Work Together
Colorist and Lighting designer, from the material to the immaterial

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ABSTRACT
The color chart is a tool to help, to advice and to prioritize data on the built heritage of our cities. The colorist works daily, most often in a position to preserve the colour identity of the geographic area, on color and material requirements for the facades. This posture of conservation of built heritage can be enriched by a double view, that of the intervention on the light on the built infrastructure. Thus, in active collaboration with a lighting designer, the colorist may consider ephemeral interventions on traditional buildings, without altering the material heritage, by a clever manipulation of light. Indeed, natural light, as well as artificial, has always been an ally in the development of the architectural space (from the windows of our churches to current glass made buildings). The colorist and the lighting designer also play a role in the contemporary architecture. Each one is trying to go as far as possible in the capture of natural light and its interaction with the visible materiality of the building.

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1. The development of current city is indeed driven by a collective desire to respect its history and historical architecture: the color and materials, fundamentals data of the essence of the architecture, are thus more and more often protected and managed by charters and other tools to avoid losing the historical and cultural data. The concept of local color, as well as that of "the geography of color" (a word created by Jean-Philippe Lenclos) describes itself as follows: each geographic area, its geology, its climate, its light, has special characteristics from a chromatic point view. The sociocultural attitudes added to these characteristics have an impact on the built landscape. This notion is fundamental because it allows to transmit this culture of color that vehicles the historical strength of the city, and the collective will to preserve the heritage, too often ephemeral.

The Chromatic Charter, often attached to the Local Town Planning, is a didactic tool to help choosing colors for the façade. So, it has the function of preventing the worst, drawing from the history of a place a color palette which respects the traditional architecture, but also offers something new for the future. The task is difficult as every constraint necessarily inhibits the creativity and architects have sometimes difficulties to deal with it. Coming from a very sharp field analysis (countertypes, stratigraphies, analysis of architectural characteristics...), the chromatic charter is a passage from the heritage identity to the upcoming identity. It works with the past, present and
future and provides a tool for technological as well as aesthetical intervention on the facades of a city. The Lighting Development Plan can, in some cases, position itself beyond this "local color" and breaks the codes to reproduce during the night an idealized daytime vision. In this case, the lighting designer, whose role is to create a complete requirement tool, which shows how to integrate both the useful light and the event light, will have the opportunity to dialogue with the contemporary creation without reaching the facades in their material identity, simply because its tool is immaterial.

Obviously, his work will have a strong impact on the way of seeing the city, and even if immaterial, the light at night may affect the identity of a building, or the tranquility of residents. In this aspect, this immateriality is not without consequences.

This work, perhaps the one that Francoise Choay in the allegory of the heritage called “a graphic play or even plastic, which breaks with the practical and utilitarian purpose of the architecture, and that enrolled it in the aesthetics intellectualist of the derision and provocation, specific to the contemporary visual arts”\(^1\) is certainly a form of “cult of the heritage» which reinvents the very function of the built infrastructure and the way we look at him.

However, in a clever association between materiality respectful of local know-how, and immateriality source of surprises and affirmation of certain features of the building (by underlining some parts of the building for example or by introducing color of lights that transform the building) this «cult of the heritage» should be able to preserve the core identity of the building while giving it an event face.

In the city of Toulouse in the southwest of France, where the brick is a tradition and where the Capitouls, since the Middle Age, have made the fortune of the city by cultivating the dyeing pastel, a color chart and a light development planning was established since many years.

A non-collaborative work between colorist and lighting designer, but a work that in both cases took into account the issue of color and local identity.

The chromatic charter which specifies both color coatings and paintings to be applied to the door and windows, was created by a colorist, who opted for a uniformization of the town by the color. On the woodwork and ironwork, a palette ranging from blue to green (as a reference to the pastel) was prescribed and some more traditional colors (such as red, brown and gray), were excluded from the range of

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prescription. On the facades, brick or equivalent color was prescribed an almost mandatory. It seems that this choice was based on a posture of patrimonial preservation which “denaturalizes” the city in the sense that instead of evolving, it freezes to become a museum showcase, a cultural and touristic object, linked to the imaging industry before being this incarnation of the men establishment history (Fig. 1).

Gradually, the city center of Toulouse was dressed in shades of blue and gray on its balconies and ironwork, giving it sweet contrasts, very sophisticated but also very different from the force coming from the earth that was worn before by the red and brown present on doors and shutters. Here, it is clear that the charter had a negative role because it transforms the city. The cult of the heritage, as Françoise Choay presents it, was in fact detrimental to the city because it has lost what made its authenticity.

The mayor’s office, after a while, decided not to make mandatory the use of the color charter to solve the issue, but the face of the city have been changed.

Regarding the light, Roger Narboni was appointed to lead the project in 2003 -2004. Once the Light Devlopment Planning done, the mayor stepped in and chose a very didactic work taking into account the built environment in all of these dimensions. A real process based on diversity has brought a real aesthetic interest to the city.

The colorist’s approach has taken a new look, because the city has stated its ambition to show an innovative face constantly renewed, as the face of modernity.

On the way, walkers, tourists or Toulouse inhabitants, spectator of the night city, have gained a scenographed vision of the city.
The Light Planning set up on outstanding buildings, but also as a marker of the urban space, has kept shadows areas and mild enhancement of buildings by a light sometimes neutral (Metal Halide 3000 °K white hot for pedestrian areas). This allowed the material (brick) to be magnified night and day (Fig 2).

2. “Have you ever seen, you who read me, the color of darkness into the light of a flame?”

