

Color Theory

Posted originally on the [Archive of Our Own](https://archiveofourown.org/works/11410539) at <https://archiveofourown.org/works/11410539>.

Rating:	General Audiences
Archive Warning:	No Archive Warnings Apply
Categories:	Gen , Multi
Fandom:	Transistor (Video Game)
Characters:	Red (Transistor) , Subject The Boxer , Sybil Reisz , Asher Kendrell , Grant Kendrell , Royce Bracket
Language:	English
Stats:	Published: 2017-07-05 Words: 3,050 Chapters: 1/1

Color Theory

by [CalicoColors](#)

Summary

Cities, visions, and people, developed in color.

Notes

See the end of the work for [notes](#)

I. Value

Cloudbank shines with restless energy, each window a shifting mystery and every building a ticking countdown. The lights are bright, blinding, hardly a shadow amidst the glowing life. It feels like the city itself is alive, as if the charged zest pounding under the surface holds more than artificial reality, as if it has a mind of its own.

There's no doubt that Cloudbank has a strength, an energy beating in its center; any one of its many citizens could tell you that much. There are thousands, possibly millions of different ways the city burns bright. People may say, voice hushed in awe, about the wonders of Goldwalk Bay, and how the sun glinting off the water shines just perfectly on an afternoon voted for sunny skies. Even at night, the wonder doesn't fade, and the flicker of sparkles dusting off the calm waters from the ever-bright spotlights remain a breathless sight to behold.

Others may smile and tilt their head towards the music hall, where faint hums and hushed claps infuse the air with lively, serene energy from the talented songwriters of Cloudbank's best. Stopping to soak in the rich ambiance with attuned ears is said to bring comfort to even the most troubled, weary soul.

Some swear that Junction Jan's flatbread makes any meal an unforgettable experience, or that Farrah's sky-paint has the power to enlighten even the most stubborn of minds. The way land bends under majority's will to follow the people's demands, never a dull moment when a new shopping district or central park is just a vote away. How the outfits resonate to the individual style, how radio broadcasts speak to the heart, how the social life galvanize the mind. Even the most sheltered, offset alleyway is spoken with well-regard, as the city remains comfortable and safe in its utopian design.

Yet.

There's unrest bubbling under the streets, crawling inside walls, rattling in the air. Energy beats as consistent as ever, but it never thrums as potent as it once did. The lights are bright and gleaming as always, a stunning view from any angle, but it no longer covers all the secret shadows. Music still sings, engineering still builds, machinery still hums, art still flourishes, and people still roam, but it's all flat, more perfunctory, as if another pressure threatens to disrupt the peace the city maintains.

There's something more, something developing, something heavy hanging in the air. No one person will say it aloud, hardly even dare to think it, only quietly ponder and file it away under false pretenses. Yet still, that pressure still builds, still seems to press close, threatening to break and spill and wonder.

No unsightly incidents have occurred in so long, and still no evidence for criminal activity arises, but rumors spread and stain like colorful paint in water, never quite washing out. Sharp minds vanish, broadcasts go quiet, investigators dead-end, sky-paint fades, fashion dulls. The best and brightest of the city, the ones that spark innovative light and invigorate that robust, core energy, disappear abruptly and without warning. New figures, inventors,

designers, and visionaries move in to replace, to maintain the cycle, but that uneasiness lingers like a ghost with unfinished business.

The city is quite familiar with change, thrives on it, even, but this pressured cycle cannot remain stabilized, and the city knows it.

And at the end of its life, all that remains is bright white creeping patches to paint over the once-vibrant mix of city lights. Individuality and uniqueness woven into the fabrics of Cloudbank, built into bridges and buildings and painted in posters and roads and sung in spades telling of time, meld into one. Any history, whatever mismatched scraps of it left to record, and any true life is wiped clean, defragmented to barely a memory.

The blur created in the wake of Process cares not about design, about luminance or values or changing, nothing for what the city originally stood for. White emptiness and deconstructed reality is logical, rational, and the most efficient path to follow for machines that are simply following its assigned job. It's their vision, to follow that ideal. That is what it strives for, just as Cloudbank strived for its own ever-shifting vision.

The world may be lighter, burden gone and white blinding, but the feeling is far darker and emptier than ever before.

-

II. Saturation

The city is intense, ever-shining and ever-changing, yet inexplicably *dull*.

There is no individuality in constant change. Nothing defining Cloudbank outside of that image, a bubble of popular vote and whimsical thoughts driving citizens to create, destroy, create, and destroy again and again and again, never tiring and never ending. History is pointless to record, if it always repeats eventually. Time passes, but it's all so timeless, empty and ultimately meaningless.

A bridge is created one morning, until majority rules popular vote for a sunny day. The bridge turns park, where everyone spends a day picnicking and frolicking, when the next few cycles turns grassy land to industrial skyscraper to local café and, finally, a return to that same simple bridge where it all began.

And the cycle never stops. It never *will* stop, caught in that infinite loop like two mirrors facing each other and forever replicating their own empty reflections.

