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## RED IN ARCHITECTURE – FROM SYMBOL OF POWER TO LANGUAGE OF EMOTION: HISTORY AND POST- MODERN INTERPRETATIONS OF COLOR AS A FORM OF EXPRESSION\*

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### CZERWIEN W ARCHITEKTURZE – OD SYMBOLU SIŁY DO JĘZYKA EMOCJI: HISTORIA I PONOWOCZESNE INTERPRETACJE KOLORU JAKO FORMY WYRAZU

#### Abstract

The article analyzes the role of the color red in architecture from antiquity to the present day. The aim was to show its function and ideological message depending on the era, style, and cultural context. The paper presents design intentions, motivations, and strategies. A literature review and qualitative visual analysis were applied to interpret the symbolism of red in a chronological framework. The results indicate its multidimensionality rooted in history and explain its ongoing popularity among designers.

*Keywords: architectural theory, color psychology, cultural context, red color, symbolism of colors*

#### Streszczenie

Artykuł analizuje rolę koloru czerwonego w architekturze od czasów starożytnych po współczesność. Celem było ukazanie funkcji i przekazu ideowego w zależności od epoki, stylu i kontekstu kulturowego. Przedstawiono intencje, motywacje oraz strategie projektowe. Zastosowano metodę badań literaturowych oraz jakościową analizę wizualną w celu interpretacji symboliki czerwieni w ujęciu chronologicznym. Wyniki wskazują na wielowymiarowość zakorzenioną w historii oraz wyjaśniają popularność tego koloru wśród projektantów.

*Słowa kluczowe: teoria architektury, psychologia koloru, kontekst kulturowy, kolor czerwony, symbolika barw*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Color is a visual element that contributes to the atmosphere of a space, influences its emotional and symbolic perception, and also serves as an informational and orientational element. In architecture, color often carries cultural, religious, and political meanings, as well as a tool

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for shaping the perception and identity of a place. As architectural theorist Juhani Pallasmaa emphasizes, architecture affects the senses in a multidimensional way, and color becomes one of the languages that influence the user<sup>1</sup>. According to psychology, colors have a real impact on people's mood and behavior, but also on the evaluation of a space. Red evokes strong emotions, attracts attention, and can stimulate or alert. Physiologically, it exhibits stimulating properties, as it raises blood pressure and heart rate, and can intensify feelings of tension. Due to these characteristics, it is often used in architecture where the designed space is intended to have a strong impact on the viewer.

Across various eras and cultures, the color red has played a significant role, both materially and symbolically, serving as an indispensable part of the architectural narrative. Furthermore, contemporary design projects demonstrate that architects often employ red as a means of expressive spatial impact, as a dominant accent in form, overall structure, or detail, lending a building a powerful visual message.

Bernard Tschumi, one of the leading architects of deconstructivism, expressed the belief that red is not a color, arguing that the use of this color expressed a manifestation and a deeper message. In his view, it is not merely about aesthetic expressiveness but rather a design gesture that disrupts the neutrality of space and introduces emotional tension. Tschumi used red as a rhetorical tool, demonstrating how red in architecture can function as a performance, an ideological vehicle, and simultaneously catalyze emotions and feelings in the perception of space.<sup>2</sup>

The choice of red as the subject of architectural analysis in this study is therefore not coincidental. This color, exceptionally loaded with meaning, is an excellent example of a color whose functions go beyond purely aesthetic meanings.

The main goal of this study was to identify and analyze the uses of red in architecture throughout history. Particular emphasis was placed on examining the functions this color has served and how its meaning has evolved depending on the era, cultural context, and design intentions. Red was treated not only as a means of artistic expression but also as a carrier of social and political meanings, making it an interesting tool for analyzing architecture in its multidimensional context.

The study employed qualitative methods based on comparative and historical analysis. The main methodological approaches include:

- a chronological analysis to capture changes in the functions and meanings attributed to the color red,
- a semantic and iconographic analysis to interpret the symbolic values attributed to red, such as the sacred, power, violence, passion, provocation, social identity, and others,
- a literature search, including a review of scientific publications and digital databases,
- a qualitative visual analysis method, based on a comparative analysis of a broad spectrum of iconographic material, to identify patterns and recurring design conventions related to the use of the color red.

