

New Chromatic Taxonomy on Plants and Colors of the Former ENI Village by Edoardo Gellner in Corte di Cadore

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Abstract: This art project, by means of an empirical and experiential research, aspires to visually transfer the relationship that the colors and the architecture of the former ENI Village in Corte di Cadore, designed by Edoardo Gellner, share with the natural environment that surrounds it. The artistic research is based on and expresses the need to proceed by freely cataloging the vegetation that embraces the buildings that make up the village and experiences, in the choice of colors made by Gellner, a particular correspondence with Goethe's "Theory of colors". In conjunction with my artistic research and the production of the images, where the plants are removed from their natural context, an applied study which envisages the design of a flip-open table came to life.

Key words: Art project, Edoardo Gellner, architecture, colors, ENI village, environment.

1. Introduction

This research is the result of an art residency for *Progettoborca*, a territorial enhancement and re-functionalization project activated in 2014 on the former ENI village of Corte di Cadore, whose goal is to develop cultural and identity redefinition researches. *Progettoborca* is a branch of *Dolomiti Contemporanee* (2011), an environment reconfigurator that, operating through contemporary art and culture, provides concrete impulses to the areas of the Belluno and Friulian Dolomites.

The study (2020-2021) focuses and investigates the chromatisms that characterize the architecture of the ENI village and put them in relation with the natural environment created during the construction of the village. "The colour scheme, based on one of these three colours (blue, yellow or red) that characterizes the interiors and furnishings of a particular cottage is repeated at the exterior in the panels and in the architectural details" [1].

Preminent in this work of Gellner is "the constant jump in scale between the details and the general, between the interior and the exterior, between the built and the natural environment" [1]. I have recognized and adopted this approach to develop my research.

Colors are therefore used as fundamental elements that organically unify in an osmotic mutual influence the buildings, the natural environment and the interiors. My goal was to create a contemporary visual project and an applied study to synthesize Gellner's thinking. From his chromatic choices Gellner excludes green, simply because it is already present: I placed the plant world, emblematically represented by the color green, in relation to the color component he adopted.

2. Method and Research

The first step of the process was to extract colors out of the building facades taking into account different qualities of light (Figs. 1 and 2). The result was a palette that I used to create backgrounds where the plant world finds a new setting (Figs. 3-6).

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research fields: visual languages, the creation of imaginaries, the relationship between reality and subjectivity.



Fig. 1 Sampling colors at the former ENI Village.

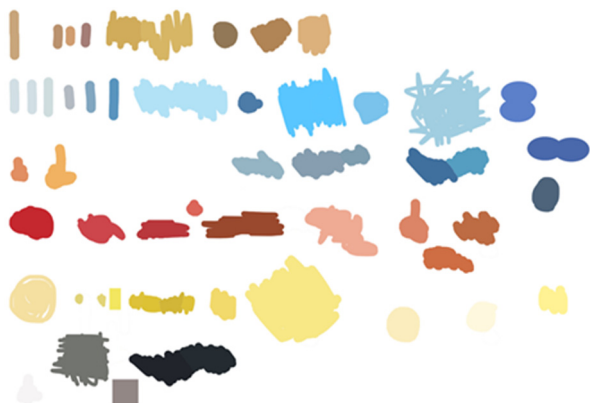


Fig. 2 Digital palette of sampled colors.

In general, every time we look at the color of an object, a wall or a car, we have the arrogance of wanting to define it. That is, we tend to reduce it into a formula or to combine it with a code, in a nutshell we have the habit of abstracting color from the context in which it is found in order to try to objectify it.

We are inclined to do the same with the colors used by Gellner for the architectures that make up the ENI village, it is natural to enclose them in a static collection of samples and archive them there, but observation and experience reveal so frankly and almost banally that even the apparently static dyes of the buildings vary



Fig. 3 Hazelnut.