Something had to change to stop change. That was the foundation of the Camerata's goals, the motto members followed and directed. "*When everything changes, nothing changes,*" and each member followed this to succeed in their own unique approach.

One connected, reaching out with effervescence everywhere at once, ranging from organizing dazzling events to meeting new people to discovering interesting information to marking

anything particularly useful to the cause. To her, the city was a journey to traverse, to find the most brilliant and newest top picks, and she saw the deep cracks in between to make her work pop brightly. Her wide-spreading reach and flawless social skills never revealed what hid under that wide-brimmed hat and wave-striped umbrella. Friendly attitudes and tolerant speech may have been her play, but denial from what she treasured corroded her, destroyed her from the inside out.

Rust led to rashness, and planned actions born from impulse and jealousy and bordering obsession flaked away at her core until not even solid metal remained. Dust in the wind, returned to the Earth, she cries in her insanity and yet none can save, save, *I saved you I saved you I always I always wanted to...*

The end is a mercy wrapped in a blessing.

-

One administrated, unsatisfied in the world around him, the depth and passion he once saw in the concentration of the city luminosity now simple, repetitive, exhausting in the constant cycling. He's served Cloudbank for years upon years, never tiring and always striving to please that driving majority, keep the city flowing and running and turning as requested. If he had a plan, there would be action without doubt. And plans he did have, even if they were not the popular vote.

Power slipped, lost to the unregistered soul, the Nobody and their intended target with the fervor-bright voice that incited passion into crowds amidst. His city, the one he worked for, strived for, wanted to become *better* and greater and with such wonderful hopes, futures—falls apart, melting seamlessly into the expanse of simplicity he wanted to wipe free. Voting matters not, when no person is around to tick the boxes of wishes and opinions, nor does innovation when no one is around to create. All because of him.

It was the coward's way out, he knew, but he couldn't spend another second feeling the loss and grief tear his way out of the remnants of his spirit, broken to shreds in the wake of his failure. There's nothing left to save, not even himself. Atonement is all he can ask.

Even then, he's sure forgiveness will never be granted. Not after all he's done. There is no comfort in the eternal Countryside.

-

One wrote, endlessly pouring his knowledge into blank pages and filling them with thoughts, ideas, questions, any scrap of information that he could find. He wrote for the city, and on the side plucked its secrets from inaccurate sequences that don't add up and drew up various conclusions on his own. A futile journey, and a frustrating one at that, until a source revealed an answer to his pile of loose threads and torn papers. There began his real work.

Finding secrets was hard; keeping his own was far easier. The terminal at his fingertips, persuading with his words, dimmed whispers and moles and questions. All for the cause, for the knowledge, for the one he would follow until the very end.

That eventually came sooner than he would have thought, or would have preferred. Betrayal twitched in his blood, thinning, and grief twisted his heart while watching the glass vial spill drops of moss-colored poison on pale skin. He said it would be together, they would be...if they fall, they fall as one, and as he watches the Process code the city to one simultaneously, their greatest risk turned failure, he understands why (but can't entirely forgive, can't, *why would he leave—abandon—he said we would—*).

At least there is enough for two.

-

One created, a sprawling vision of what he saw the new normal to be. The stars of the show, the workers behind the scene of Cloudbank's edits, would be brought forward. Their function, saturated in electric blue, would be his own whim. Surety in his mind, a goal at hand and a means to achieve, he worked to build and create something long-lasting, solid, real and tangible and an art unlike anything that has been seen.

Craft disrupted, torn aside and function disconnected to an error() that would destroy what he wished to build. Panicked rush, and in one two three strikes their cabal folded, the card house of their careful design falling slowly at first then, sudden collapse, all at once.

There is a solution, he knows and understands and explains. Connection returned, electric blue sending signals to cease and desist.

Really, it's too bad it was far too late to fix anything at all.

And really, it's unfortunate that he was too slow to strike the final blow and rebuild.

All that's left is the failure of their mission, the result of their pride, the wreck of their city and their livelihoods dulled and dimmed, how it was never supposed to be.

-

III. Hue

Gold is the city, and the people within. Sparkling, achieving more with ambitious creations and high hopes. The sky was no longer the limit, when you can change its design and color at will. Cultured, well-spoken, enlightened, and prosperous, Cloudbank shone bright and stood tall over the world as the leading gateway to a new, elegant future people carve for themselves.

The status of their citizens reflects this, with the wealth and success of the utopia created. Rich, knowledgeable minds flock, each contributing something new, something everybody wants or needs. People pleasers, clever creators, silver-tongued souls, ever more developing to build their ideas. All are unique, yet all seem to ultimately strive for the same goals, curiously.

At room-temperature, gold is solid and tough, a beautiful metal to build upon. Yet when heated by passion and driven minds, liquid gold turns malleable, crafted into whatever the hands holding it want. Soon enough, too much change turns even the most brilliant block of sparkling yellow to less hues, weaker tints and dull designs.

Eventually, it will all fall apart back to its foundations. Eventually, it will all build anew.