We analyze two specific cases of enhancement of Toulouse heritage, three monuments included in the light development plan (PLUM), that staged more than forty places and landmark buildings in Toulouse. The Pont Neuf and the Basilica of Saint Sernin, two monuments of major interest located in different parts of the historic area of the city.

The lighting engineer from Toulouse, Joel Lavergne, directed his thoughts to a night-time partial colorization of public space thanks to LED technology. Beyond the general instructions from the SDAL indicating the temperature of the light, the cold white being assigned to “underscore the architectural point of interest”, the PLUM offers specific stagings of outstanding buildings and spaces. The city of Toulouse “do not want a strict alignment between PLUM. From the diversity of these actions may rise both a real clarity of identity aspects of the city and a particular aesthetic interest, original ... and reversible.

First of all, the Pont Neuf, the oldest bridge in Toulouse and one of the oldest in France, completed in 1632, after a century of construction. 220 meters long, it spans the Garonne in the loop connecting the Place Esquirol to the Cours Dillon (Fig 3).

From the aesthetic point of view emerges from the bridge a massiveness lighten its irregular seven arches. The red brick of the masonry is more or less visible, the light and blonde stone gives to both sides of the bridge a graphical look, coming from the contrast between the two materials. The building fits perfectly in the landscape of “la ville rose”: docks stretch their red-orange bricks bands, subtle tones enhanced by the changing water sometimes awaken the sleepy red, sometimes brings out the white accents by a clear / dark effect. A beautiful fluidity also born in the wedding between the bridge and its reflection in the waters of the Garonne.

To this day vision corresponds a rewriting during the night. So is described the lighting of the bridge by Joel Lavergne: “The bridge is now put in light from the interior in order to magnify its power by restoring volume, depth, height, adding a fourth dimension, that of time, symbolized by the color changes in interaction with the aquatic environ-
The color is used to sustain the bridge at night, makes it laugh, makes it smile. By using dynamic lighting (RGB LED projector, DMX programming), in a “negative” effect, the light fills the arches materializing the emptiness, obscuring the “full” keeping them in the shade. The light effects on the bridge vary by alternating colors ranging from white to red in five minutes. During important events, the play of color is tailored to be in tune with the festivities. From the use of colors is born a scenography whose symbols can communicate messages to the inhabitants.

This intervention seems to be willing to “personify” the bridge. The distance from its brick and stone materials is obvious. Here the aim is not to transcribe literally the bridge in its daytime character but to reinterpret it artificially in a contemporary writing that offers another aspect of its “personality”. Changing in relation with the moods of the city, receptacle of a changing world where silence and stillness of the night are the theater of the great characters of the city. Playful figure, reassuring, even magical or mysterious, the Pont Neuf is an architectural object that lets itself colorized so that at night, when the waters of the Garonne turn black, it becomes a colorful animated heartbeat signal to walkers even when the city sleeps.

Another intervention, another concept with the Basilica of Saint Sernin ((Fig 4) which highlighted was designed by Roger Narboni. Symbol of the southern Roman architecture, built from the Xth century, the building is constructed in brick from Toulouse and white stone. It has an octagonal tower organized into five levels with a boom that peaked at 64 meters. A true landmark in the urban space, the symbol of Toulouse, the bias here is to enlighten the religious building in a more “natural” means with a projector IM-3000 ° K and LED strip. Two specific treatments are used: one licks the brick walls surrounding the architecture with the warm light of a setting sun, the other highlights from a light source of a cold white the bays of the tower. The tower stands out from the darkness like a “candle”. This light writing is thus more liturgical.

Between the Pont Neuf and the Basilica of Saint Sernin, the dichotomy of interpretation is straight-
forward and reveals an unholy transcription and a holy transcription by the lighting. Between the established framework of a religious space and that of urban space less codified, the use of color light as material to enhance the architecture is the vector of messages loaded with cultural and religious symbols to serve the heritage, transmitting the codes of a urbanity that now needs to magnify, view, read what it was and what it wants to be.

CONCLUSION

When making new neighborhoods in the cities, the work of architects and “city makers” is often managed by companies that bring together the various projects to give an overall coherence to the new neighborhood. Sometimes built with almost no work on the patrimonial identity or prospective of the site, these projects are often highly innovative, although very different.

By an experimental way, SETOMIP a society in Toulouse, has refer to a colorist agency : Nacarat, in order to make a work of formal coherence of the various projects set up for a new area using color.

This work is based on a methodology wich respects the specific architectural work while creating a creative and spatial identity link that allows future residents of the neighborhood feeling in a place that carries its own story and that is talking to him, in which he feels not lost in a lush diversity, but proud of his district he recognizes as his own.

After a careful analysis of each architectural project, colorists have achieved a synthesis of materials and colors that were set up in the neighborhood (from brick to coat, through the colors of colored lights and plants.)

This analysis also included a reflection on the plastic space and the space for pedestrians. (What impact would have buildings on the environment in a specific place?). Here the contribution of the color and material specialist is precious.

Indeed, it has the power away from the physical constraints linked to architectural practice, to question the space with a particular view, a retreat beyond the technical issues, toward a fundamentality of the look. Henry Maldiney evokes indeed the look of the child “who climbs up a tree to pursue a bird, and then suddenly in the burst of a new light, (he is) invaded by the very space of the world. “ This look may at times be the colorist’s one in the simplicity of what color brings to the world. Simple approach to addressing what is essential.

This work, in a transversal approach of practices, creates the tangible link between the projects.

Thus, the colorist gives birth to both a synthesis of projects and he establishes a urban scenography : colour light that gives the area a strong identity.

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