

# colourings

between 1979-1981 and then again 1989-1991 i gave a course at the frankfurt art academy for young, newly enrolled students. it was called: "simple colour and form experiments". i had no other intention than to teach young people a candid relationship to colour. beyond ideas of grand art beautiful colours were to be juxtaposed. for this purpose the surface of half a din a4 sheet of paper was divided into eight equal fields. the task was to place beautiful colours next to one another using oil pastel crayons. each student was to assort the colours they perceived, based solely on feeling, to be beautiful and which harmonised with one another. colours were to be made to sing. the difference between randomly assembling colours and genuine colouration was to be elaborated. colours were grasped as sounds. colour harmonies were constructed. pure joy in configuring colours was to be aroused and nurtured, similar to how harmonies are sought out at the organ or piano, and once found brought into consonance. bruckner apparently often joined together only pure triads on the organ. in music the laws of harmony are stricter, almost mathematical. it is different in painting, here in the first instance there is no precisely manageable harmonic laws, no strict harmonics teaching is even possible. it is very much left to subjective feeling to decide which colouration is beautiful, which colours emanate an ecstatic glow, which radiate what is harmonic. nonetheless there is agreement, otherwise it would be impossible to determine quality in painting, in the art of colouration. people speak about the rapturous colours emanating from paintings by titian, tintoretto, veronese or rubens, or we are enthralled with the colour glow in the paintings of el greco, the golden yellow hues and red-green luminosity of rembrandt's works. an extremely sensitive delicateness of colour is discernible in vermeer, velasquez and watteau. the impressionists reveal a new, unprecedented colouration. van gogh then raises this colouration into an ecstatic blaze. i tried to convey to the students my experiences with colouration by judging their work from my viewpoint. there is little one can generalise. colour harmony arises when mostly similar colours are juxtaposed. for instance red and orange hues, yellow and orange hues, violet merging into red, violet merging into blue, yellow into green, green into blue, cold hues merging into warm red ones. the task is to then make one or more of the colours within the harmonic construct sing. another possibility is to generate an effect for a colour through dissonances, through complementary colours. sometimes a heady, intoxicating glimmer is created. but not much more can be said about a hard-and-fast rule. at times everything turns out differently and has to be decided on and configured all over again. the final connections in the harmonic, in form will always remain a secret. despite the seemingly ordered rules in music ultimately even there anything is possible.

i have always dreamed of developing an art based solely on harmonics, rhythm and melody are dispensed with, only pure sound, the consonance, the colour, the purity of colour, the beauty of a juxtaposed and simultaneous sounding of colour, the mixture, the glaze. it can be heard, it is almost irrelevant if i mean music or painting, if i mean the art of tones or that of colours. in both cases one speaks of tones and colours, of harmonies and dissonances. both mediums intermesh, the differences are minimal. the tones of music unfurl in time, but layer in one another, intermingle into a harmony in a moment. painting unfurls across a surface, often simulates the space, the colours (hues) intermingle in the viewer's brain into a harmony (to a harmony of disharmonies). it is self-evident that art not only knows of a pure law of harmonies, but often on the other hand that first the merging of the harmonic and the dissonances gives rise to genuine form, the artwork. in music i have tried to realise my ideas by simply playing (bringing to sound) only long-drawn-out notes on the piano, harmonium and organ. these studies were and are of great importance for the music of the o.m. theater. the vision of the spheres of music so crucial to me can be realised through the ideas of harmonics. savouring harmonies over the space of time. a long time is needed for registering and enjoying harmonic constellations, thus the long-held notes, the slow layering of sounds. harmonics has been savoured far too seldom, enjoyed in music up until now, a rapturous, meditative pleasure in harmonic backgrounds is to be striven for. the fullness of time, the endless "space of time" that is eternity is at hand.

over the course of his long lifework albers found concentrically arranged colour squares to be the simplest form for representing, for illustrating colour harmonies. i'd like to go a step further and see the bare colour scale as the most ideal demonstration of chromatic constellations and harmonic relationships.

now all is ready for the students to delve unencumbered into the almost endless combination possibilities and indulge in the plethora of harmonies. dealing with and exploiting colour, a sense of colour is to be acquired for composing and painting pictures later. pure colour, the harmony of colour, beyond complicated artistic

organisation, is capable of imparting health, calm, poise, vitality, joy and intoxication, as well as feelings, sentiments like sorrow, joy, pain, torment, angst, love. catastrophes like injury, death, destruction, processes like healing, recovery, resurrection can be represented through colour progressions. illness, injury, destruction and death are representable. in a final step i took up the synaesthetic ideas of the o.m. theater. i had the students assemble colour series which were supposed to express a certain smell or scent. or colour series were formed and the smell or taste matching the colour was chosen. we discussed and assessed all of the sheets together (as mentioned, without a precise scientific evaluation system). nonetheless, as our experiments progressed we reached agreement more often, although not firmly anchored our judgements became increasingly fine-tuned, precise. i was delighted at the results produced by the students, even if they did not appreciate the purpose of their activity at the beginning. they'd come to the academy to learn and practice complicated grand art, and in my course all they did was produce simple colour scales. i'm almost tempted to say that they weren't yet mature enough for the simple setting of colours into relationships, which at the same time goes to the very root, but ultimately, so i believe, the significance of what we did was appreciated by everyone!

the quality of the results led me to exploit the general listening in (the sounding out) to the human sensibility for colour for the colour theory of the o.m. theater. at some stage i'd like to compile the best results of the students into a book so as to point out the chromatic projections of the o.m. theater and the role colours play within the fabric of the o.m. theater. i consider this colour course to be the exposition of a demonstration of pure colour, the colour harmonic for the o.m. theater.