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In this particular volume the issue of art as interference and the strategies that it should adopt have been reframed within the structures of contemporary technology as well as within the frameworks of interactions between art, science and media. What sort of interference should be chosen, if one at all, remains a personal choice for each artist, curator, critic and historian.

INTERFERENCE STRATEGIES

Towards an Ontology of Colour in the Age of Machinic Shine

by

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Colour is a very familiar experience, we are always already immersed in it, but when it comes to speaking or writing colour, something else happens, that is neither colour nor language. The more we talk about colour the more we talk about language and its limitation at the phenomenal edge of perception.

Because of this, as David Batchelor demonstrates in his book *Chromophobia*, [1] we tend to live in a world of colour prejudices and cultural taboos against colour, that align good taste and cultural sophistication with a severe restriction on the use of colours. As such the West is inherently chromophobic, equating taste and sophistication with clothes, houses and paintings that are black, white, grey, or brown. This is to be contrasted with chromophilia, [2] a wantonness of colour which erupts in the excessiveness of the "feminine, primitive, infantile, vulgar, queer or pathological." [3] This apartheid of colour is also reinforced by the ancient argument between colour and line, dating back to Aristotle who argued that the "repository of thought in art is line, the rest is ornament." [4] Ever since then colour has been understood as superficial, an ephemeral occurrence on the surface of things, whereas line and the under-coloured is permanent, structural and meaningful.

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A B S T R A C T

This paper argues that the enduring mystery of colour, in particular its elemental effusiveness, has been tamed and managed by notions of good taste and chic that equate cultural maturity with a limited palette. Yet colour in all its post industrial forms continues to break free of constraints in an audacious display of autopoiesis. The science of colour based on image, mimesis, and the physiology of the eye has missed the phenomenon of colour altogether because it takes place at the incalculable level of shine and radiance. Ontologically colour makes things manifest by revealing them in their unique presence rather than merely facilitating communication, representation or spectacle. Before colour is seen, before light can facilitate a look, colour looks back in such a way that looking and seeing are provoked.

Using Thierry de Duve, David Batchelor and Martin Heidegger it will be shown that these ways of being with colour are extended by a formal evolution in painting whereby expanded painting addresses everything in the everyday world that carries colour from data screens to plastic utensils and even paint itself. Ultimately, the medium of painting however deconstructed or expanded, has become the entity to 'whom' the work of colour is addressed.

Despite some of the prohibitions against immodesty in colour, the meaning of the most basic term in this discussion, namely "colour" itself , is poorly understood. The slipperiness of colour has been sometimes held in place by symbolism that ties some colours to specific social purposes and meanings. For example the Sumptuary Laws of Elizabethan England mandated that only royalty could wear purple attire. Into the 20th century, various modern artists attempted to develop a grammar of colour linked to music or emotions. Kandinsky developed a primary polarity of yellow and blue that suggest active and passive perceptual sensations. Johannes Itten a colleague of Kandinsky at the Bauhaus, developed a complex colour theory that linked colours to certain emotions and spiritual states.

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Colour is verifiable, it surrounds us at all times, but the words we use to divide the spectrum of colour into functional divisions is quite arbitrary and untranslatable between different cultures and ages. The Inuit supposedly have a vast array of terms for the single colour we call white, the French use brown and purple as interchangeable in certain situations, Russians see two colours where we just see blue, and Hindus don't differentiate red and orange. The word 'red', or any colour term in any language, has no inherent chromatic value and is only an arbitrary signifier shifting under cultural and historical differences.

Colour is there, but it continually slips through the grasp of linguistic possession.

Batchelor cites Plotinus [5] to show us why. In short, there is an incommensurability between colour and language because colour is indivisible, there are no breaks in the rainbow, while language is based on divisions and conceptual units that contradict colour's natural tendency to "spread, flow, bleed, stain, soak, seep, and merge." [6]

Because of this, the difference between the perception of colour, the social experience of colour and the history of colour terms, has produced a bewildering set of possibilities. At various points physics weighed in as the most authoritative voice, but due to an unresolvable uncertainty between wave and particle theories it has resulted in "one of the worst muddles in the history of science." [7]

COLOURISM

Colour is a constant challenge to our understanding. It challenges the scientist to quantify light, the thinker to bring colour to language, and the painter to embrace it elementally. It is the indeterminacy of colour in its movement between physical presence and modes of understanding that leaves us with a bewildering array of colour strategies in art. In 20th century art whenever there was a struggle between concepts as pure idea, unadorned by colour, and perception embodied in colour, idea always won out. Consider the different status of Conceptual Art and Cubism versus Op Art and Fauvism.

