

Curves and Colors: A Journey into Hundertwasser's Visual Language

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Abstract

This paper offers a critical and original reading of Friedensreich Hundertwasser's work, focusing on the continuity between his visual language in painting and architecture. Moving beyond symbolic or stylistic interpretations, the analysis introduces the concept of atmospheric drawing: a perceptual grammar in which color, line, and texture do not merely represent but generate multisensory and affective environments. Hundertwasser's graphic signs—spirals, organic curves, chromatic contrasts—are interpreted as compositional devices that activate emotional responses and structure space, both pictorial and architectural. By comparing specific paintings such as Irinaland over the Balkans with buildings like the Hundertwasserhaus or the Waldspirale, the article demonstrates how drawing operates as a generative process that redefines the relationship between humans, architecture, and nature. The concept of the 'third skin' is reexamined as a sensory interface, mediating the boundaries between interiority and landscape. Finally, the paper proposes the idea of visual ecology as a framework for understanding drawing as a critical and environmental practice. In doing so, it positions Hundertwasser's work as a living laboratory for rethinking the role of drawing, not as a static representation of reality, but as a creative tool for shaping how we perceive, inhabit, and imagine the world.

Keywords: Hundertwasser, visual semiotics, drawing, graphic language, colors.

Introduction

In the context of reflecting on drawing as a language, the work of Friedensreich Hundertwasser represents an exemplary case of how the graphic sign can transcend its mere representational function to become a complex communicative system. This perspective invites us to consider drawing not only as a technical or aesthetic tool, but as a form of visual language capable of conveying profound meanings through an articulated semiotic structure [Derrida 1978]. Hundertwasser, a multifaceted and visionary figure, developed a unique approach to drawing, using it not only to represent forms but to convey philosophical, ecological, and aesthetic values that challenge the conventions of modernity and open new perspectives for dialogue between art, nature, and society. Hundertwasser's work is positioned at

the crossroads of multiple disciplines, spanning from painting and architecture to design [Barak 2017] (fig. 1). At the center of this multifaceted approach, drawing emerges as a unifying element, a visual language capable of connecting signs, symbols, and concepts in a coherent and original expressive system. His visual alphabet is distinguished by the predominant use of spirals, curves, and organic shapes, elements that subvert the rigidity of geometry and refer to a vision of the world as cyclical and ever evolving. These signs are not mere decorative elements, but genuine vehicles of meaning that reveal a deep concern for the dynamics between humanity and nature, inviting a reconsideration of the relationship between the individual, the environment, and the built world.



Fig. 1. F. Hundertwasser, *The 30 Days Fax Painting*, 1992-1994, mixed media, 1510 mm × 1300 mm (collection KunstHausWien, Vienna), and Hundertwasser photograph taken by Gerhard Krömer (Title: *Hundertwasser 1985 Gerhard*, Format: jpeg, 1973 px x 2067 px, collection Hundertwasser Archiv, Vienna) (composition by the authors).

As an illustrative example, one can refer to the painting *The Houses Are Hanging Underneath the Meadows* (1972), in which spirals proliferate within a dense chromatic field, enriched by tactile textures that evoke a sense of continuous, pulsating movement. The colors, sulfurous yellows, intense greens, and saturated reds, function not merely as expressive tools, but as sensory devices that engage the viewer on a visceral level. The color planes are far from flat; they are animated by tonal variations and juxtapositions that suggest the stratification of matter and the vitality of biological life. These pictorial elements find a clear architectural counterpart in the facade of the *Hundertwasserhaus*, where the undulating surface is accentuated by glossy ceramic cladding and chromatic segmentation that deliberately rejects symmetry.

This article aims to analyze Hundertwasser's work through three main directions: its semiotic, aesthetic, and ecological significance. From a semiotic perspective, we will explore how drawing functions as an organized system of signs, capable of communicating complex meanings through articulated visual grammar. On an aesthetic level, the use of

color and organic forms will be investigated, as they evoke an intense emotional and sensory response, challenging the conventions of rationalist modernity and celebrating the diversity and irregularity of nature.

Finally, the analysis will focus on the ecological dimension of his visual language, highlighting how drawing goes beyond a representational function to offer a critique of urban rationalization and propose a vision of harmony between humanity and the environment. Hundertwasser's drawing reveals itself as an integrated and polysemic language, where semiotics [Eco 1976], aesthetics, and ecology [Domazet, Nadić 2022, pp. 1003-1031] merge to offer an alternative and deeply meaningful vision.

The research has focused on an in-depth analysis of the material preserved at the Hundertwasser Archive in Vienna. This archive constitutes a comprehensive collection of writings, original drawings, and print clippings related to Hundertwasser's work, most of which have been published in collections such as the one curated by Schmied and Fuerst in 2003.

The investigation centered on Hundertwasser's texts and the related press articles, with particular attention to four

recurring themes in his production: ecology, style and architectural process, the active role of residents, and the concept of utopia, often defined by Hundertwasser as 'paradise'.

Hundertwasser and visual language

The visual language of Friedensreich Hundertwasser presents itself as a complex and deeply symbolic system, where drawing plays a central role not only as a form of representation but as a multifaceted and polysemous means of communication. Hundertwasser's visual alphabet, as we've already introduced, is characterized by the prevalence of spirals, curves, and organic shapes, elements that deliberately oppose the rigidity of geometric forms and the coldness of modernist structures [Hundertwasser 1986] (fig. 2). The spiral occupies a central place in his work, representing the continuous flow of life and the cyclical movement of nature. This form, which appears in many of his pieces, becomes an emblematic sign of the connection between the individual and the cosmos, suggesting a process of evolution that embraces both personal growth and universal interdependence.