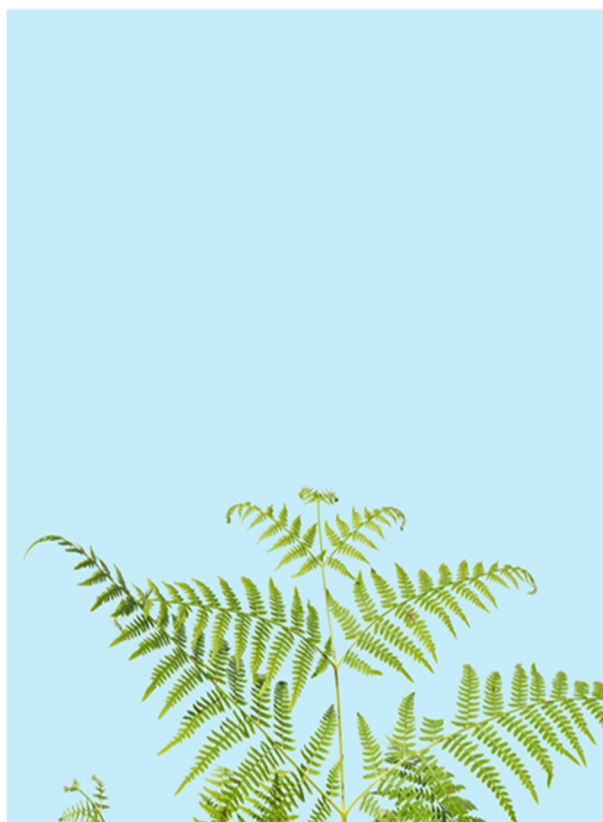


Fig. 4 Fern.

dynamically as the light changes. So I recorded colors photographing them with different quality of lights and shadows.

Goethe said that the phenomenon of color formation takes place in the turbidity that acts through light and shadow, between light and dark and in “The Theory of Colors”, yellow and blue are considered the representatives of light and darkness. Again according to Goethe’s qualitative thinking, purple, or red, is born from the dynamic combination of yellow and blue. Red is the result of a shining encounter of positive and ascending polarity of the chromatic force.

On the other hand, the meeting of blue and yellow that generates green is different. In this case green is born from an atomistic union which creates a sacrifice of both of these two colors which, by aggregating, mix mechanically. I found a curious coincidence when, carrying on with my research and going up to the campsite to sample the tones and densities of the colors present there, I once again realized that the wooden huts, as well as being white, are actually yellow, blue and red. As already mentioned above, Gellner chose his colors with the intention of creating relationships between the natural environment and architecture through the hues. I deduce that it is precisely to underline the decisive role that color can play in architecture that Gellner seems to want to pay homage to the colors of the area through their presence at the ENI Village.

So that, in finding an expressive modality that could show this relationship materialized by Gellner in his architecture waiting to be surrounded by the greenery that would develop over the years, I also concentrated on the plants.

In my investigation there is no taxonomic or scientific approach (if not partial or incidental), in fact the photographs I have made, although they depict the plant world through an orderly portion of the plant removed from its natural context, show the close relationship that the latter maintains with the colors used by Gellner.

At a second glance, however, the synthesis that I have created potentially contains a decorative motif that has proved to be important for further development of the research which I will discuss later.

I believe that colors have their own voice, that is, they are vectors and manifestations of signs of deep natural and organic processes that far exceed any need for a functional order of the forms that display them. I transferred this element of reflection and made it derive from considering the bodies of the buildings of the Village as places of emanation of color, precisely in the sense just explained above.

In fact, “The characteristic features of the form have a particular morphological value which cannot be understood either with the function of preserving life, or with that of manifesting changes in intimate moods. This morphological value makes visible to us the special nature of each particular organism. The proper qualities, present in the invisible structure of the living substance, i.e. the protoplasm, of a certain species make their influence felt in all the reactions of the blood and also determine the peculiar way of behaving of the species itself; these qualities become evident, expressing themselves in the external appearance. The Dutch Buytendijk, [...] once called this meaning of their aspect “*exhibited value of existence*”. I called it the “*value of presentation (Darstellungswert)*”. Placing the emphasis on the value of presentation should draw our gaze back to the most significant property of organic forms, which is that of making manifest, in the language of the senses, the peculiar nature of individual living beings and to bring, of this nature, direct testimony in their particular shapes” [2] (Fig. 6).

Therefore, if in the forms and functionality of the organic architecture in the village buildings we can recognize their openness towards the search for relationships with the surrounding nature, we can also realize that the use of colors is the tool that allows all of this to be achieved. In fact, colors are the symbolic and symbiotic presence, the vital expression of the natural environment of this territory and, at the same



Fig. 5 Red Lily.



Fig. 6 Rosehip.

time, as suggested by Portmann, they are the elements that can make the buildings of the Gellner Village more organic and therefore more expressive.

3. An Applied Study: The *Ribalta* Gellner, a Flip-Open Table

La *Ribalta* comes to life from the same process, that is by having a direct experience of the place, living and observing it, identifying with it.

Following up the constant jump in scale between the details and the general, the interior and the exterior, that characterize Gellner's work, I imagined the design of a removable and foldable flip-open table to be positioned on the wooden planks that make up the parapet of the livable balcony of which each cottage in the ENI Village has (Fig. 7).