The polarity of colour and concept is a lingering Platonism that favours the immortal realm of ideas over the temporary and sensuous. [8] Colourist artists are usually associated with a kind of anti-realism, breaking with the natural colours of things, to make colour an expressive, affective or formal element as in impressionism, abstraction, and colour field painting. The nature of colour for a colourist changes with time and according to the presence of pigments and how they are harnessed and made available. Before the 20th century colour came from earthly pigments sometimes captured in a tube, later on synthetic colours were produced in tins and made from laboratory concoctions, now colour is largely pixel based. The demand for colour in various non-art situations, as in house paint and industrial surfaces, saw the creation of new industrial paints and related products. This in turn pushed the nature of art making away from the accurate representation of flesh to the seductive presentation of colour that might somehow compete with the spectacular materials and facades of the modern world. To be a colourist in the 21st century means thinking colour anew, specifically in terms of the ubiquity of coloured plastics and the plasticity of colour on an electronic screen.

As Batchelor points out the tension between these two worlds of colour is symbolised by the difference between the colour wheel and the colour chart. The colour wheel is historically steeped and scientifically justified in its hierarchies of colour, that rationalise the visible and makes it ready for representation. Whereas the colour chart is a "disposable list of readymade colour" in a "grammarless accumulation of colour units" [9] that strips colour free from colour theory and places it in an entirely autonomous zone ready for abstraction.

We might take a further step from the colour wheel through the colour chart to the colour cell, that is, the picture cell or pixel of the video and computer screen. These are the colours of any screen we might use for domestic entertainment, telephony, global location, gaming platforms, video art or media facades.

The pixel that makes up the LCD screen on a phone or the plasma screen that hangs in a gallery is electronically endowed with a colour more intense than any painting. As Jeremy Gilbert Rolfe puts it, these kinds of screens

> *make the world more than it is, more colourful and more defined … offering painting another surface to which to refer … brighter than any that preceded it, unimaginably thin, a surface without depth.* [10]

What permits the impossible brightness and thinness of electronic colour is plastic itself, the plastic of the surface of the monitor and the plastic components that hold the screen elements together. Plastic, the ultimate technological agent has also become the agent provocateur of colour, transmitting a new kind of colour while also challenging painting to find ever new intensities that can match it. In the history of colour, pigments were originally refined by hand from natural materials such as ochre, beetle eggs, flowers and crushed shellfish. Later industrial science and the petrochemical industry produced synthetic pigments that were more intense and not reliant on expensive exotic biomass. Today the colour cell has no origin in material substances at all, shining out from the interior of electronic light itself. The colours of a digital screen have moved beyond the materiality of pigment towards something like structural color. Structural colour occurs in nature without pigment through optical effects such as interference, refraction, and diffraction. It happens when the arrangement of physical structures interacting with light produce a particular iridescent colour as seen in peacock feathers, mother of pearl shell, beetle shells and butterfly wings.

Many things today aspire to the condition of structural colour whether it is made of plastic or pigment, whether it is material or electronically immaterial. The challenge is taken up in the laboratory where new synthetic chemicals attempt to reach the colour intensity of a data screen through fluorescent paint or the integration of LED technology into wearable fibre and building exteriors.

As such the electronic monitor and painting reach out to each other through the medium of colour and the format of the screen, alternately embracing and exceeding each other.

If Pollock and Newman engaged wide angle cinemascope screens and in response Technicolour film stock aspired to the intensity of painterly expressionism, then contemporary painting refers to the digital monitor in its luminescence and multimodal forms while small digital screens show complex visual presences mimicking miniature painting and postage stamp design.

This change in the nature of colour involves refiguring the presence of paint and the object of painting itself. The matter of paint in this new environment of colour can no longer be constrained by coloured stuff gathered from a tube, but must also include any object that has been invested with colour such as string, clothing, furniture, cars, data screens and build-

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ings. Similarly the object of painting can no longer be confined by a flat surface but must include works that spread out across space and time encroaching on other media like sculpture, installation, performance and video. Riffing on painting, mixing colour in different painted materials, some things are left out of the painters repertoire, such as brush and easel, and new things are introduced, such as anodised aluminium, coloured smoke, and architecture. These works are not nameable as painting but nevertheless originate within the differential field of colour.

