

A Study of The Relationship Between Environment Colors and The Public Art - Exemplified by the Public Art in Taipei

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***Abstract:** In this paper we would like to present our investigations about the relationship between environment colours and the public art in Taipei.*

***Keywords:** color, pattern, harmony*

Preface

Public Art, which integrates visual art, space and environmental construction, has been a worldwide trend in the past twenty to thirty years. When art enters a city's public space, it doesn't just offer citizens more opportunity to interact with it, but certainly brings a change to the environment. In early years, Taiwan's government deemed public art only a form of statues or memorials, whose positions and usage weren't normally settled until the construction work was finished. Compared to the selection of material, the relation between an artwork and environmental color was often neglected; therefore, a tight "partnership" or connection between an artwork and a public construction work wasn't really common back then. In 1992, Taiwan first had its own official policy for public art funding. All the public buildings were expected to commission public art as a way to beautify the buildings and environment, and a public art budget shouldn't be lower than one percent of the building's construction scheme. Further in 1998, Taiwan announced its schemes of installing public art in selected sites. Besides using public art as an art platform and career stage for artists, it is also a means to care for life in public space and a drive to promote art education to all citizens.

Since public art functions as a drive for developing urban space and providing more art experience for citizens, public art is no longer a sole "piece of art" in public space but strides to build a city's image and takes more responsibility to play a role in citizens' aesthetic experience and lifestyle. For decades, the

government has constantly increased funds on public art, which has now developed into a diversity of forms and an “innovative” style. The current public art policy in Taiwan has further accepted non-material, reachless works and the events-based interventions into its public art domain.

1 Environmental Color and Public Art Development in Taiwan

The survey in environmental color started in 1960, and since then, it has represented an aesthetic combination and relationship between a region’s culture and environment, and has also stridden to take the whole environment into account. However, with the fast-paced urbanization, which accelerates the deterioration in the living quality, Taiwan’s citizens have had more solid awareness of environmental preservation and demanded better living quality, which then prompts the government to pay more attention to the color usage in the environment. Colors have been taken for granted by modern people as the air they breathe in and hence the value of colors in a city is often neglected. Artificial colors are even “invisible” in a bustling city when they have become an “icon” of consumerism and road signs, and often fail to wholly integrate into the surroundings; people have long lost the sensitivity to colors.

Though the government included and emphasized “The Urban Color Schemes” in its civic aesthetic policy in 2009, there hasn’t seemed to be any progress in the exact way of planning and executing the scheme. Neither is there any light for the decision of color choice in public space and the way of using colors to harmonize outdoor space.

As the capital, Taipei has endeavored to establish its images and marketing schemes, and its public art development has also taken the lead for the fact that it possesses larger proportion of public constructions. The 2010 *Taipei Flora Expo* further prompted the scheme of “*Beautiful Taipei*”, hoping to effectively integrate and unite the capital’s differing districts aesthetically. Taking part in the public art scheme in the Treasure Hill area, the author of the thesis got to observe the development in public art in the Gong-guan district.

The thesis is based on the two public art schemes, *The Floating Color Codes in Treasure Hill* and *The Heart of Wellspring*, which both differ from the previous public art cases that didn’t really take color survey as the priority. The former scheme is the first and only public art case that specifically targets at “environmental color” issue while the latter commissions the internationally highly- acclaimed artist, *Yaacov Agam* to transform the outer walls of Wellspring Market into a new landmark by means of symbolic rainbow colors.

1.1 The Floating Color Codes in Treasure Hill

The author was invited by the Taipei City Council as the artist in residency at the Treasure Hill Artist Village, where the author's major task was to develop a public art scheme specializing in environmental color, which combined colorists art creativity, survey, and education, launching a cross-seasonal field study and creativity in the aspects of past experience, current circumstances and future perspectives.

Due to the fact that the Treasure Hill area has witnessed the urban development in the Gong-guan district, the current environmental color survey and representation should also take history into consideration. To enforce cross-field cooperation and effectiveness, the team of the color survey was composed of the members from the field of arts, landscape architecture to architecture. During the period of the environmental color survey, the public could participate in workshops to further explore the environmental colors around the Treasure Hill area. Within a year, the environmental survey began and gradually built its database of historical and current colors.

1.2 The Heart Of Wellspring

Yaccob Agam (1928~), renown for his *Ope* and *Mechanic Art*, is adept at using color combination and developing durable viewing experience. In 2009, the Taipei City Council commissioned Yaccob to create the public art, *The Heart of Wellspring* for Wellspring Market beside the Gong-guan MRT station. Based on the concept of rainbow, the work gave the viewers diverse sensual experience using color gradation as a visual effect. From the left perspective, blue and white stripes alternate. From the frontal view, gradation of rainbow color is vividly reflected on the ocean waves. From the right angle, strong gradation of rainbow color again captures viewers' eyes. The work successfully transformed the old market (est. in 1953) into the landmark of Gong-guan's bustling shopping zone.



2 The color relationship between Taipei's Gong-guan district and public art

An urban transformation or landmark formation in the hands of artists and architects is a rather common form of urban reformation. With the policy of aesthetic lifestyle policy promoted by the Council for Cultural Affairs in 2009, the Urban Color Schemes has been highly concerned by the governing bodies. Nevertheless, there hasn't seemed to be any constructive progress in the execution of the Color schemes nor a solid consideration for the exact choice and usage of colors in public space. Even though there is a growing people-public art interaction in Taiwan's public space, environment color is often the "blind side" in a public area, and people are prone to ignore the visual value and effects of colors.