This reading moves beyond symbolic interpretation to consider the spiral as a spatial operator: not a sign to decode, but a visual engine that expands the pictorial field, generating rhythms, tensions, and directions that guide the viewer's perceptive experience. In this sense, Hundertwasser's use of spirals reveals not only the cosmological intent, but also a proto-architectural logic that anticipates the morphogenetic processes of his built works.

Similarly, the curves and undulating lines evoke the fluidity of water and natural rhythms, emphasizing an aesthetic grounded in respect for and celebration of natural life. Hundertwasser's canvases are self-contained universes, filled with details that interweave and overlap [Restany 2002].

The artist covers every square inch, often starting with humble materials such as packaging paper, and completing the irregular edges with a black background that creates a sharp contrast. It is said that he works from the edges toward the center, in a process that feels almost automatic, but which also reveals great mastery. The images emerging from his paintings are rich with suggestions and hidden meanings. Titles like *The Garden of Happy Dead*, *The Yellow Tear*, *The Escape of the Dalai Lama*, or *The Tower of Babel Pierces the Sun* reveal a deep sensitivity and an acute awareness of the world around him. Hundertwasser



Fig. 2. The theme of the spiral in the architecture and painting of Hundertwasser (elaboration by the authors).

Fig. 3. A comparison between the rigidity that characterizes Bauhaus and the organic forms of Hundertwasser (elaboration by the authors).

describes himself as a “literary and decorative painter” [Hundertwasser 1956], harmoniously combining visual narration with formal beauty. These graphic elements, far from being mere decoration, constitute complex semiotic signs with layered meanings. Using a semiotic approach, we can analyze them according to the dimensions of syntax, semantics, and pragmatics. At the syntactic level, Hundertwasser’s compositions stand out for their fluid, non-linear structure. The signs combine into configurations that evoke the harmony and complexity of nature, rejecting the rigid and standardized rules of modernity [Frascina, Harrison 1983] (fig. 3).

The semantics of his work manifests through the intrinsic symbolic charge of each sign: the spiral represents infinity and renewal, the curves embody dynamism and vitality, while the vibrant colors amplify the symbolic message, conveying emotions and stimulating imagination [Jeong 2018, pp. 159-178]. This visual grammar is not just a formal matter but carries a deep critique of modernist rationality and the detachment of contemporary humans from nature. Hundertwasser uses drawing as a symbolic language to express a worldview in which humanity is an integral part of a living, interconnected ecosystem. His works become a denunciation of alienating urbanization and standardized planning, proposing in their place a model of harmonious coexistence between humanity and the environment. In this context, drawing doesn’t merely represent reality but reinterprets it, offering a new perspective on how art can stimulate ecological awareness and critical reflection on our role in the world. From a semiotic standpoint, Hundertwasser’s drawings represent a dynamic semiotics [Aroni 2023, pp. 277-296], in which every visual element is charged with complex and interconnected meanings. His works demonstrate how the graphic sign can transform into a powerful vehicle for ideas, emotions, and concepts. Through a process of visual coding, Hundertwasser creates a symbolic system that not only communicates but invites the observer to actively participate in the construction of meaning. This participation occurs not only on an intellectual level but also on a sensory and emotional one, making the drawing an immersive and multifaceted experience. The strength of Hundertwasser’s visual language lies in its ability to challenge conventions and propose innovative alternatives. Through the transformation of the graphic sign into a rich and articulated meaning, Hundertwasser redefines the role of drawing, making it a medium capable of addressing contemporary challenges and proposing new avenues for connection between humanity, nature, and culture.

The fluid grammar of drawing

Friedensreich Hundertwasser’s drawing stands out for its ability to break from traditional geometric conventions. His wavy, sinuous lines deliberately avoid rigid straight structures, embracing a natural dynamism that rejects static, artificial forms. Hundertwasser’s visual grammar is not simply decorative but a dynamic, fluid process that evolves organically, much like nature itself. His works result from a design process where classical geometry has no place, replaced by forms that adapt and respond to principles of growth, evolution, and transformation [Hundertwasser 2005]. These forms follow no rigid logic but flow with the natural cycles of life. At first glance, Hundertwasser’s works seem like abstract compositions, a kaleidoscope of colors dominated by squares and spirals. The insistent use of color as a structural element is also evident in works such as *Irinaland over the Balkans* (1969), where the pictorial surfaces are broken down into overlapping chromatic modules that evoke imaginary landscapes and cities. Each color carries a symbolic function: gold represents utopia, blue the vital flow, and an expansive red energy. Green, which dominates the lower portion of the painting, suggests the latent presence of nature, even within structures that appear artificial. Color acts as a constructive element, delineating areas of space not through sharp boundaries, but through layers and transparencies that render the composition unstable and vibrant. The dense, tactile, almost stratified texture of the painting contributes to a sensory perception of the surface. The entire work unfolds as an emotional map, where color, line, and material create an autonomous universe governed by its own visual logic.

Upon closer inspection, these squares reveal windows and rooftops, while circular shapes become streets, rivers, or labyrinths.

Trees, boats, fields, and water also emerge. However, these shapes are not attempts at realistic representation but symbols more akin to childlike drawings or map symbols. Their precise identity is secondary; they represent a deeper search for meaning. Hundertwasser’s true obsession lies not in painting houses or cities but in his love for color and his impulse to create lines and fill blank spaces with vibrant hues.