In the current situation there is nowhere that colour cant go, there are green stripes on toothpaste as it is extruded from the tube, cars and cleaning utensils have an infinite array of tones, human limbs as well as everything plastic can be injected with myriad colour variations. Wherever colour is, in commodities, on screen interfaces, in experiential environments, painting can take a stand, addressing colour as that which is environmentally all around.

COLOUR IS

One thing is certain at this stage, colour is, but the nature of its presence has not yet been captured or named [11] since it is essentially resistant to nomination. [12] Colour invokes a series of nested questions, how does it present, how is it experienced and how can it be spoken? Experientially colour rains down from the sky in the warmth of the sun and erupts up out of the earth as raw pigment and the hues of nature. Colour is awesome and ubiquitous in its presence, it is in everything, on everything, everything is shot through with colour, colour shines out from a world of things, and in its shining brings a world into existence. Colour is not a solitary separate thing or event, it is always the colour of something. The whole world is coloured and so to some extent the world is colour. Everything is in colour, colour emerges from the obscure ground of things, it is all around like air, things are always already coloured. In the everyday we are so immersed in colour that it is taken as granted, it becomes un-thought, a background phenomenon, until a sunset or work of art shocks us into remembering its uncanny way of being surprising, awesome, astounding. As Michel Haar puts it, "[c]olours are all at once the ground, 'the secret soul of what is below', the surface, and what sublimates the surface, 'the ideas', substance, figure, and 'general harmony', 'the life of God'." [13]

Colour is not just seen, it is experienced in depth, through and through. It is an unfolding encapsulation from sensation to perception, to affect, to my sense of being in the world. In this movement from perception to being, "colour cracks open the form-spectacle." [14] Thus colour is not a spectacle or an element of form, but a necessary precondition to both. Colour is more than my affective or sensory experience, it moves me to a place of ecstatic embeddedness. Through the sensation of colour I am of the world.

Colour, like the act of thinking, can be forgotten and at times must be forgotten, so that performance and experience can take place. One way of remembering the forgotten of colour is through painting. In painting, touching colour as a maker, or being touched by colour as a viewer, is much the same thing. It begins with seeing colour, then really seeing colour, then touching colour, then feeling colour, then knowing colour, then being in colour, then in colour, being.

This kind of language is an attempt to find another way of talking colour that honours and justifies the new ways we walk with colour today. I find some help in this process from the German philosopher Martin Heidegger. Heidegger was not known for his chromatic sensibility despite the fact that he was a personal friend of modern masters such as George Braque and Paul Klee. His writing does briefly mention colour as lighting or shining out, in an ontological sense, without relying on any scientific theory of colour or light.

In "The Origin of the Work of Art" he mentions stone, colour and language as various materials that can be used to set forth a work of art, such that "rock comes to bear and rest; metals come to glitter and shimmer, colours to glow, tones to sing, the word to say. All this comes forth as the work sets itself back into the massiveness and heaviness of stone, into the firmness and pliancy of wood, into the hardness and lustre of metal, into the lighting and darkening of colour, into the clang of tone, and into the naming power of the word." [15]

All these types of work from sculpture, to painting to poetry rest back into a material element. If we try to understand the work by analysing the materiality of stone, metal, colour, tone and word, the material itself simply withdraws. Thus for example "if we attempt a penetration by breaking open the rock, it still does not display in its fragments anything inward that has been opened up. The stone has instantly withdrawn into the same dull pressure and bulk of its fragments." And similarly with colour, "colour shines and wants only to shine… when we analyse it in rational terms by measuring its wavelengths, it is gone. It shows itself only when it remains undisclosed and unexplained." [16]

It is the work of art that allows us to see the shine of colour as opposed to a more direct physiological and scientific understanding of vision. Art, particularly painting reveals an ontology of colour in which shine and radiance is experienced as "showing self-showing." [17] The artwork introduces what is undisclosed about colour into the world, while a scientific grasping of colour simply dims it down as explanation or calculation. The shining of the earth through the material of colour radiates through the world as a sense of manifest meaning. "The world stands as the medium through which the shining of the earth distributes itself through relations of significance." [18] Colour as an aspect of earth, presents a radiance that penetrates or 'juts' into the world as pure shine or shimmer. Kenneth Maly describes it as a

> *shimmering that shines with a certain unsteadiness where it is always at something like a boundary, it can never cross that boundary, even as it is always moving 'across' the boundary.* [19]

At that point, colour casts an ontological light rather than an optical presence, moving closer to the movement of thought and away from the physiology of vision.