I thought of a 60/80 cm square functional modules with a thickness of about 2.5 cm. Normally every accessory that is used in the house must then be stored somewhere. To combine this, and overcome possible space problem and of course because of the aesthetic aspect of images, I thought the flip-open table should also have the function of furnishing the house as if it were a painting. In fact, the images created for the artistic project are inserted on the surface of the *Ribalta*, which here transfer Gellner's thought into everyday objects. Once it has been used the flip-open table can be repositioned on the internal walls of the house, just like a work of art.

The image must have a very high print quality to justify its double use as a furniture and as an object for the home. The surface must be transparent, waterproof and resistant to use and time, easy to clean, easy to install on the terrace and easy to store at home.

It was therefore necessary to find a simple and elegant solution to hook the flap to the balcony planks so that the mechanism was hidden.

Furthermore, the same mechanism must have been used to hang the flap on the lodgings applied to the walls of the cottage (if not positioned too high, the flap could serve as a support surface, or shelf inside the house) (Fig. 8).

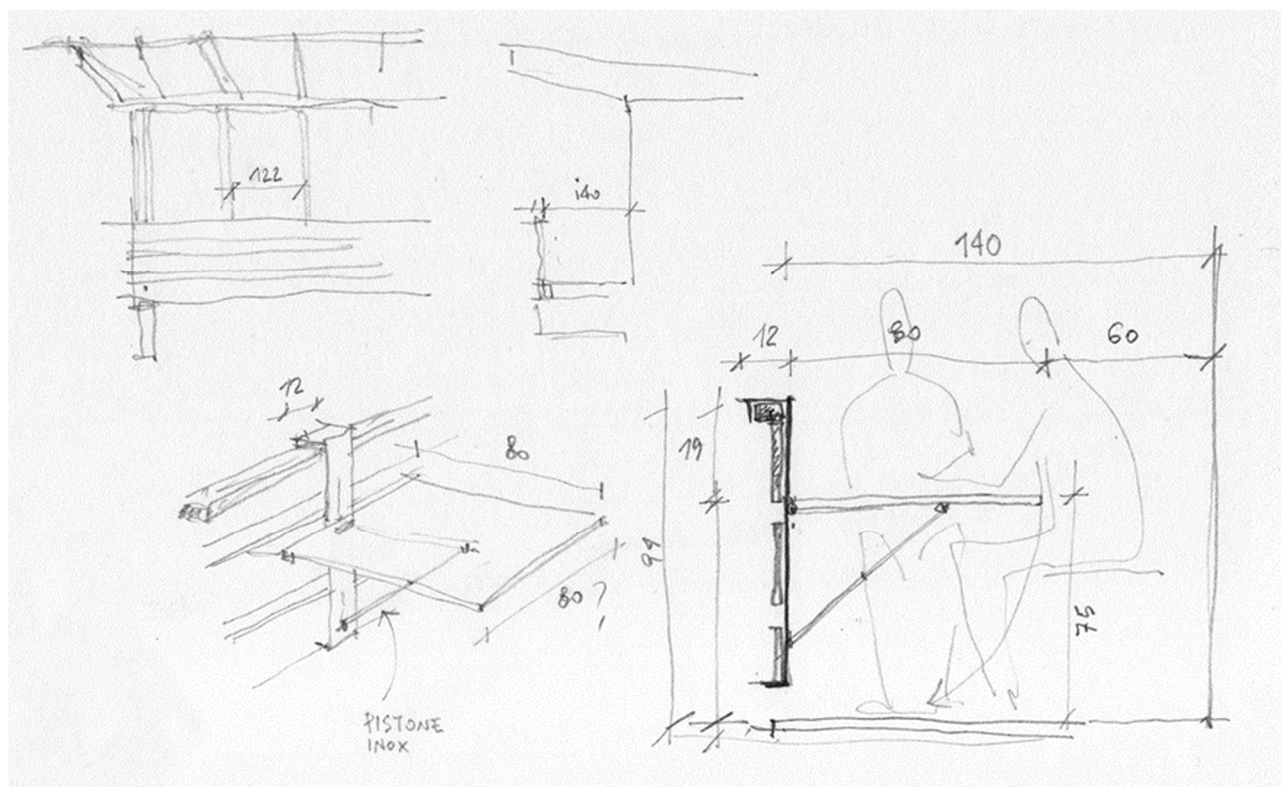


Fig. 7 Measures and possible solutions for the installation of the *Ribalta* in the balcony. Drawing by Arch. Edoardo Turozzi.