This fluidity extends into his architecture, where every building is conceived as a living organism, constantly evolving and reflecting the interconnectedness of humanity,



Fig. 4. A comparative analysis of the artistic works of Klee, Klimt, and Hundertwasser (composition by the authors).

nature, and space. The continuity between drawing and architecture does not rely on formal repetition, but on a shared logic of process and transformation. What emerges is a form of diagrammatic thinking, in which the act of drawing becomes a projective gesture: it establishes relationships between forces visual, emotional, material that are then spatially translated into built form.

Hundertwasser's art rejects the static, functionalist visions of modernity, advocating for designs that celebrate spontaneity, naturalness, and unpredictability. His approach is a departure from rationalist architecture, which focused on clean, definable geometric shapes, as seen in the work of Le Corbusier and the Modernist Movement [Heller, Pettit 2004]. Hundertwasser distances himself from this reductionist view, embracing the diversity and unpredictability of forms. His architecture is not meant to reflect a universal ideal of order and functionality but to blend with the landscape, adapt to its features, and foster an empathetic relationship with the environment [Margolin 1989]. Hundertwasser opposes the standardization and rationalization of modern architecture, promoting a visual language that seeks to reintegrate nature and its laws into the design process. Through this, he challenges the notions of beauty, order, and functionality that dominated 20th-century architecture [Nesbitt 1996]. His fluid drawing grammar invites us to rethink the role of art in architecture, urging us to view the world with open, sensitive eyes that are in tune with nature. Hundertwasser's artistic influences are

varied, particularly from the Austrian heritage of decorative motifs and sinuous lines, notably seen in the works of Klimt and Schiele. Klimt's *The Kiss* demonstrates how Hundertwasser absorbed and reworked the curving lines and rhythms of the Secessionist style. The embrace of the figures in Klimt's work, united by a sinuous outline, anticipates the spirals and organic forms in Hundertwasser's later work. Egon Schiele, Klimt's student, also profoundly influenced Hundertwasser, especially with his depictions of cities, where houses with sloping roofs and empty-eyed windows foreshadowed the dreamlike and melancholic atmospheres in Hundertwasser's paintings. However, it is Paul Klee who provided a deeper influence. Klee's work, which balances abstraction and figuration, poetry and geometry, offered Hundertwasser a model to explore his own fantasies and create a pictorial world rich in symbolism [Gombrich 2004]. Klee's organic shapes, sinuous lines, and vibrant colors helped shape Hundertwasser's approach to art, combining technical precision with poetic imagination. Although Hundertwasser acknowledged his debt to these predecessors, he developed a distinctive style of his own. By merging Klimt's technical perfection with Klee's poetic sensibility, Hundertwasser created a unique visual language that blends formal beauty with profound reflection on humanity's relationship with nature. His vibrant colors, organic shapes, and intricate textures invite the viewer into an introspective journey, discovering an inner world full of mystery and fascination (fig. 4).

Drawing and architecture

Since the 1950s, Hundertwasser has passionately dedicated himself to creating architecture that is deeply human and in harmony with nature. This pursuit led him to develop a personal architectural language, which allowed him to intervene in buildings as a true “architectural doctor” [Hundertwasser 1947]. His style is characterized by undulating forms in floors and walls, which contrast with rigid geometry, rooftops transformed into lush gardens, windows of various shapes, and towers and columns that encourage relaxation, evoking a sense of being embraced by nature. Hundertwasser revolutionized the concept of architecture, elevating it from mere function to artistic and social expression [Chiavoni 2017] (fig. 5).

In this sense, the artist anticipates many contemporary reflections on emotional architecture and sensuous dwelling, in line with the theories of Juhani Pallasmaa. His buildings are not merely spaces to inhabit, but environments to be experienced through all the senses—spaces where the variety of materials, the presence of natural light, and the diversity of forms foster a deep, embodied relationship with the surrounding environment.

Through his wise use of color, he gave buildings a ‘third skin’, an organic and dynamic coating that harmoniously integrates them into their environment (fig. 6).

The ‘third skin’ can be understood as a perceptual membrane: a dynamic threshold that filters and modulates light, color, and texture, reconfiguring the boundary between the private and the collective, the natural and the artificial. This notion resonates with contemporary discourses on embodied architecture and sensory space, positioning Hundertwasser as a forerunner of today’s experiential and affective design strategies.

His theory of the ‘third skin’ is based on the idea that buildings, like living beings, should breathe and evolve over time. In this context, color becomes a key tool in creating organic architecture, capable of stimulating the senses and promoting well-being. His works, such as the *Hundertwasserhaus* in Vienna or the *Waldspirale* in Darmstadt [Kraftl 2009, pp. 111–134], exemplify this approach (fig. 7).

In these buildings, the undulating facades, green rooftops, uniquely shaped windows, and flower-filled balconies create an atmosphere where humans and nature coexist in harmony. In the *Waldspirale*, the façade’s texture alternates between smooth and rough surfaces, treated with earth-toned plasters interrupted by glossy ceramic inserts.



Fig. 5. Colors and shapes in Hundertwasser’s architecture (photo by the authors).