The goal and set of methods formulated in this way allowed to capture both continuity and breakthroughs in the ways of using the color red in architecture. They enabled a preliminary exploration of the design strategies and meanings associated with this color in various contexts.

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<sup>1</sup> J. Pallasmaa, *The eyes of the skin: Architecture and the senses*, Wiley, Chichester 2012, p. 58.

<sup>2</sup> B. Tschumi, *Red is not a color* [in:] idem, *Architecture and disjunction*, MIT Press, Cambridge 1996, pp. 217–218.

## 2. RED AS A SYMBOLIC CODE IN HISTORICAL ARCHITECTURE

Red is one of the most archetypal colors in the history of culture and architecture. Its appeal stems from its natural intensity, as red-light wavelengths are among the longest in the visual spectrum. However, it is not just a physiological response that contributes to this color's uniqueness. In the architectural context, its significance extends deeply into the realms of symbolism, ideology, religion, and the aesthetics of space. According to the principles of color philosophy, as Goethe wrote in *Zur Farbenlehre*, red is a color that strongly affects emotions by stimulating, amplifying, and making the object present<sup>3</sup>. These properties have been widely reflected in architecture throughout various eras.

Since ancient times, red has served not only as a visual attraction but also as a warning, protection, and boundary marker. Native pigments were often used to highlight architectural details and create paintings. In Egyptian architecture, the color was associated with both life and energy as well as chaos and danger. In ritual architecture, temple doors and thresholds were painted red to ward off evil spirits and emphasize the sacredness of the place. In paintings, male figures were often painted red to emphasize their energy and strength.

In non-European cultures, red was often a ritual and cosmological color. In Shintoism, gates leading to temples (called *Torii*), which marked the transition from secular to sacred space, were often painted red, especially in Japan. In this case, red was the color of purification, protection from demons, and also the color of life. An interesting example is Fushimi Inari-taisha, a temple in Kyoto, where thousands of red gates lead to the mountaintop, creating a kind of tunnel. It is a spectacular visual impression that currently attracts crowds of tourists, for whom it is not the spiritual but the emotional symbolism of red that attracts and delights.

In Africa and South America, red earth pigments were used to paint temples, ritual houses, and the bodies of ritual participants. This color created a symbolic boundary between the material and spiritual worlds.

In the Middle Ages, the expensive red pigment was used to paint the doors of chapels and churches, emphasizing the importance of these structures. Meanwhile, in defensive and military architecture, red gates, insignia, and banners emphasized strength and readiness for battle. In sacred architecture, it primarily symbolized sacrifice and spiritual power, sometimes brotherly love. In Judeo-Christian culture, red played a significant role in liturgy and iconography, primarily symbolizing the Passion of the Lord and the shed blood of Christ. It was used in stained glass windows and wall paintings and also as the dominant liturgical color in the vestments of church dignitaries. In Gothic cathedrals, the use of red in architectural details but also in the intense color of brick as a building material was intended to enhance material durability and create a mystical aura of the place.<sup>4</sup>

During the Baroque period, red acquired even greater ceremonial significance. The use of red marble and fabrics in churches had a theatrical dimension, serving a visual and emotional transcendence. According to Pallasmaa's theory of phenomenology, sacred space was shaped by a multisensory experience, with red serving to enhance the perception of space on a supra-sensory level.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>3</sup> J.W. Goethe, *Theory of Colours*, John Murray, London 1840.

<sup>4</sup> W. Bałus, *Gotyk bez Boga? w kręgu znaczeń symbolicznych architektury sakralnej XIX wieku*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu Mikołaja Kopernika, Toruń 2011.

<sup>5</sup> J. Pallasmaa, *op. cit.*, pp. 49–55.

In secular architecture, red primarily represented wealth and social standing or power and dominance. In the Red Fort in Delhi (17th century), red sandstone became a code of identification and a symbol of the dominance of the Mughal Empire. The pervasive red was not only an aesthetic element but also a manifestation of state power and the might of government. Red played a similar role in the Forbidden City in Beijing, where it served as the imperial color.

