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The Crystal Palace was built on the occasion of the Great Exhibition of 1851 in London. The designer and architect Owen Jones was responsible for the interior decoration. He designed a colour palette for the gigantic cast-iron structure in which the horizontal surfaces were painted red, all convex surfaces facing the visitor were accented with yellow, while all concave surfaces receding were given a cool blue, and white was used for all vertical surfaces. With this colour scheme containing all the primary colours, Jones wanted to create a "colour bloom." Each surface would reflect a particular light and shadow depending on its spatial relationship.

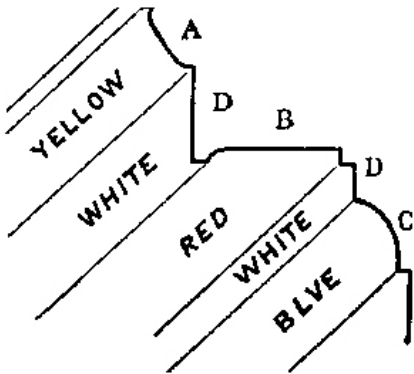


Diagram of Colour Palette used in the 1851 Crystal Palace

When I look at Owen Jones' cross section diagram of the four shapes mentioned above and their assigned colours, I always think of this chart as a chute. So my slide journey would be as follows: horizontal - standstill (B), convex sweeping - slow glide (A), concave receding - gaining speed (C), vertical - nosedive (D). It's not synesthesia; my association has more to do with the way I trace a shape or outline. For example, when I look at an ornament, wall frieze, or other decorative surface, I follow the lines with my eyes, and sometimes my perception shifts from that of a platform game (e.g. Super Mario) to a first-person player (e.g. Mario Kart) and I see the surface from the perspective of a mini-chariot or soapbox driving along those lines, shapes, and mouldings.

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Proposition 6.

Beauty of form is produced by lines growing out of one from the other in gradual undulations: there are no excrescences; nothing could be removed and leave the design equally good or better.

Proposition 7.

The general forms being first cared for, these should be subdivided and ornamented by general lines; the interstices may then be filled in with ornament, which may again be subdivided and enriched for closer inspection.¹

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The whole thrill of the video game or slide is that the trajectory is always a little different to my expectation. When I see ornamentation on a surface it's tempting to make assumptions about its meaning or use, but this has to be constantly questioned and corrected. The most revealing part of the game is the glitch. Shapes and forms break down and can be read as something different. Butterfly shapes become relief printing blocks or templates on surveillance mirrors; chains become wings and store signs become frilly porcelain cups. The tidiness of a primary coloured design scheme is disrupted by the big gut that is life; beauty sits on the brink of decay.

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