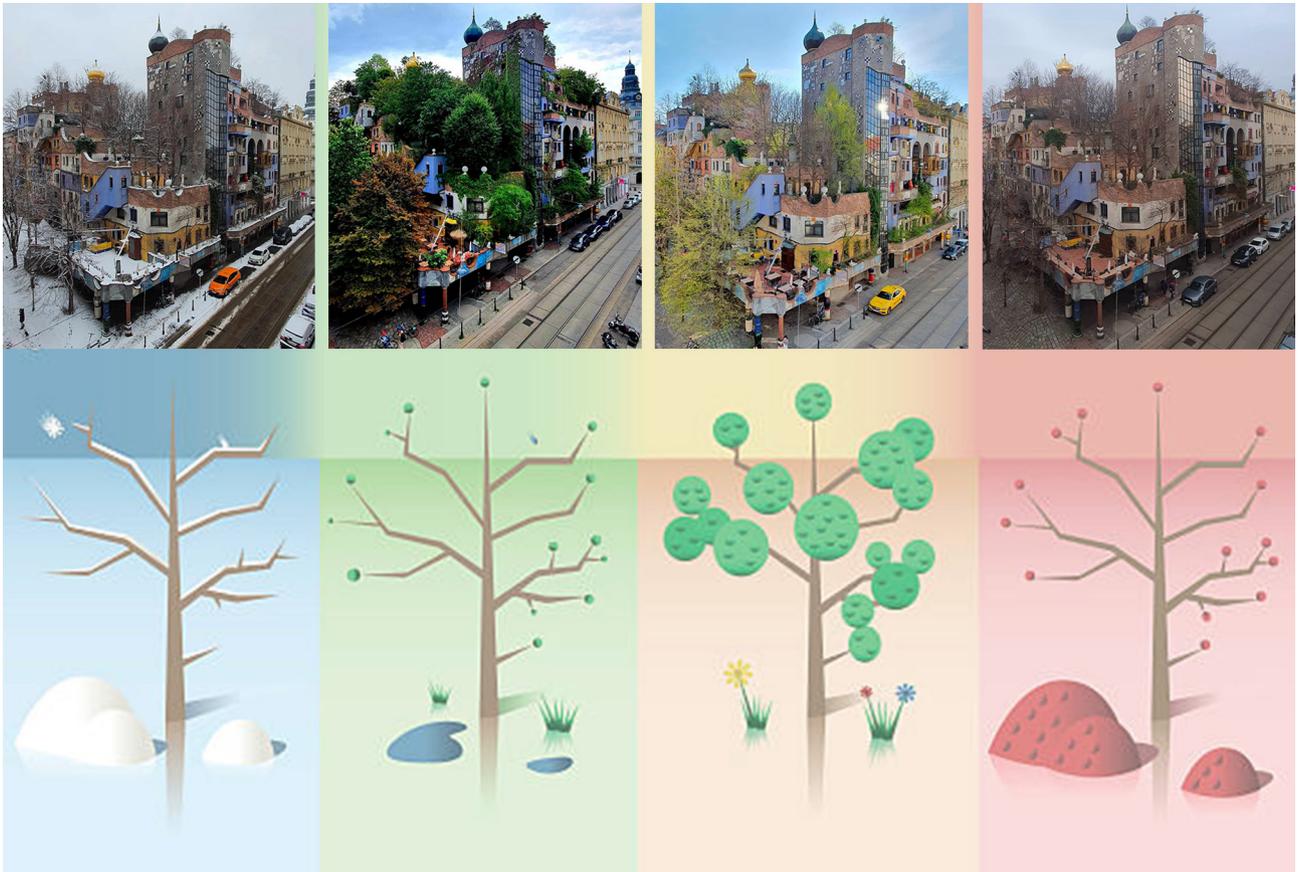
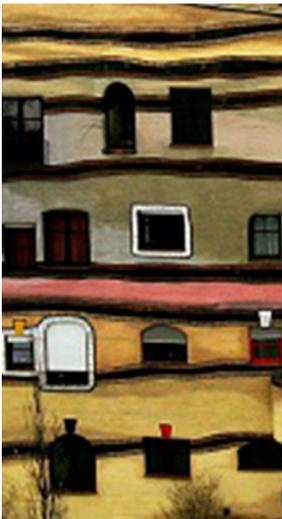
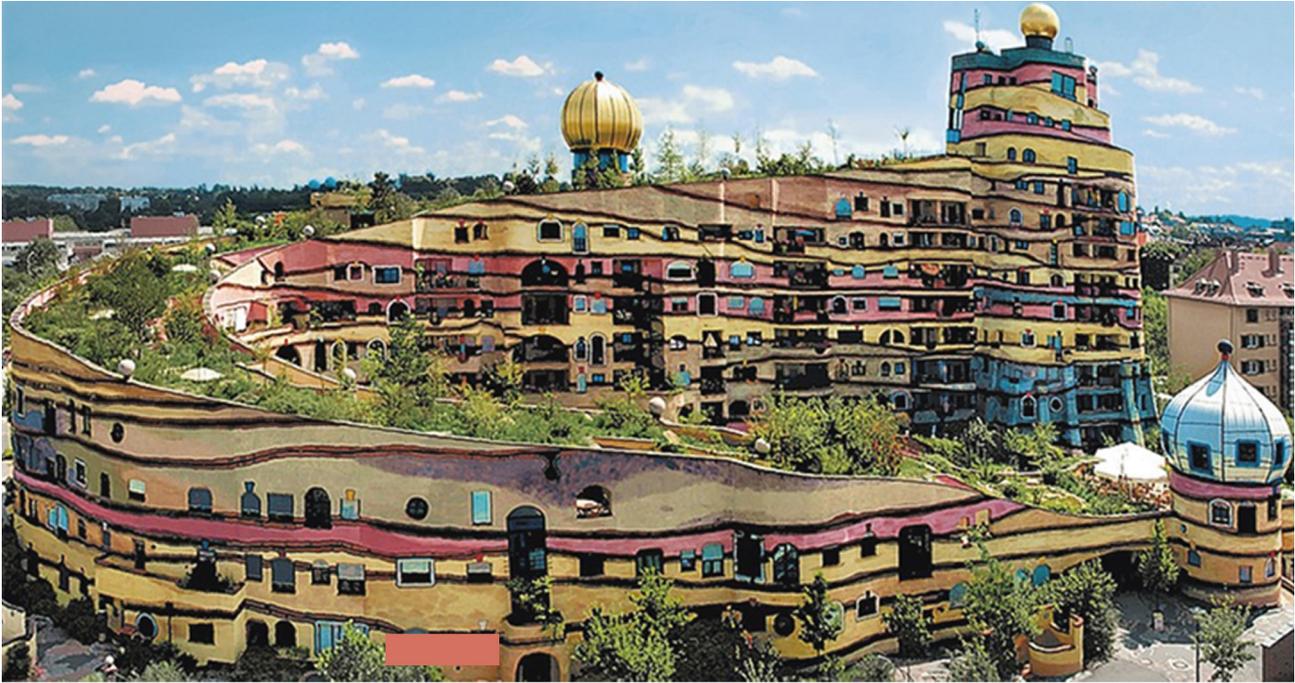
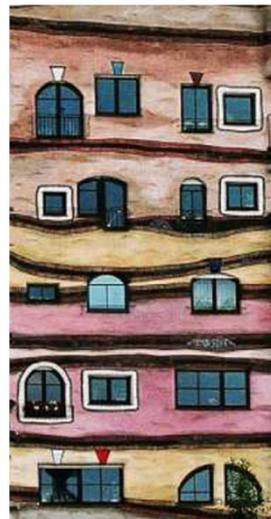


