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COLOR

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THE USE OF COLOR IN OFFICE FURNITURE

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We consider the use of color absolutely fundamental to the design and construction of the new system of office furniture.

The conflict between our present mechanistic age, and the new age which is contemplated in the new system of furniture, reaches its apex in the question of color.

In other matters, layout, design, materials -- there is always a possibility of misunderstanding or ambiguity between the "old way" and the "new way". But, as we shall see, in the discussion of color, there is no possibility of misunderstanding or ambiguity. The issue is too clear and too sharp.

The issue arises through four facts.

1. Color, the beauty and unity of color, is fundamental to a persons well being. The work environment cannot be a genuinely happy place, which nourishes people emotionally, unless the color there has a special, very definite type of unity and depth.

2. This special unity of color is an objective quality, well known to the people of almost all human traditional cultures. However, it has been almost unknown in the 20th century. It is qualitatively different from the quality of color which we have come to recognise as bright, gay, joyful, or "well designed". It is also entirely different from the new use of color common in post-modern design.

3. This quality of color which does make such an enormous difference to the well-being of people, is a spiritual phenomenon. It cannot be produced mechanically, or by rules, or by design. It is something which appeals directly to a persons spirit, and it can only be produced by a human being, who makes judgement through his own spirit. It is therefore fundamentally human, and fundamentally NOT technological or mechanical. It cannot be incorporated in a mass produced solution, because it is, BY NATURE, different from the things which can be produced in this way.

It is this fact, above all, which makes it part of a "new vision" and a "new way".

4. The special quality of color, can only be produced in the place where it is going to be. It cannot be preprogrammed, or worked out at long distance. It can ONLY be created in response to the actual physical place itself, and must be so. This is because it depends on minutiae of judgement, which can only be made step by step, in the place. It is caused, empirically, because the interactions of color are extremely subtle. If the quality described above, is to be attained at all, it can only be attained by a process which takes all this fact into account.

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These facts are surprising, even for artists; and certainly for many lay people. They are, we imagine, inaccessible to managers at some large corporations like Lockheed. On the other hand, we believe they can be understood by some other corporations like Xerox or the Chemical one. We also believe it can be easily understood by many emerging small corporations in California and other similar markets.

We propose, therefore, that the customers of the new furniture, who follow the layout and choice process explained in our other manual, will be told these facts about color.

It will be made clear to them that they may, accept the consequences of these facts (which are explained below), or they may simply ignore them, and avoid the use of color altogether. If they wish to ignore them, they will then be given white furniture, or furniture of some other neutral color.

Possible statement to customers:

"It will not be helpful to have color in your office, unless you accept the reality of these four facts. These facts are fundamental, and empirical, they cannot be avoided. If you accept these facts, you may then use the color process which is offered by Haworth, as outlined below. On the other hand, if you cannot accept these facts, or do not want to accept their consequences, you may obtain the new line of furniture in white, or some other neutral color".

For those customers who accept these facts, the color process for their office will then work as follows.

1. Someone does color studies of the office. These are rough studies. They are done after furniture is installed in neutral color. The person who does them is part of the team of craftsmen who build and install the furniture.
2. Color mockups go ahead, with painted paper, and other materials.
3. Then colors themselves are produced. Colors may be produced by a combination of processes:
 - a. Painting on wood or other surfaces.
 - b. Use of colored materials, such as cloth etc, that are ordered according to the color work.
 - c. Painting on paper, or glueing paper.

Materials like glass, plastic, steel, brass, will tend to be independent of color, and act as part of the neutral background of materials, within which color work is being done. Colored versions of these materials will not be used (i.e. factory painted steel, or moulded plastic of a certain color). These kinds of colors are too remote from spirit of the craftsman, to make spiritual color possible. Also, the fine tuning, and subtlety of the process of creating the harmony among the colors, and the fact that this process must happen in the site, makes it too difficult to get actual harmony if factory made colors are included.

4. Customers themselves may play a role in the process of getting color. Their role should take the form of actually doing color, not merely making comments.
5. It is made clear, from the beginning, that this process has no resemblance to "interior decorating".

Interior decorating is a technological product, without soul. It is based on machine, money, and image. The color to be produced in this process, is based on inner harmony, and welfare of the spirit.

The process will only be able to take this form if the customers and workers completely accept this situation, and intentionally choose it.

6. In the case where customers DO choose this process, some form of education may be made available, to give them a more complete picture of the meaning of the color, and the process.

We believe that color plays an enormous role in the indoor environment of the future.

To say it in one sentence, with an image:

We imagine a workplace, with a riot of subtle colors, looking like a fifteenth century turkish miniature.

The following practical problems must be taken into account.

MOST BASIC LEVEL OF ANALYSIS

~~to departments~~

1. Each office must have its "own" colors. There cannot be a standardised one, it would be dead and horrible. *(This does not refer to a small office - but to a large group.)*
2. Thus, each one has colors created specially for it, and growing out of the situation, light, atmosphere, and particulars of the people.
3. Even the colors of individual pieces of furniture cannot be mass produced. They must grow out of the total color harmony of the place, as a painting grows.
4. This raises enormous problems of production, which must be acknowledged.

DISTRIBUTION OF COLORS AND COST.

5. There must be a distribution of colors, like hierarchy of colors. This means each office will have one dominant color; then perhaps two secondary colors which we can call #2 and #3; and a variety of small patches of bright color.

6. This also corresponds to economic reality. The cost of handpainting each piece would be impossible. But if 80% of color is first color, then after that only 20% needs to be handpainted. And even in that 20%, perhaps 15% are color #2, 5% color #3, and thus only the last 5% is very small stuff with totally unpredictable colors, which someone really has to think out afresh.

All this creates some hope that economics of handpainting might work.

PHYSICAL TECHNIQUES

7. Gesso over the surface, then handpainted gouache, with a finish of varnish, is the best method. It is the most alive.

CHOSEN PIECES

8. Certain pieces of furniture in the catalogue may be the ones which obviously attract color detail. For example, the frieze will be best of colored. Perhaps there is always color round the doors. Other items which tend to have several small colors can be known in advance, and color detail always concentrates towards these items.

THE MAIN PROBLEM

9. The main problem lies in the fact that inner light, the real thing, ~~is always~~ ^{can only be} created as inspiration in a real place.

At first sight ^{this} ~~it~~ seems totally inconsistent with the conditions of the technological age.

How can it be reconciled.

Who will do it, how will it be done, and what are ordering and manufacturing conditions which can allow it.

Is there a painter, who does it in each workplace. Is the person who makes this, part of the production subsidiary that produces and assembles the furniture locally. This is the fundamental question.

And the answer is, it cannot be avoided that somehow this furniture, if color is to be real, MUST HAVE A HUMAN TOUCH. It cannot be a technological factory product.

10. ARE RULES POSSIBLE

Is there any formulation of rules, codes, etc, which can partially help to produce the color.

Or must every decision, every choice, be made by human eye and human artist.

This is the first critical question which must be answered, before we can go ahead and define a workable process.