

White

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Is it the blending of all color or the absence of color that is white? Ask a scientist and he will tell you that white is the combination of all colors of light. Ask a child and they will tell you white has no color although it is in their box of Crayons. Ask an artist and they will tell you that white can't be created and therefore it is the absence of color. In feng shui white is considered a supreme color. It is considered the color of the complete energy of light and that it stands for wholeness and completion. It is said to provide clarity as its energy is complete. In western countries, brides wear white to symbolize purity and innocence. In fairy tales the white knight is referred to as the savior and honorable one. Doctors wear white coats, chosen as a symbol for hope and life. Lastly, the white picket fence surrounds the safe and happy home down the block. These meanings behind the color white sometimes elude consciousness, yet the impact can leave an imprint on the mind of the audience. Is this the reason architecture Santiago Calatrava has chosen to use white as the color of his entire addition to the Milwaukee Art Museum in Wisconsin?

In his acceptance speech for the Pritzker Award, Richard Meier states why he uses white in his works. "White is the most wonderful color because within it you can see all the colors of the rainbow. The whiteness of white is never just white; it is almost always transformed by light and that which is changing; the sky, the clouds, the sun, and the moon."

In addition to his interest in shapes, balance, and movement, Santiago Calatrava uses the relationship between light and his pieces to create the unforgettable image. Using these elements he is able to engage his audience and create a stronger connection between them and the work. The audience is no longer just using the architecture, but is a part of it. Light is constantly changing; as a result, Calatrava's work is always being transformed. Knowing about these characteristics of his work and the different meanings behind the color it seems clear as to why he chose to use white for the entire addition. This building reflects the culture of the lake both in shape and movement. White is only appropriate because it contains all the colors of the light that are being shown through the life in and around the lake. Being that this building is a new addition to the Milwaukee Art Museum, white again works because it signifies new beginnings and developments in new directions. In the case of tourists, the color's energy leaves an imprint and generates more visitors. These are just some reasons as to why the color of this work plays such a key role on the amount of attention that this building has gathered.

On the other hand, the color white can be said to be very impractical. Its cold quality can ask you to admire, but keep your distance. The constant traffic flow of the museum created by groups of school children, families of all sizes and visitors from around the world can create a massive amount of work on the museum's end. The non-stop job of painting and repainting to cover the smudges created by shoes and hands is surely difficult and costly. The constant painting of the outside due to weather damages alone would be unbelievable. These characteristics can make for a troublesome work of art. But the museum is unforgettable and that alone will make the life of this piece last for as long as Milwaukee would like it to.