Fig. 6. The theory of the 'third skin': buildings as living beings (elaboration by the authors).



-  Light yellow → Solar Energy: a symbol of vitality and optimism, the light that nourishes life.
-  Ochre → Connection to the earth: a natural color evoking clay, the raw material.
-  Sand beige → Neutrality and breath: a calm background on which nature and art can emerge.
-  Olive green → Integrated vegetation: nature climbing over buildings, a living part of the architecture.
-  Terracotta red → Deep roots: a warm, emotional bond with the soil and tradition.



-  Sand beige → Neutral Base: a harmonious support for more vibrant colors.
-  Warm brown → Living matter: nature as the very fabric of construction.
-  Cream yellow → Diffused light: embracing warmth that fosters well-being.
-  Powder pink → Emotion and delicacy: a visual caress, an opening to feelings.
-  Golden yellow → Spirit and splendor: spirituality shining through matter.

Fig. 7. Color analysis of the Waldspirale in Darmstadt, 2000 (elaboration by the authors).

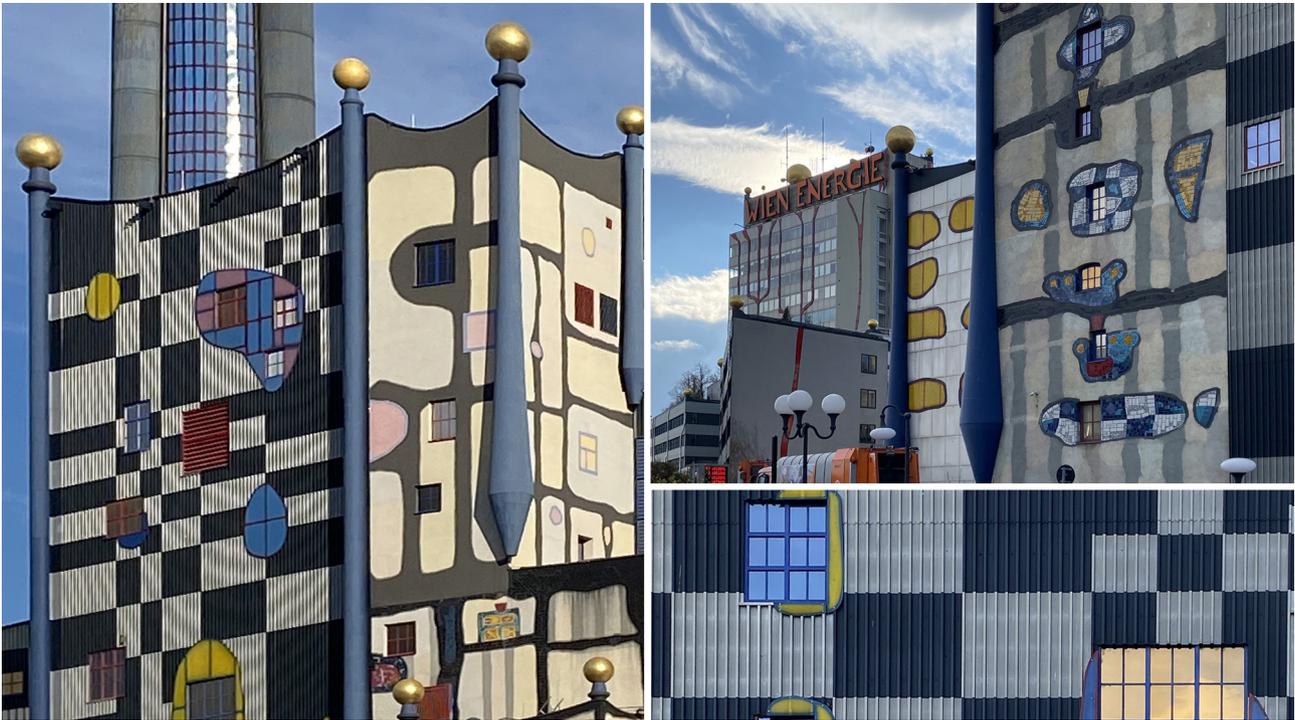


Fig. 8. The Spittelau Incinerator in Vienna, 1971 (photos by the authors).