The use of red in the history of architecture often stems from the color of available materials. Naturally red-colored building materials were often used, such as red sandstone, brick, marble, and terracotta. In the southern Baltic region, where access to natural stone was limited, red brick and ceramic roof tiles constituted one of the most important formal devices used in buildings and structures. As a result, a distinct tradition of brick construction emerged, which gained the status of a style, the so-called Brick Gothic. Its distinctive color and texture resulted largely from the use of baked clay as the basic building material.

In the history of Polish architecture, fortresses were initially built from this material, which offered better protection against enemies than wooden structures. Monumental structures began to emerge across Poland, whose architecture still captivates today. An example is the 13th-century Malbork Castle, built by the Teutonic Order, which is the world's largest brick structure and the largest Gothic castle. In this case, the abundance of red brick symbolized durability and security but also power, dominance, and authority.

Analyzing the use of red in historical architecture, one can see that its presence was not accidental. The deliberate use of this color helped to create a mood and atmosphere but also conveyed ideology. Red, as a powerful color, appeared where architecture was intended to inspire respect or devotion but also to evoke emotions. At the same time, the use of red was also dictated by practical considerations, stemming from the availability and durability of materials. An analysis of the properties of red in the context of architecture reveals the importance this color held in constructing spatial, political, and cultural narratives. Red was:

- a symbol of authority and power, both spiritual and secular,
- served a ritual or protective role,
- formed the boundary between the sacred and the profane, safety and danger.

### 3. RED IN 20TH-CENTURY ARCHITECTURE

In the 20th century, the color red acquired new meanings. Transformed by the ideas of modernism, the avant-garde, and totalitarian regimes, it became a tool of expression, a means of visual communication, and an instrument of power and ideology.

At the beginning of the 20th century, red was adopted by totalitarian regimes as the color of propaganda. In the Soviet Union, the Third Reich, and Maoist China, red had a strong ideological significance. It signified revolution, individual sacrifice, the unity of the people, and the strength of government. In the USSR, red was present in the details of monumental architecture. In the 20th century, Red Square in Moscow became a site for parades and rallies, with red as the dominant visual code. Meanwhile, in Nazi Germany, red was an element of psychological impact, reinforcing the aesthetics of terror and subjugation. NSDAP banners with a red background and a black swastika formed the backdrop for Adolf Hitler's rallies, symbolizing the dictatorship of power. Charles Jencks described such phenomena

as manifestations of semiotic architecture, in which the color red functions as a sign of power and an emotional code<sup>1</sup>.

Meanwhile, socialist realist architecture, developed after World War II in the Eastern Bloc countries, utilized the color red as a manifestation of Marxist ideology and the construction of a political narrative. Red was consciously used to decorate facades, squares, and parade streets, as well as the interiors of representative buildings. Its visual intensity was enhanced by the postwar grayness of the surroundings. In this context, red had an even greater influence on shaping the social worldview and collective identity. Inspired by the revolutionary symbolism of the USSR, red served as a vehicle for ideology and collective emotions. It symbolized the blood of the victims, the courage of the revolutionaries, and the hope for a new social order.

At the same time, red was rediscovered as a means of intensifying the perception of architectural form and space. Avant-garde architects, including the Russian Constructivists and members of De Stijl, employed red as a fundamental element in shaping space. In Constructivist architecture, red emphasized dynamism and the new aesthetics of functionalism, carrying an emotional and symbolic charge. At the same time, it manifested a rejection of decorativeness in architecture. An example is the Zueva Workers' Club in Moscow, designed by Ilya Golosov in 1927. According to the architect's concept, the red building was to be associated with the world of technology and serve as a symbol of progress.

Members of the De Stijl group also utilized red and other primary colors in their designs. The color had an almost metaphysical value and was treated as a carrier of harmony and abstract order. In the famous Rietveld House in Utrecht from 1924, red appears as one of the contrasting accents used to distinguish elements and emphasize the free geometrization of architectural form. Meanwhile, the Bauhaus School, under the direction of Walter Gropius, promoted the sparing use of color in connection with structure or function, as can be seen in the example of red in the staircases of the Bauhaus building in Dessau. They also experimented with color selection to emphasize the spatial effect of buildings. In graphic designs and interiors, red appeared as an element of spatial orientation and functional identification.

