seen. The walls were whitewashed as white as milk.<sup>10</sup> Whitewash is extremely moral. Suppose there were a decree requiring all rooms to be given a coat of whitewash. I maintain that that would be a police task of real stature and a manifestation of high morality, the sign of a great people.<sup>11</sup> To replicate the monochrome with a different colouring would be to destroy the heterogeneity of organising principles that is the basis of adaptability.<sup>12</sup> The members are divided over the somewhat stark black-and-white aesthetic, but I feel that it contributes to what gives the space its philosophical aura.<sup>13</sup> A single, colourless ray.<sup>14</sup>

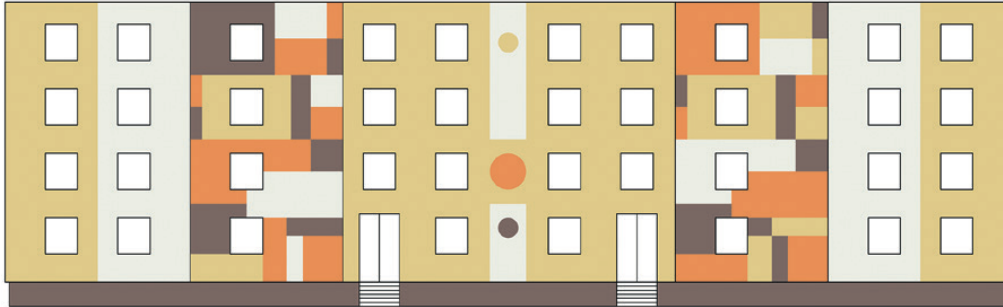
IV  
Blue is a beautiful colour and is also soothing for the eyes.<sup>22</sup> The authorities feel pink is the way to go for residents to feel proud of their town again.<sup>23</sup> Our leader has decided that the theme colour of the city will be sky blue because the motto of the new government is 'the sky is the limit'.<sup>24</sup> If he did not paint the town red, he would probably have preferred to paint it all the colours of the rainbow, as in a medieval picture.<sup>25</sup> Deprived of toys he fondles the light glinting off a bunch of keys. He becomes the infant fetishist of patchwork.<sup>26</sup> When the sun shines through the prismatic glass, it throws colours on the white surfaces, which is very pleasing – and also gives pleasure that the architect thought to add this touch for us.<sup>27</sup> The directors of the ritual must ensure that all processes in it are elementarily comprehensible. Anyone who does not understand the text, must grasp the action; anyone for whom the action is alien must be captivated by the colourfulness of the spectacle.<sup>28</sup> The city spreads out like a sea of colour, as proof of the happiness in the new life.<sup>29</sup>

## V

The truth of architecture is now located in its visible outside rather than its hidden interior.<sup>30</sup> And you know that there's an inside in there. Even though the colour is beige or ochre, or green or dirty yellow or yellow-grey, or milky brown – or even silver. It doesn't matter. Because you know once you're in there – it's black. You just know it.<sup>31</sup>

Guests had to leave fingerprints in the entrance and were advised to dress up as the factory-workers, meaning mostly grey, or in colourful clothes received in a parcel from the West.<sup>32</sup> This aesthetic taste is ostensibly very open, very inclusive – and in this sense also genuinely democratic. But it in fact rejects everything universal, uniform, repetitive, geometrical, minimalist, ascetic, monotonous, boring – everything gray, homogeneous, and reductionist.<sup>33</sup>

One colour is exchanged for another simply because the one was old and the other new.<sup>34</sup>



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inkjet print, framed 29,5 × 39,5 cm.

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