These material contrasts create a dynamic, multisensory perception, enhanced by the irregular sequence of openings, niches, and colorful frames. Color, applied as if it were mural painting, does not follow functional logic but acts as an emotional code.

Similarly, the *Kunst Haus Wien*, with its irregular black-and-white checkerboard tiles, glazed ceramic cladding, and the bold yet poetic use of primary colors, illustrates how the architectural surface is conceived as an extension of the painted canvas. Here, texture is not only visual but also tactile: the materials invite touch, exploration, and inhabitation. Architectural experience, therefore, is not built through abstraction, but through sensory immersion. For example, each apartment in the *Hundertwasserhaus* features a personalized facade with unique colors and decorations, highlighting individuality and creativity. The *Waldspirale*, a residential complex in the shape of a spiral, integrates perfectly

into the surrounding forest landscape. In both works, Hundertwasser uses color to evoke a sense of movement, vitality, and connection with nature. Drawing plays a central role in Hundertwasser's architectural vision, as it does not simply represent spaces but forms the foundation for a new way of thinking about architecture [Docci, Ippolito 2010, pp. 26-37]. Unlike traditional practices where drawing is primarily used for functional design, for Hundertwasser, it is a language that conveys a message.

Architectural drawing is the medium through which he expresses a spatial concept that goes beyond utility, extending to the sensory and visual experience of the user. The transition from two-dimensional drawing to spatial design is a key transformation in Hundertwasser's work. When the artist confronts three-dimensionality, his ability to represent the world visually is no longer limited to the surface of a canvas or paper.

Drawing becomes a means of translating two-dimensionality into three-dimensional architectural spaces, with lines and curves evolving into walls, windows, and arches. Hundertwasser's visual language, based on natural and sinuous forms, disrupts the geometric rigidity that dominates conventional architecture.

In his *Mouldiness Manifesto* (originally titled *Verchimmelungsmanifest gegen den Rationalismus in der Architektur*), he boldly criticized the use of straight lines in architecture, calling it a 'symbol of new illiteracy' and 'a reproductive lie'. For Hundertwasser, straight lines were not creative but represented sterile, unimaginative design. His manifesto advocates for a rejection of modern architecture that employs straight lines or circles, even conceptually, arguing that these shapes contribute to 'architectural decay'. For Hundertwasser, the curve was not an arbitrary aesthetic choice but a reflection of natural form, with each element of design conceived to interact harmoniously with the environment.

Hundertwasser's architecture is not about merely designing buildings; it's about creating a spatial experience that visually expresses a philosophy of life. Nature and humanity, in his view, are interconnected, not separate. A striking example of how Hundertwasser's drawing informs his architecture is the Spittelau Incinerator in Vienna (fig. 8).

Although it serves an industrial function, the building is designed as a work of art that reflects the artist's aesthetic philosophy [Peirce 1955]. The Spittelau district heating plant represents a sharp break from the monotony of functionalist architecture. Its form, though cubic, is animated by elements that enrich its visual and tactile perception. The facade, composed of heterogeneous materials such as Corten steel, concrete, and ceramics, creates a play of textures and hues, giving the building a dynamic, ever-changing appearance.

The straight lines and sharp angles typical of rationalist architecture are replaced by curved forms, saddle roofs, and irregular windows, giving the structure an organic, spontaneous character. The vibrant color palette contrasts with the neutrality of the materials, creating a joyful, festive atmosphere. Decorative elements like golden spheres, colorful ceramics, and sculptures further enhance the building's distinct character.

The facade of the incinerator merges Hundertwasser's pictorial language with the practical need to design an industrial building. The curves and vivid colors are not mere decoration but structural elements that redefine the perception of space. The design of the Spittelau Incinerator shows how

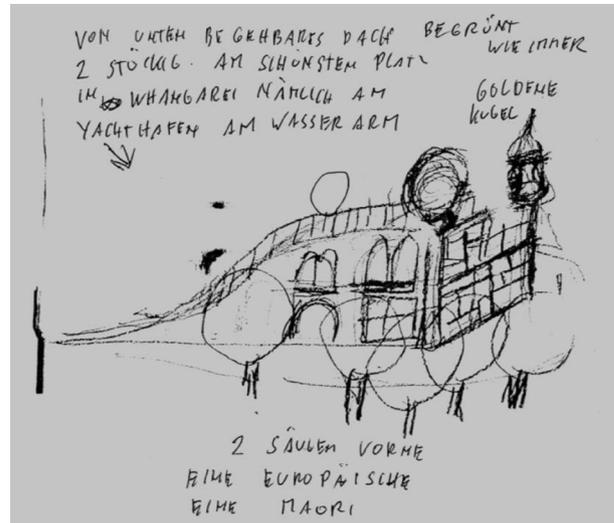


Fig. 9. F. Hundertwasser, original concept sketch for the Hundertwasser Art Centre with Wairau Māori Art Gallery in Whangārei, New Zealand, 1993 (image: courtesy Hundertwasser Non Profit Foundation).

