

4<sup>th</sup> March 2022

## Colour

**“Colour seems to radiate happiness and the spirit of modern life and movement, and I cannot put too much of it into my designs.”**

*Clarice Cliff*, in 'Clarice Cliff: the Art of the Bizarre' by Leonard Griffin

An on-line news report triggered a piece of research. Here's what I found.

*Synaesthesia* is a neurological condition in which the origin of one sense triggers another. In some people the senses are “cross-connected”. There are those who will see a balloon in the air and have a particular taste in their mouth. Others can see the letters in black-and-white text in a variety of colours. There are even some who can smell your name. Only about 4% of the population have one of the 80 types of *synaesthesia*, including some famous people, Vincent Van Gough, Fredrich Nietzsche, Marilyn Monroe and Vladimir Nabokov, to name but a few.

A common type is *chromesthesia* in which sounds produce colours or shapes, and the history of music is full of singers, songwriters and composers who've seen music in colours, in one way or another: Duke Ellington, Jean Sibelius, Kanye West, Franz Liszt, Ed Sheeran, Stevie Wonder. The singer-songwriter and pianist, Billy Joel, tells us this: “[In] more intimate songs ... I think in terms of blues and greens. When I [see] a particularly vivid colour, it's usually a strong melodic [and] rhythmic pattern that emerges ... In some songs I've written, I have to follow a vowel colour ... a very blue or a very green ... With consonants, it's a harder sound. These ... I associate with reds and oranges.”

Now, I don't live with *chromesthesia*, or, indeed, *synaesthesia* in any form. Nor am I envious of those that do. But I'm amazed that there are people who experience the richness of life in more complex and amazing ways than I'd ever realised. I don't really understand it all. But I'm astounded that, once again, there are new dimensions to appreciating beauty and sounds, words and colours, shapes and tastes than I ever knew.

Clarice Cliff was right. Colour *does* seem to “radiate happiness in the spirit of modern life and movement”. And as I'm in the 96% of the population that doesn't have *synaesthesia*, I'll just have to use what's available to me to appreciate the wonder and colour of life all the more.

### A prayer for today

*Colour, variety, wonder, beauty, sounds, music, words ... Wow! Thank you, God.*