In the dominant trend of interwar modernism, color was reduced in favor of white, though not completely eliminated. Le Corbusier, although he promoted color minimalism, later developed the concept of so-called *architectural polychromies*, where he promoted red as a color that heightened the emotional tension of space and added drama. In his designs, such as the Chapel of Notre-Dame du Haut in Ronchamp from 1955 and the Unité d'Habitation housing unit, red served to colorfully accentuate selected elements, and as a language of communication on a semiotic level.<sup>2</sup>

In later 20th-century movements, such as Metabolism and high-tech architecture, red began to be used more expressively. In Japanese Metabolist architecture, red appeared as the color of pipes, capsules, and structural elements, combining modernist functionality with the color's emotional appeal. One of the most recognizable examples of red in high-tech architecture is the 1977 Centre Pompidou, designed by Renzo Piano and Richard Rogers, which utilized the building's color code and marked communication and evacuation systems in red, promoting a design strategy based on emphasizing the clarity of function through color.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> C. Jencks, *The language of post-modern architecture*, Rizzoli, New York 1977, pp. 89–90.

<sup>2</sup> Le Corbusier, *Polychromie architecturale*, Birkhäuser, Basel 1997, p. 136.

<sup>3</sup> P. Overy, *De Stijl*, Thames & Hudson, London 1991.

In late modernism and postmodernism, the color red was increasingly used as an element of an architect's style or of the identity of a place. In the work of Aldo Rossi, James Stirling, and Ricardo Bofill, red appears in various forms, no longer symbolizing ideology, but emotion, memory, and sometimes irony, or as a form of dialogue between history and modernity.<sup>1</sup>

Meanwhile, the critical and experimental architecture of the second half of the 20th century and the turn of the millennium brought a qualitative transformation in the use of color. Deconstruction and conceptual architecture, in particular, gave red a philosophical dimension. It became the vehicle for a certain architectural narrative, individually crafted by the artist. One of the most significant architectural theorists and practitioners who contributed to this transformation was Bernard Tschumi. In his most famous work, the Parc de la Villette in Paris from the late 20th century, the system of red buildings – the so-called *folies* – serves not only a structural function but also interacts with the viewer. Drawing on Derrida's philosophy, red pavilions are likened to punctuation in written language, halting or intensifying perception. According to this architect, red does not embellish but disrupts, poses questions, and demands interpretation.<sup>2</sup> Red has also appeared in:

- the work of Peter Eisenman as an element of deconstruction, drama, and multi-layered tension;
- Zaha Hadid's designs as an expression of dynamics, continuum, and sensuality of expressive form;
- Daniel Libeskind's designs, where it is used in details as a symbol of memory;
- Jean Nouvel's designs as a dramatic, contemplative color, associated with the play of light and mood;
- Rem Koolhaas's works as a symbol of consumption, a provocative color with a media dimension;
- UNStudio's architecture as a tool for spatial orientation and emotional activation.<sup>3</sup>

In turn-of-the-century projects, red thus became one of the most powerful means of architectural expression, a narrative and critical tool to which individual architects attributed individual meanings. It ceased to serve harmony and began to disrupt, provoke, and evoke emotions.

#### 4. RED IN CONTEMPORARY AND 21ST-CENTURY ARCHITECTURE

Twenty-first-century architecture is characterized by a pluralism of forms, techniques, and meanings, which is also reflected in the use of color. Red has gained new interpretations in the context of social, technological, and cultural changes, although many contemporary applications are a continuation of strategies initiated in previous eras. It is increasingly gaining an activating role, soon to become a powerful visual sign in public spaces. Red is also used functionally to enhance the orientation and inclusiveness of public spaces, as an element of clear coding of circulation routes, passageways, and accessible areas. In the context of contemporary design trends such as multisensory and user-centered architecture, red is often an emotional means of enhancing the experience of space. In installations such

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<sup>1</sup> M. Droste, *Bauhaus, 1919–1933*, Taschen, Cologne 2019.