Hundertwasser's visual drawings are essential to his architectural conception. Curves and undulating lines are not just formal choices, they are translated into spatial designs that convey respect for nature and emphasize the relationship between humanity and the environment [Villela 2012]. Spittelau is more than just a waste disposal plant. It is a testament to how visual language can be applied to architecture to generate a spatial experience that goes beyond function, integrating aesthetics, ecology, and symbolism. Rather than hiding or denying the industrial function of the building, Hundertwasser amplifies it through a symbolic aesthetic. The incinerator becomes a manifesto of reconciliation: between pollution and beauty, between the violence of industrialization and the possibility of ecological awareness. This visual transformation re-signifies the function, turning infrastructure into a site of reflection and civic identity. Hundertwasser wove a rich tapestry of symbols into Spittelau's design, each evoking deep, sometimes contradictory meanings. The white and black, referencing the Vienna Secession, symbolize not just elegance but life's inherent contrasts: light and shadow, birth and death. Colorful ceramics, fragments of an industrial and polluted world, are coated

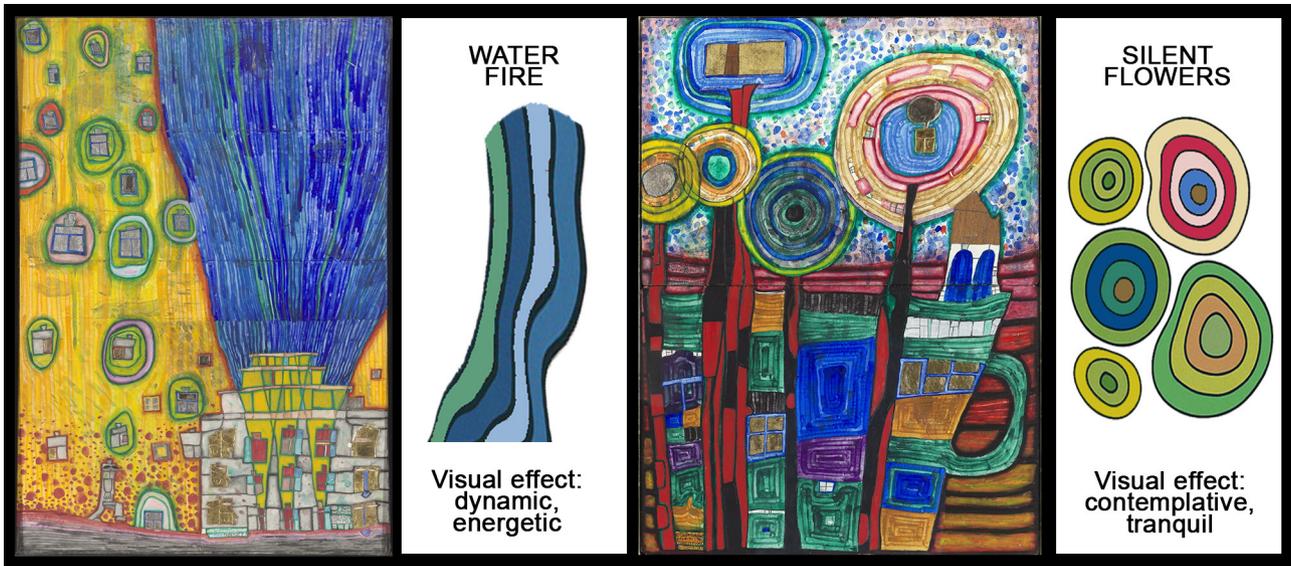


Fig. 10. Analysis of the paintings by Hundertwasser: on the left *Water fire*, 1982-1991; on the right *Silent flowers*, 1989-1991 (elaboration by the authors).

in nuances that suggest the complexity of reality and the importance of recycling.

The windows, like colored eyes, reflect both the richness of life and its fragility. The checkerboard pattern symbolizes the fight against standardization, contrasting with the organic forms and colors that speak to the tension between order and chaos. The blue of the sky, the yellow of fire, the gold of the future: each color carries a message, urging reflection on our relationship with the world and ourselves. Hundertwasser's drawings do more than represent form; they are the foundation of his architectural vision [Fürst 2002].

The transition from two-dimensional drawing to spatial design highlights how Hundertwasser translates his visual ideas into buildings that fulfill not just functional needs but emotional and symbolic ones as well (fig. 9).

Emotional and perceptual implications of drawing

The emotional and perceptual implications of drawing reveal themselves through a sensory and transformative dimension that goes beyond mere visual observation. The

artist draws and paints with brushes and various types of colors-oil, tempera, gouache, or watercolor-on canvas or paper. The only heterogeneous material that he likes to introduce is a touch of silver or gold leaf. Each color, chosen with precision, becomes a vehicle for a specific psychological and emotional response, capable of evoking contrasting sensations or harmonizing the perceptual experience. Colors are the true protagonists of his works: warm, vibrant shades like bright red and intense yellow alternate with deeper, more mysterious hues, such as black and purple. The color combinations are in continuous evolution, creating atmospheres that are sometimes joyful, sometimes melancholic. Particularly recurring is the spiral, a symbol of life and movement, which unfurls against backgrounds of intense colors. The line, as well as the color, plays a fundamental role. Organic shapes, reminiscent of the lines of nature, repeat rhythmically, creating a sense of movement and vitality [Pallasmaa 2012]. Despite the repetition, each work is unique, thanks to the artist's ability to avoid monotony and give each element its own individuality. Warm tones, such as orange and yellow, for example, create an atmosphere of warmth and vitality, stimulating interest and