-

The Process is colorless, blank, an expanse of unblemished white to pound new design into. It has no love for art, no eye for design or theory of color, only the blank slates as designated by code. It does not feel—it simply executes actions as it was made to do. Just as all citizens are bound by their ambitions, to carve futures as they see fit, the Process works just the same, bound to its design.

Purity lies in white, the color of everything, completely lacking all tints and shades and other impurities. All spectrums in the hues of life, each an individual, eventually create a balanced slate, a neutral choice neither good or evil. Left behind, the slate leaves room for another spectrum of citizens to grow upon, only to repeat the same cycle, and it goes on and on and on.

The city's remnants whirl silently, no crowds or sets or machinery to hum along, and hues slowly wash out to fade into the absence of all color.

-

The Camerata had the color of red woven into their background, their goals passion-driven and established. Determined to bring change, to unravel the threads tying Cloudbank together in its toxic cycle and braid them into their new vision, one that would heal and mend and help the city grow and develop instead of stagnating as flat pools of beautiful, but still, water.

They worked behind the scenes, exactly like the Process did, and kept their true hues hidden to anyone other than each other. Once it was time, they would be able to shine, unblemished and bright and intense, but every good plan takes patience to properly execute. And so, they waited and worked and failed, thinned red trickling to a dry reservoir.

She, on the other hand, is a deep, esoteric Red, carving her path through the degrading city with wild, strict intent. Without voice, she prowls, revenge and justice in mind and her own desperate wish driving her ever forward. Decisions are her own, no conformity to ideals or chasing of a plan, only her ambitions. All the loss—her voice, Cloudbank, friends, *Him*—leads to one source, the one place where everything began cascading to pieces, and she'll tear them apart, break their hearts like they did hers. She was never one to lie down and admit defeat.

Endless swarms of Process, crushed under function and `turn()`, developing and growing as she flies close and closer. One Process, grief and insanity twisting and cracking a once-sharp mind, a close acquaintance broken from unintentional harm—it hurts to see, but she can't help her. She can't (never could, not even the one that mattered most—) save everyone.

Neither can she forgive, entirely, but what's left of that once-known friend deserves some mercy at least.

Cowards who destroyed the whole city with their hubris, their vanishing vision, lie at her feet, who don't even have the decency to speak to her face and attempt to expiate their actions. Twisted together under a chalkboard, outlined model unknown, message waiting in an OVC splattered with flecks of toxic drops, their touch contaminating one last place in Cloudbank. She leaves that tower with a new goal in mind, the final realization, to complete the one in her heart.

The composer, the primary orchestrator of this operation lies in his cradle, and falls inside of it to never return. Colors bleed out—bright red, washing out to pale pink, and finally spotless ivory after it bleaches to pure nothingness. A part of her may regret or mourn what has been done, but it's hard to consider that and equally compare it the grief of the people's loss and her own. It's finally over.

Even with power under her hand, wielding the paintbrush on the city's canvas, her heart's desire can never return. The city is a tomb, devoid of life and artificial in nature, and her promise is broken as any last tint of hope fades away. She has a whole world to rebuild, but how can she want that facsimile when her whole universe can never truly return to her?

There's nothing for her here, not anymore. There's nothing she can do. It's easy to decide what to do next. This choice, is the most freeing one of all.

"See you in the country" --R.

-

Electric blue was built to control, to curb the design and create the whims. It was a weapon not to destroy, but to create, and for a while it did its job to serve the vision of a few that wished to fix the many. Just like any delicate balance, however, a single wrong move sent it spiraling apart to dust and bones.

The new control, the same vibrant blue under new management, works not for the cabal and not for the city. It doesn't work, technically, for anyone except his own goals, just like that other primary red with the blazing-bright hues. Which is funny, in a way, because her goals are what he wants to ultimately defend anyways.

Often he's calm, collected, a guiding force with voice to encourage. That electric song under the blade shines, destroying Processes in the path etched, and the weapon is no longer a creator yet not miscreant either. It's used as it's title intends, and its intentions are to destroy those who will take or have taken from them.

He wishes he could have more—oh does he want more, to have just one more day on top of Highrise with her in his arms or to hear one more grand performance of hers, songs filled with spirit and love—but he can't. Maybe never will. They're still figuring things out, ending the Process and hunting the Camerata and finding justice for the wrongs wrought pretty high on their priority list, but after that—well, the outside of the city is waiting for them. As long as she is okay. As long as she never lets him go.

They succeed, in the end, but no one really wins. Now, though, the world lies waiting, sprawling, the Transistor a creator once again. He knows he can never return back to life as he knew it, and he'd accepted that a long time ago no matter how much it still hurts like knives. But she *will*, she can paint a masterpiece of Cloudbank's remains and build her own future. This is as good as it will ever be, and it's plenty enough for him to see her safe.

He wonders what she'll do first, what they will—

—stop. Don't do this. Don't you dare, *please*—

-

-

-

Hey.

End Notes

me: wow what a good game, i'll just write a short drabble, haha
me, three days and 3000 words later: ok

This was so cathartic to write. Just thoughts and thoughts. Also I love this beautiful game to bits and pieces, and I have a lot of feelings to express.

Please [drop by the Archive and comment](#) to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!