<sup>2</sup> B. Tschumi, *op. cit.*, pp. 217–218.

<sup>3</sup> E. Manferdini, *Full spectrum: Colour in contemporary architecture*, RIBA Publishing, London 2023.

as SelgasCano's *Red Pavilion* at the Serpentine Festival in 2015, the color becomes an immersive component, also utilizing the atmospheric qualities of red light and color temperature. Thanks to these qualities, red is readily used in all kinds of temporary structures and spatial art. Urban art installations utilize the intensity of this color to attract attention through contrast and clarity, as well as to activate spaces, becoming a kind of spatial identifier and catalyst for events. An example is the installation *Commonplace*, designed by Interboro for the American Pavilion at the 13th Venice Architecture Biennale. A simple set of freely reconfigurable red cubes, along with a designated spatial framework, formed a kind of outdoor living room. It served as a forum for meetings and a playground, encouraging active spatial creation. The same applies to red-saturated recreational and leisure areas in urban spaces. Playground surfaces and facade accents in educational and sports space designs encourage activity and integration. An example is the unique public park *Superkilen*, opened in 2012 in Copenhagen. This space is dedicated to sports and cultural activities, covered with a rubber surface in shades of red, symbolizing the diversity and energy of the multicultural community.

The almost extravagant use of color is also linked to the phenomenon of recent years, where a crucial element of architectural creation is its photogenic nature, which attracts and promotes bold, color-saturated architecture. This is influenced by the development of digital media and the popularity of social media. This stimulates design trends aimed at capturing the attention of audiences seeking media-attractive spaces. In this context, red is an excellent medium for immediate identification and emotional engagement but also for scenography. For this same reason, red often serves as an identity marker, both at the level of place identity and the identity of a brand or institution, utilizing strategies borrowed from the language of advertising and design. This can be seen in red buildings and interiors of PUMA stores or KFC restaurants. Intense red as a symbol of love and desire and shades of burgundy as a synonym of elegance taken from historical architecture are used in the strategies of promoting luxury products of brands such as Cartier, Chanel and Versace, which saturate the displays, interiors and facades of their showrooms with red.

Nowadays, color also plays a significant role in revitalization projects in historic settings. Contemporary uses of red often consciously reference the hues of traditional materials, the local context, or historical aesthetics. Red, therefore, can bridge the gap between modernity and the memory of a place. The choice of red can also serve as a way to highlight new structures in contrast to the existing architecture, creating a visual dialogue between old and new, as in the case of the expansion of the Reina Sofia Museum in Madrid designed by Jean Nouvel, where a massive red roof dominates the entire space. Another strategy is to use red through color matching, as in the case of the Moderna Museet in Malmö, Sweden, designed by Tham & Videgård Arkitekter, where a perforated, bright orange-red cuboid complements the classic brick facade of the historic buildings.

Perhaps surprisingly, red also aligns with contemporary ecological and humanist trends. As a contrast to natural materials, it serves as a visual accent but it also often expresses a social idea, utilizing the branding and identity properties of red to activate a place or integrate local communities. An example is the Red Pavilion, a multifunctional community center in Hurlstone Park, Sydney, designed by Sam Crawford Architects. Its dynamic red metal roof with perforated screens echoes the red of the district's traditional roofs and brings new energy while respecting the local architecture. Another example in a natural context is