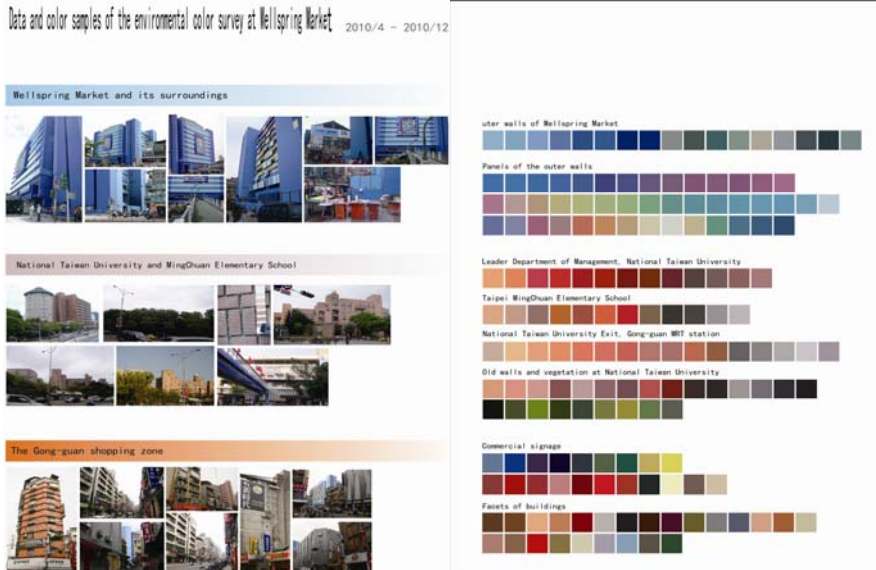
From April, 2010 to February, 2012, the survey continuously set up the data of environment color in Gong-guan. The research method comprised of references and field study of environmental color, sampling and filing color-related data which included investigation, collection, and representation of both natural and artificial colors. Moreover, the research also featured the induction and analysis of interview documents and assessment of the relationship and effectiveness among public art artists, viewers and overall environment.

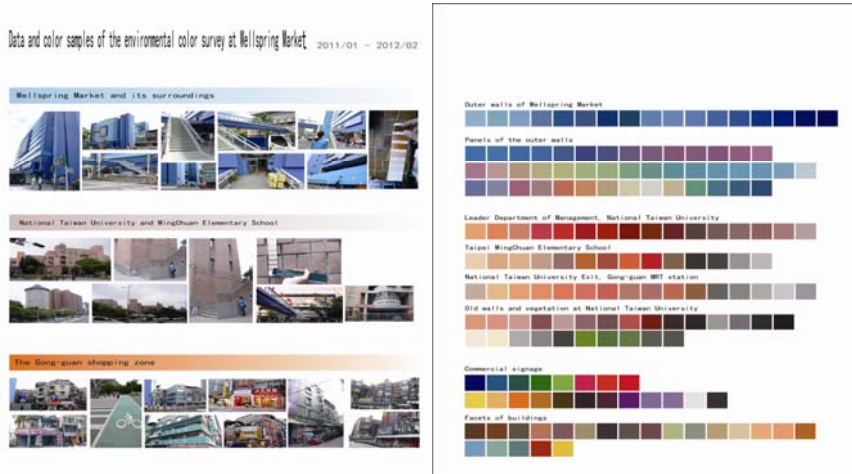
In different time and seasons, the research documented the changes in environmental color after the construction of The Heart of Wellspring at the outer walls of Wellspring Market. During the whole documentary, store owners and residents in the area were also being interviewed. Through the changes in color,

we are likely to have better insight into the new visual impact on the surroundings and the possibility of future public art's role in environmental color improvement.

3 Aftermath and Suggestions

The environmental color in the Gong-guan district contains a wide range of natural and artificial colors from coastal landscape, historic communities, schools, parks, squares, landscape architectures, public-owned buildings, shopping zones, and theme streets. The district has relatively more open accessibility for the public, and hence contains more elements and colors. Since colors don't stand alone and can't be assessed individually, the district surely deserves more attention and regulations. In the cultural and historical Treasure hill area, many "overlooked" colors in public space were revealed through the study of the surroundings' basic tone of color. Later, we added artistic, public, educational, and extensive values to the color scheme with art placement. We further bridged people's perception to colors and past experience through a series of color workshops, which aimed to encourage people's involvement in art activities in Gong-guan.





Through the public art project, *Floating Color Code it Treasure Hill*, it's concluded that environmental color should correspond to cultural preservation, and a sound communicative platform should be established for the residents, who are expected to express opinions, gain more sense of belongings to the reformed community. With the environmental chromatogram and color samples gathered from the research, we look forward to supporting culture and heritage conservation in Treasure Hill as well as setting a reference for future study of art's intervention in the environment.



Unlike the previous public art case, *The Heart of WellSpring*, which enters Gongguan's shopping zone solely as a landmark, *Color combinations* contains strong accent and its gigantic blue panel with the dominant color is meant to outstand and distinguish itself in the area. The work will surely affect the overall facet of the surroundings.

From the case of *The Heart of WellSpring*, we sincerely advise the governing bodies to practically integrate colors into people's lives, and further invite the public to take part in the discussion of color relationship between public and environmental color so as to further enhance cities identity and cultural value.

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