In this moment colour and light become one and the same issue, each resting within the other, neither existing without the other.

ONTOLOGY OF LIGHT

In everyday experience for something to show up as substantially present to our awareness it must be apparent, that is, have some aspect of accessibility. The current understanding of visual access relies on a model of perception based on the laws of representation and the physiology of the eye. However other ages, notably ancient Greece, had no such conceptual structure. For them vision was more laterally democratic in that "the one who looks shows himself and appears" [20] in the act of seeing. Thus objects seen and those who look "emerge in the double sense that the object rises in self showing and the essence of the looker is collected in the look." [21] Looking is then the way humans come into presence with other beings, all sharing the commonality of appearance, each drawing

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out and revealing something of the other in the moment of appearing.

By treading around the extreme edges of what is currently understood about the eye, light, and subjectivity, old certainties begin to give way. New possibilities beyond the scientific quantification of light and its lens based metaphors begin to take shape. A significant move in this context is Heidegger's contrast between modern representational looking and pre-modern apprehension of presence:

> *That which is, does not come into being at all through the fact that man first looks upon it, in the sense of a representing that has the character of subjective perception. Rather man is the one who is looked at by that which is, he is the one who is – in company with itself – gathered towards presencing, by that which opens itself.* [22]

At first instance apprehension might seem to be a passive mode requiring only a certain openness and availability on the part of those who look. However Heidegger does go on to define both active and passive poles of apprehension. Passively the looker lets something come to be seen so that what appears can show itself out of itself. On the active side apprehending is a dynamic claiming, similar to the legal understanding of apprehending a witness who is held for detention and interrogation.

> *Apprehension in this double sense denotes a process of letting things come to oneself ... [and to] take up a position to receive what shows itself.* [23]

Thus apprehension is not simply a passive absorption or active consumption by a knowing subject, since it takes place beyond any mode of sensory perception.

> *Apprehension is not a way of behaving that the human being has as a property; to the contrary, apprehension is the happening that has the human being.* [24]

Apprehension actively creates an appropriate receptivity in the moment of looking. It is "fundamentally a de-cision ... and thus a confrontation *with* seeming." [25] The 'de-cision' to be made is not a conscious choice but a separating that establishes the possibility of a new meeting place between self showing and a welcoming invitation. It requires a certain touch since if it is too soft then nothingness reigns as an "unseeing gaping," [26] and if it is too hard then deception rules as a form of self referentiality, seeing the world only as an anthropomorphic mirror. As Merleau Ponty put it,

> *since the seer is caught up in what he sees it is still himself he sees: there is a fundamental narcissism of all vision. And thus, for the same reason, the vision he exercises, he also undergoes from the things, such that, as many painters have said, I feel myself looked at by the things, my activity is equally passivity – which is the second and more profound sense of the narcissim: not to see in the outside, as the others see it, the contour of a body one inhabits, but especially to be seen by the outside, to exist within it, to emigrate into it, to be seduced, captivated, alienated by the phantom, so that the seer and the visible reciprocate one another and we no longer know which sees and which is seen.* [27]

In apprehension the seer is seen by what appears, and what appears settles back into itself through the action of shining out. Apprehension is the moment of shine, a moment of encounter between looking and being seen.

Unusual support for the counter intuitiveness of this idea comes from the world of science, in particular quantum physics where a reversal of the dynamic relationship between seer and seen has been documented. The Heysenberg uncertainty principle, [28] suggests that by simply looking at something causes it to change its behavior. This was based on the observation that sub atomic particles, beings that do not have sight or emotions, were effected by the act of human inspection regardless of the accuracy of the technology being used. The uncertainty principle was found to be inherent in all wave-like systems of which light is one. The uncertainty principle is one of many theories that shows a fundamental limit to the precision with which certain basic physical properties, like position and momentum, can be known. The more precisely position is known, the more mysterious is its momentum and vice versa. The uncertainty principle in quantum physics is a variation of the observer effect in traditional physics, where simple acts of observation interrupt the phenomenon being observed. For example when I am pumping up the tyre on my bike to the recommended level of 60hpm, as I release the pump a certain amount of air always escapes leaving the precise measure of pressure unknown. However this error can be reduced to almost insignificant levels by using better instruments or different observation techniques. This cannot be done in quantum mechanics because things observed are at a sub atomic level, at the limit point where energy and matter become indistinguishable. Quantum systems are infinitely vulnerable to the presence of observational technology showing that observer and system cannot be separated, that the observer must be considered part of the system being observed.

