

# Lazure: Walls of Living Color

BY AMY MARQUIS

One unique and striking characteristic of a Waldorf school is the luminosity of the walls of the classrooms. Each classroom is painted in a different color, and the walls seem to radiate this color, filling the space of the room.

This effect is achieved by a technique of color application called “lazuring.” Lazuring, based on indications by Rudolf Steiner, was developed in the early part of the twentieth century by artists connected to Waldorf Education and Anthroposophy. *Lasur* in German means something like “glazing.”

Lazure artist Robert Logsdon describes the lazure process:

Layers of paint [are] prepared nearly as thin and transparent as watercolor, consisting of water, binder, and pigment. A coat is applied with a rhythmical movement using large brushes over a white surface. This is allowed to dry and then another coat is applied. The final color is achieved using varied colors applied in several layers. Light passes

through these thin layers of color and is reflected back, giving a pure color experience.

The result is a transparent, radiant color that replicates, to a degree, color in the natural world. There are few, if any, phenomena in nature that present us with a flat surface of a single color. Lazuring recreates the dynamic, nuanced colors we find in nature, particularly in atmospheric phenomena such as the rainbow. Rudolf Steiner believed that walls should do more than simply wear color—they should radiate it. This radiant quality allows a person to “spiritually pass through the walls.” As another lazure artist, Charles Andrade, observes, when a room is painted in one flat, uniform color, we are limited to one experience—one mood, one sensibility. Lazure opens up many other possibilities of experience.

Rudolf Steiner also held that what we experience through the eyes as color deeply affects us on the physical, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual levels. Andrade points out that our perceptions of color go from the eyes directly to the brain and, from there, travel through the central nervous system to the glands and internal organs. Hence the colors of the room where we live, sleep, work, as well as study and learn are extremely important. They can have a supportive, enlivening, and even therapeutic effect.

The wall colors that are used in Waldorf classrooms are based on Steiner’s view of how colors are related to each stage of development of the children. The hue chosen is understood to support the children’s development and learning. For example, in the kindergarten, the walls are a soft peachblossom (a light and living magenta), which reflects and assists the dreamy consciousness of the small child. The classrooms of the older children may be a shade of blue that corresponds with their more formed and intellectual consciousness.

Ayesha Mall is a Waldorf early childhood educator who fell in love with lazuring and trained in the technique. In April 2011, she came to New Orleans for AWSNA’s annual service weekend. Mall was joined by Waldorf students and alumni from across the nation who came to help make the Waldorf School



*Hallway of the Baltimore Waldorf School, painted by lazure artist Charles Andrade*

of New Orleans shine. Under Mall's direction, some of the volunteers lazured the classroom walls with rainbows and the school auditorium with a sunburst.

Mall describes the project with enthusiasm, saying, "Working with so many wonderful Waldorf colleagues from all across the country was a new experience, and I left with the sense that the walls were glowing."



Color circle showing the sequence of wall colors suitable for the various grades

Ama Rogan, who is a Waldorf parent and an artist, joined in the lazuring effort that same weekend. She says it was inspirational and gave her an intuition about the parallel between the technique itself and the Waldorf curriculum. "It seems to me the key is in the layering, the depth, just as in the education," Rogan

explains. "Then of course there is the color—what each color means and especially how the children respond to it."



Lazure "rainbow" treatment of a stairway wall,



Chapel of The Christian Community, Toronto, painted by lazure artist Charles Andrade

And the children do respond. On the day she first saw her newly lazured classroom, one second grader at the New Orleans school exclaimed: "The most beautiful thing I saw when I walked into school this morning was my classroom. It is like a real rainbow. I really, really, really, really like it." ☺



Lazure projects in progress

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### Resources

For more information about lazure painting, contact

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