energy, while cooler colors, like blue and green, induce a sense of tranquility and connection to the natural environment. The viewer is invited to immerse themselves in a fluid and dynamic vision, where each curve suggests movement, a continuous flow, generating a multisensory response that goes beyond sight to embrace touch and movement as well. Hundertwasser's drawing, therefore, does not merely represent a static image, but becomes a vehicle for a multisensory visual experience that transforms the perception of the surrounding world [Stephens, Fürst, Walkup 2020, pp. 53-57]. In this context, drawing operates as a form of atmospheric design: it sets in motion a choreography of signs and colors that affect the viewer's mood, memory, and bodily presence. The space of the drawing is not a window onto the world, but a milieu, a sensorial condition in which perception and emotion are mutually entangled. The fluid shapes, spirals, and curved lines are designed in such a way as to stimulate the imagination, inviting the viewer to enter a sort of visual dance, where each part of the work is in constant relationship with the others. The sense of movement these lines evoke is amplified by the contrast between vibrant colors and soft forms, creating a visual synesthesia that stimulates not only the eye but also the mind and the soul, facilitating a deep connection with the personal emotions of the observer. Drawing becomes an integrated experience that not only visually informs but also fully engages the emotional sphere, creating an experience in which art becomes a sensory medium (fig. 10).

Conclusions

This contribution aims to offer a critical and previously unexplored interpretation of Friedensreich Hundertwasser's work, moving beyond the predominantly descriptive or iconographic readings found in existing literature. While acknowledging the richness of current scholarships, particularly those focusing on the ecological, symbolic, and stylistic aspects of the artist's oeuvre, this study introduces an original perspective: the idea of drawing as an atmospheric language, conceived not merely as a medium of signification, but as a device capable of generating sensory, perceptual, and spatial conditions.

From this standpoint, Hundertwasser's graphic production is interpreted as a field of experiential activation, where color, line, and material collaborate to create affective environments, rather than mere images to be decoded (fig. 11).



Fig. 11. F. Hundertwasser, *Green town*, 1973-1978, mixed media, 970 mm × 1450 mm, Kunst-HausWien, Vienna (loan by collection Christian Baha).

The originality of this approach lies in its systematic and critical connection between drawing, painting, and architecture, domains which, in Hundertwasser's practice, are not separate, but form a fluid, coherent, and transformative language. While literature often separates his pictorial and architectural phases, this research demonstrates how the same visual alphabet, spirals, curves, chromatic contrasts, and tactile textures, is articulated both in two and three dimensions, maintaining an expressive continuity that challenges conventional disciplinary boundaries.

Works such as *Irinaland over the Balkans* and *The Houses Are Hanging Underneath the Meadows* (fig. 12) are analyzed here not only for their symbolic value, but also for their generative function, as genuine sensory prototypes that inform the spatial logic of the *Hundertwasserhaus* [1] and the *Waldspirale*.

The contribution also distinguishes itself through a focus on the active role of color and line as architectural tools. Contrary to interpretations that frame them as merely decorative, these elements are understood as part of a design strategy in which visual qualities act as devices for orientation, inclusion, differentiation, and relational engagement. Color, for instance, functions as a perceptual threshold: it defines zones, suggests directions, and evokes emotional states. The curved line, on the other hand, disrupts the functionalist rigidity of modernism and introduces the logic of body, of movement, of living irregularity.



Fig. 12. Paintings by F. Hundertwasser: on the left *Irlandland over the Balkans*, 1969; on the right *The houses are hanging underneath the meadows*, 1972.

In this sense, the paper proposes a semiotic reading applied not only to Hundertwasser's graphic work but also to architectural space as a communicative and affective environment.

An additional critical element is the reconsideration of the concept of skin, a recurring theme in Hundertwasser's poetics, as an interface between the individual and the environment. It is not merely an ecological or symbolic envelope, but a sensitive, perceptual threshold that embodies the continuity between subjectivity, inhabited space, and nature.

Viewed through this lens, the artist's work can be reinterpreted as a precursor to current discourses on drawing as an immersive, relational, and multisensory language.

Finally, this study introduces a new trajectory for research: that of visual ecology, understood as a field that interre-

lates sign, color, space, and perception. Through this paradigm, Hundertwasser's work emerges as a paradigmatic case for understanding how drawing, far from being a purely representational act, can generate perceptual and ecological worlds, restoring to the discipline of drawing a central role in imagining sustainable and poetically inhabited ways of dwelling.

The critical value of this contribution lies in its ability to rethink Hundertwasser's work beyond stylistic repertoire, exploring it as a visual thought practice that questions how we perceive, construct, and inhabit the world. In this perspective, drawing, in its broadest sense, asserts itself not only as a language of design, but as a critical and generative tool for engaging with the complexities of the contemporary world.

Notes

[1] The *Hundertwasserhaus*, completed in 1986, is a social housing complex that houses 52 apartments. Located about fifteen minutes' walk from the center of Vienna, in a predominantly residential area from the 19th century, it stands in sharp contrast to the surrounding buildings, which were often rebuilt in a modernist style in the mid-20th century. As a social housing building, it is owned and managed by the City of Vienna. To live there, residents must meet the criteria set by the city for public housing allocation. All the apartments are rented and feature different layouts: some are spread over one or two floors, while others are designed

for couples or larger families. Many have terraces with private gardens or balconies, while others provide access to common areas such as terraces, a winter garden, a laundry room, and children's play areas. The building also houses a café and a shop on the ground floor, which welcome the many tourists who visit Vienna each year. Although access inside the *Hundertwasserhaus* is no longer allowed for visitors, it is possible to immerse oneself in Hundertwasser's creative universe by visiting a renovated tire factory across from the building, where installations inspired by his architecture have been created.

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