The Color Labyrinth

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Abstract: The Color Labyrinth is an educational project on urban color, presented as a color design project. Using tarmac as a medium, it transmits color to the environment as a dynamic element running across the road surface without obstacles. More specific isles, for various games, are included in this path. Suggested topics are useful for educational insights. The street becomes a 'laboratory' where children learn and play at the same time, while developing the topics suggested also with the help of their teachers. It is a Unicef project.

Keywords: color, pattern, harmony, labyrinth, color design, TARMAC, color, pattern, harmony

1 Introduction

The Color Labyrinth is a Unicef Child Friendly Cities project. Some time ago, children had asked Unicef for a street where they could play safely. This is another reason for opting for an exemplary design that would meet the right of children to play and enjoy their childhood.

2 Description

The project involves different aspects: color and urban design, education, color systems, harmony systems. All these different elements informing the original nature of this, still unparalleled, project, are described here below.

2.1 Color Design on Tarmac

The road surface – which is 60 m long – lends itself to becoming a large swath of colored paths. These pathways are freely but not randomly arranged, they are flowing and dynamic.

They have been designed to suggest ever changing routes with suitable dimensions for the street.

Colors are crossed and matched, thus creating directions and unexpected connections.

The grey tarmac provides the background to this large composition: an unusual match of textures that enhances color interaction of the various pathways (according to the rules of complementary cold colors).

Color islands, providing play suggestions, are interspersed along the pathways.

2.2 Choice of Colors and Shapes

While complying with color rules (primary, secondary, complementary, warm and cold colors), color ranges were expanded with the introduction of 'favorite' colors looking for new matches and varieties that are more sensitive to yet uncodified perceptions: a new and unparalleled color harmony.

The project color design is based on dynamic - never static – shapes, which stretch like ellipses in the space, while offering out-of-the-box perceptions and fantasies proper of the magic age of childhood.

Colors are selected in relation to shapes and are harmonized into a composition sequence.

First of all, primary colors were selected and applied along pathway directions, and were then integrated with lighter shades. This is the outcome of previous projects presented at IUAV Conference in Venice, AIC Zurich, and Gruppo del Colore Rome, in which I had investigated the intuitive choice by children and teenagers of their favorite colors, as well as the synergic relation between color and light.

Therefore, in this work, my previous project experience and color research have merged together into a harmonious composition project which also becomes an educational work focused on color and emotions associated with it.

2.3 The Street Function: an Educational Path

2.3.1 Preschool Children

Large swaths of solid color on the floor divide street spaces into long pathways inviting young kids to a joyful and free discovery, and promoting their sense of direction and orientation.

However, colors are also shapes to be freely interpreted: the sea, butterflies, a round dance, etc.

Colors with their visibility offer suggestions that become creative perceptions fostering the development of early knowledge elements.

2.3.2 School-Aged Children

A deeper and more mature reading of portrayed elements is targeted on a more precise learning phase: for example, a yellow axis, bright and clearly visible like a sign across the street, fosters awareness of measures and sizes.

A large chromatic circle right at the end of the path stimulates reflections on the knowledge and harmony of colors.

The project color design is based on dynamic - never static - shapes which stretch like ellipses in the space, while offering out-of-the-box perceptions and fantasies proper of the magic age of childhood.

2.4 Project Technical Features

The Color Labyrinth has experienced some lucky breaks, as well as the opportunity to revamp an existing street to playing an educational role. Colors are indeed quite suitable for this purpose.

COLORDOC paints – an innovative fluorinated coating suitable for high foot-traffic – were donated by the manufacturer Docchem, which produces it under an international patent.

The color scale was selected from the NSCRAL palette. The coating stainproof and high resistance properties will guarantee long life to the Color Labyrinth also from a chromatic point of view.

Conclusions

Therefore, the City of Genoa has now the First Child Friendly Street in Italy.

School children are coming and enjoying this new free outdoor space.

Completed just after the dramatic flood that hit Genoa last autumn, all its joyful colors were meant to be a sign of rebirth.

Children create their own games and plays and stimulate their imagination.

As to its architectural function, the street has been upgraded to become a perceptive space: the previously anonymous and charachterless space now enjoys a dynamic relation with the life and spaces of existing buildings.

The color path designed on the tarmac becomes the "system" in charge of this role, as well as a valuable educational tool.

The Color Labyrinth is a Unicef Child Friendly Cities project. For this reason it has been defined as the "FIRST CHILD FRIENDLY STREET".

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PHOTOS OF THE LABYRINTH OF COLOR