Even in psychoanalysis the act of looking is made problematic and reversible in a similar manner. Freud initiated this discussion when he identified *Shaulust* (scopophilia), the pleasure of looking, as a major component of human sexuality. [29] Laura Mulvey applied this idea by suggesting that there was a particular kind of sexualised male looking in modern cinema that subjected women to "a controlling and curious gaze." [30] In this kind of thinking looking is the seer's shoot, a shot of power coming out of the eye that intentionally holds what is seen in a willful and self-serving manner. The cinema became a unique situation for analysing the nature of human looking or the gaze as a kind of extromission theory. [31] Accordingly there are three types of look in the cinema, that of the camera recording the event, the looks between characters on the screen and the viewer watching the completed film. Sitting in the cinema the viewer has little to do but sit still in a seat. There is no need to move their eyes since attention is fixed strait ahead on an immobile screen placed at a convenient distance. The viewers look has been laid down in favour of a screen that looks back at the viewer with the omnipresence of an all seeing eye. "I not only look at the point of fixation (the screen), it looks at me." [32] The same uncanny sense of being looked at by the object of our gaze was an important issue for Jacques Lacan the most important psychoanalytic theorist after Freud. In his discussion of the development of the human ego, looking into mirrors, specularity and the gaze were of paramount importance. For Lacan looking was not a one way street, the look existed in a field of looks whereby what is looked at is also an active looker. "I am not simply that being located at the geometrical point from which perspective is grasped." [33] "In the scopic field [...] I am looked at, that is to say, I am a picture" [34] looked at by the world. Žižek notes that from a common sense point of view Lacan's concept of the gaze is easily misunderstood as indirectly belonging to the subject. However "it is crucial [...] that it involves the reversal of the relationship between subject and object, as Lacan puts it there is an antinomy between the eye and the gaze, ie the gaze is on the side of the object." [35]

Some of this counter intuitive play between human looking and objects that see is played out in the film

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work of Andy Warhol. Warhol is most well known for a series of paintings that capture the post war moment of industrial production and mass media through images of movie stars like Marilyn Monroe and consumer culture products like Coca Cola. His personal presence in this work seems driven by a desire to step out of the mundanity of everyday existence into the glowing presence of stardom. Being a 'star' is to generate light and attraction based on the kind of fame associated with success in the world of popular film and music. As Stephen Koch puts it, it is about "the obliteration of the self, the unworkability of ordinary living. Warhol proposes the momentary glow of a presence, an image--anyone's, if only they can leap out of the fade-out of inexistence into the presence of the star." [36] The star in nature shines in the night sky as a source of light and visual fascination. In popular culture the star is a person who has acquired the cultural status of a heavenly body, capturing the look of ordinary consumers who drift and dream under a virtual firmament. In shining, the star activates a certain kind of enchanted look that draws the looker towards a phantasmatic presence. The star captures and transforms the look, offering a certain glow as a bestowal on those who look. In this way the star looks back, not with an intentional gaze but through the marvellous shine of a hypnotic presence. Warhol in his own experimental 16mm films, inspired by his love of Hollywood stardom, demonstrates a way of looking at the world that is both actively voyeuristic and passively immobile, as if an inert object was initiating or imitating a look. His camera gazes at people and things but refuses to follow the action, it is "an inattentive camera [...] that will not give the spectacle its full concern." [37] As a director, as an individual with human choice, he absents himself and takes a certain distance, while at the same time drawing out an exhibitionistic display from those who appear in front of his camera. Paradoxically it is Warhol who becomes the star, not the performers who strut on his temporary stage, but Warhol as the one who shines from an untouchable distance.

In separate ways, from vastly different disciplines, Heysenberg, Lacan and Warhol, take us out of subjective gazing into a primordial encounter with shining light, where there is a loss of the division between subject and object, where "looking is the primordial way of coming into the light." [38]