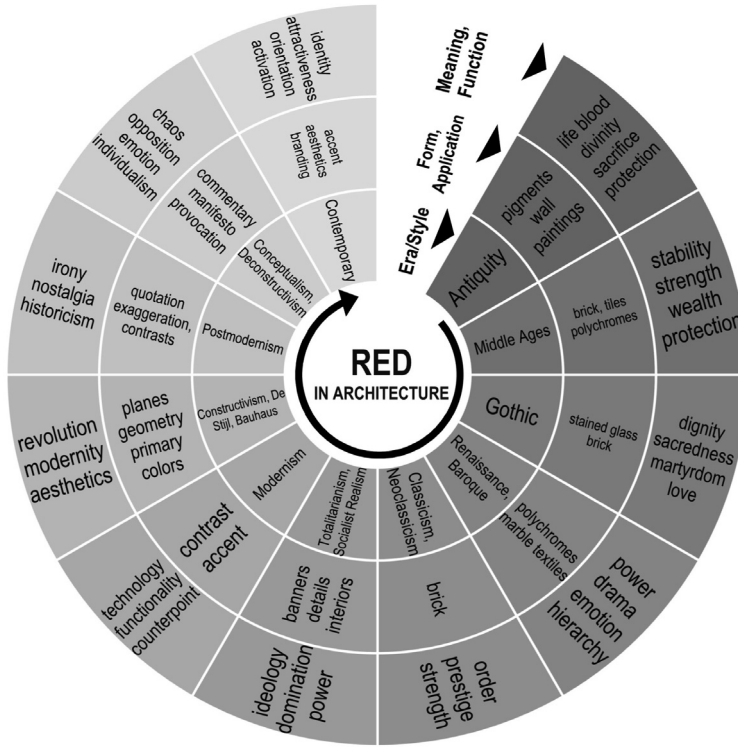
*Red Ribbon Park* in Qinhuangdao, China, where a contrasting red, winding walking path runs through the greenery, encouraging activity and time in nature.

Finally, the influence of virtual-architecture aesthetics is becoming increasingly strong in contemporary architecture. Forms and colors are beginning to be inspired by unusual, bold film-set designs, generative art, or images created by artificial intelligence based on text descriptions. Digital images familiarize viewers and encourage creators to employ saturated colors, cyberaesthetics, and science-fiction narratives. Exposure to these images subconsciously increases the general acceptance of solutions previously considered too radical. In particular, intense colors such as blood red, deep purple, and neon fuchsia appear surprisingly frequently in generated images. For these reasons, there is currently an explosion in the use of intense colors, including saturated red, even on a large scale, in the form of monochromatic red compositions. While architects such as Ricardo Bofill, Michael Graves, and later Jean Nouvel began covering entire facades in red in the previous century, and Bernard Tschumi dared to create a *total look* for his red pavilions in La Villette Park, coating them in a glossy, intense, pure-red epoxy paint, these design strategies no longer evoke the same emotions they did back then. One might get the impression that, given the color's popularity and its multiplicity of meanings and applications in architecture and public spaces, its impact is waning. Red seems to be becoming increasingly popular, appearing in public and cultural architecture, commercial and exhibition spaces, historical and natural contexts, and even in residential architecture with a social or manifest purpose, as in the designs of the MVRDV group.

Monochromatic red facades often serve as icons in space. They stand out from the urban backdrop, serve as guides, and as symbols for a brand or institution. However, in the context of a city's multicolored landscape, even intense red can sometimes lose its impact. The growing popularity of red and its shades, as well as of other intense colors, is reinforced by the availability of a variety of new materials (e.g., painted metal, glass, polymers) and ready-made technical solutions offered by manufacturers in a wide color palette (e.g., panels, blinds, structural and modular elements). This availability, stemming from technological progress, influences both the ease of applying ready-made solutions and the aesthetics of contemporary buildings and public spaces. In this version, red is sometimes devoid of deeper meaning and becomes merely an element shaping the aesthetic resulting from the personal preferences of the designer or investor.

## 5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

A chronological analysis of the use of red in architecture over time (Ill. 1) illustrates that this color has been a constant presence in architecture. Even in white-saturated modernism, it did not disappear entirely. It survived changing styles and eras but over time acquired new meanings and functions. It served as a carrier of ideological meanings and a means of expression. The history of architecture demonstrates that red has consistently been used as a powerful conveyor of emotion and symbolism, as well as a narrative element shaping the perception of space. Today, the color is used as a tool to enhance the user experience, support spatial orientation, and build the identity of a place. At the same time, we observe a continuation of earlier strategies, particularly those related to deconstruction, conceptualism, and the rhetoric of color, but also their reinterpretation to emphasize inclusiveness, accessibility, and media



III. 1. Graphical illustration showing the use and functions of the color red in architecture across historical periods in chronological order, own elaboration

appeal. Over recent decades we have observed a shift in the intentions behind the use of red, in line with general trends that lean toward participation, inclusiveness, and social activation. Red is increasingly losing its clear interpretation, with its meaning dependent on the cultural context, location, and function it accompanies.