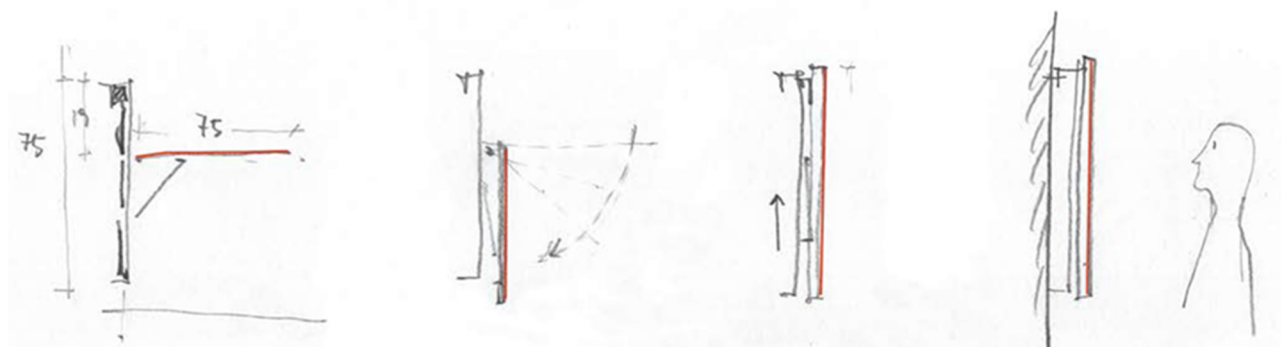


Fig. 8 The *Ribalta* in its two locations: positioned in the balcony and hanging on a wall. Drawing by Arch. Edoardo Turozzi.

4. Conclusions

As part of *Progettoborca*, other authors and artists approached Gellner's chromatisms.

Rob van den Berg worked between 2015 and 2019, creating with his artistic practice a visual translation of the aesthetics and method that Gellner adopted in the former ENI village. In the children's camp building, van den Berg collected the fallen plaster, found an old paper and with the "mould and deckle" technique and, through the use of a loom, he (re)created a brand new

paper. The measurements of the sheets correspond to those of the square windows that give rhythm to the space of the buildings: by means of this project, that owns a regenerative matrix, the artist wants to underline the continuous dialogue of the village with the environmental context. Ilaria Fasoli (Iuav, Venice), attending a workshop curated by Marta Allegri and sponsored by the Academy of Fine Arts of Venice in 2015, describes her project as follows: "Behind the dormitory complex, in the western area of the children's camp building, a particular color of the plasters in shades of yellow and

pink catch the eye, shaping the idea of a photographic observatory. That is the approach photography entertains with nature and architecture, it allows you to document, know, understand. On the sides of the steps that lead to the dormitory there is also a luxuriant flora of mosses, lichens and *Carlina* flowers; the intent is to expand and accentuate the growth of the local flower, treating it as its own, personal and intimate garden.” In her words the exploratory-cognitive role that photography plays is evident.

In 2017, during the “Abitare Condiviso” seminar, an activity promoted by the University of Padua and curated by Professor Edoardo Narne, around forty students were accompanied by teachers, tutors and a carpenter, in a process of active experimentation through which they conceived, developed and finally created, versatile prototypes of seats and furnishings and Magic Boxes—on a 1:1 scale which also adopt the colors present in the village.

Valeria Pin and Sebastiano Pallavisini in 2023 also used peeled plaster to produce wax crayons with which, together with self-produced charcoal, they drew cave paintings on the roofs of the children’s camp buildings. In the same year Sara Magni, a student of the Bologna Academy of Fine Arts collects and catalogs Gellner’s pigments and dyes some weaving threads.

All these art projects are regenerative and the regeneration they aim, in almost all cases, is pushed by the use of colors Gellner made. Thus, up until now, there had been no photographic research that studied and closely related the natural environment with the chromatic one created by Gellner. This project is born from a direct experience that, enriched with theoretic

thoughts, gives rise to a new photographic aesthetic of the former ENI village. My work has always focused on giving art a sort of utility. In fact, to me, the applied study is the most important aspect of this research. The flip-open table combines both the artistic research with an object that approaches Gellner’s creative thinking. Functionality, symbiosis with nature, places experience, research of quality and care are all ingredients present in the design and construction of the village which have been borrowed from me and from other artist involved in Gellner’s chromatisms. *La Ribalta* also aligns perfectly with the ongoing regeneration activity carried out by *Dolomiti Contemporanee* and, compared to other research carried out in this sense, it is designed exclusively to add functionality to the use of the cottages of the former ENI village.

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