The use of this color in architecture has been analyzed primarily through the lens of color psychology, aesthetics, or in the context of individual examples. The novelty of this study lies in presenting red not only as a compositional or symbolic element but as a design tool with complex sensory and psychological functions in the context of social impact and visual communication. This study attempts a historical and architectural synthesis, drawing on both cultural conditions and contemporary technological and media transformations.

As a result of the conducted analyses:

- multi-layered symbolism was identified,
- the varying scale of red use was demonstrated,
- the chronological presentation of moments of change in usage strategies was provided,
- new phenomena of the 21st century were identified,
- historical connections in red use strategies were identified,
- the role of red as a narrative tool was emphasized.

A limitation of the presented analysis, however, is the generalization of the concept of red. Its various shades, saturation, brightness, and transparency convey slightly different

meanings or influence changes in the intensity of the perception of this color's symbolism. Therefore, the presented analyses could become the basis for detailed research differentiating the aspects of pure red as a primary color in the context of its various shades. An interesting continuation of the presented content could also be in-depth research on the perception of red in public spaces by its users, particularly in various social and cultural groups, as well as studies on the impact of red on the aesthetic experience, functionality, and inclusiveness of space. Another interesting avenue of research would be to analyze the trend resulting from the role of artificial intelligence and generative technologies in popularizing red as an element of cyberaesthetics and new visual narratives in architecture.

As this study demonstrates, red remains a unique color. It can be provocative yet at the same time universal and enduringly relevant. Its power lies not only in its aesthetics but also in its ability to build emotional relationships with space.

## 6. SUMMARY

This study explores how the color red has played a role in architecture for centuries that goes beyond aesthetics. It has conveyed cultural, ideological, emotional, and functional meanings. Its use and interpretation have varied depending on the era, social context, and design intent.

- In ancient times and the Middle Ages, red had sacred, ritual and social dimensions. It was reserved for the elite, power and religion.
- In the Renaissance and Baroque, it was suitable for representative interiors and dramatic form.
- In modernism and later trends, it became a tool of conscious communication, contrast, expression and ideological intervention.
- For conceptual and postmodern architects, red has decisive and semantic functions – it creates drama, activates emotions, suggests memory, trauma or sensuality of form.
- Contemporary architecture treats red as a conscious design strategy, where it is the language of communication and the foundation of a place's identity. The use of red can build spatial tension, serve an orientation and activation function, accentuate an ideological or artistic message, or highlight the form and structure of a building. It can also be a tool for participation or provocation in urban spaces.

Based on the research conducted in this study, it can be concluded that:

- The color red carries powerful meanings: emotion, power, the sacred, rebellion, ideology, and memory.
- Its symbolism has changed over time, from ritual and religious, through representative and national, to contemporary – emotional, contrasting, critical, or identifying.
- In contemporary architecture, red becomes a conscious design tool that creates narrative, drama, contrast, or visual provocation.
- Architects use red strategically as a means of orientation, ideology, communication, or sensuality.
- Color is not an addition but an integral element of architecture. Its presence can create a building's meaning, guide its reception, and enhance the experience of space.

Moreover, the presented examples of red's use in architecture across the ages demonstrate how powerful and influential a spatial narrative element this color can be. Red clearly influences the perception of the surroundings, building emotional tension and reinforcing

the architectural message. These properties make this color highly popular in contemporary design projects. At the same time, a visual analysis of a comprehensive set of examples of objects and spaces (both real and conceptual) reveals a certain oversaturation with visual stimuli, including the excessive use of intense red. This may prompt reflection: Will increasing sensitivity to stimuli lead to a need to limit them? Or conversely, will it result in audience indifference and a weakening of the impact of red in architecture?

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