MOMENT OF VISION

Human beings are intrinsically oriented towards sight and visibility as way of knowing the world. "All human beings strive to see, ... to existence there belongs a pursuit of seeing, of being familiar with." [39] Any action in the world requires a moment of deliberation and decision in the face of the unknown, an orientation toward the unknown for the sake of future familiarity. In the moment of action, such as taking a journey, conducting an experiment, making a work of art, a view ahead is established. It is suddenly seen as a "catching sight of the here and now." [40] Something is determined in "that moment at which talking and deliberation come to a standstill." [41] In that moment the doctor makes a prognosis, the craftsmen picks up a tool, and the artist makes a mark. Something has been sighted, it is now in view and all action is aimed towards it. Yet it is also the moment of having been looked upon. That which has been sighted has the looker in its hold and guides them towards its light. It is the moment of apprehension, "the moment of having-seen, in the sense of having been looked upon [...] removing any [...] connotations (of) an 'active' or 'perceptive' seeing that would belong [...] to (an individual's) own originating accomplishment." [42] It falls outside the contemporary understanding of "modern looking in which we direct ourselves to an object of representation and thereby 'grasp' it." [43] In being looked at, an ability to look is activated, and in the act of looking I show myself as engaged and orientated towards the world and all its possibilities. Thus it is "only because we are already addressed, looked upon by beings themselves, can we respond to them in the manner of looking 'at' them." A grasping look is a fallen kind of looking that crushes what is seen with a predetermined intention, while apprehending is "not yet a 'looking at' but is a more subliminal and prediscursive 'catching sight' of something." [44] In the moment of apprehending the seer is no longer the one who sees and knows, "in having seen there is always something else at play other than the completion of an optical process. From there [...] seeing is not determined by the eye." [45]

Various modes of looking, not determined by a physiological eye, can be found in the historical records. Modern theories of sight and understanding date back to classical Greece in particular Plato's allegory of the cave that sets up a division between shadows and reality. However even further back in the age of Homer there is a different and more primal sense of non-visual radiance. This is demonstrated in a passage from the Odyssey where the goddess Athena appears in the form of a beautiful woman. Ulysses sees her but his son Telemachus does not, "for it is not to all that the gods appear *enargeis*." [46] Under Plato's influence the Romans translated *enargeis* into *evidentia*, a mode of becoming visible, literally visual evidence in the form of an outward appearance. However for Homer *enargeis* meant "a brilliance, a shining, a lighting up, a radiance proceeding from things themselves as they presence." [47] This kind of etymology detects a double valence of light, lost in layers of historical usage and translation, latent with potential for strategic reactivation. Since Ulysses saw and Telemachus did not, *enargeia* and radiance need not have a necessary relationship to light or outward appearance. This aspect remains latent in the English word 'light' and its two contemporary usages. Light's primary meaning refers to the registration of brightness and optical presence. It has a secondary meaning to lessen a burden or lighten a load, that is "to push aside whatever resists, to bring it into a realm without resistance, into a free realm." [48] The free realm is radiant in the sense that it liberates the eye and all the senses in a moment of self-showing presence. It is the simultaneous moment of seeing, enacting the bodily capability of seeing and being seen. It suggests a brief experience, where there is sight, insight and something out of sight, something that has not been created by the actions or thoughts of any individual. In this way the visible world has us rather then we having it. Consequently the so called primacy of perception is made secondary to the opening of presence. [49] Perception is no longer an original relation to being or things since it already "presupposes a world to be given and understood." [50] The sense of the world, is not created through an accumulation of perception nor a totality of sensible impressions. "Perception, although it seems to arise at first glance, is late-born, derived." [51] What we mistakenly call perception is the concretion of a world whose essence is to appear, in it "the visible has a relation to itself which traverses me and constitutes me in seeing." [52] Once again arriving at a situation where "I can feel looked at by things." [53]

Even at the most basic level of biology we understand photosynthesis as a kind of non human looking, whereby the look of the sun as perceived by plants generates the building blocks of life. The sunflower, an aptly named representative of plant life, returns a look without eyes by orienting itself towards the compelling gaze of the sun. The result is the transformation of light into energy and the dehiscence of seeds into new generations of life. From here it seems no coincidence that the birth of human vision is linked to photosynthesis in the earliest forms of life on earth. Four billion years ago, microscopic single cell organ-

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isms, had no eyes but photoreceptors, that were receptive only to light direction and intensity. They had no vision for objects, they could not see each other, but they sensed the light from the sky. In the middle of the day, the light was too harsh so they swam down, while at twilight they swam to the surface to turn light into energy. The same molecule that was used in their body to photosynthesise, to give them life, is the same one that facilitates vision in creatures with developed eyes. [54]

The sun, as the source of light grants the possibility of sight as a donation from one that does not see to those who cannot yet see. The sun in its generous looking attracts the gaze of the sunflower and the dehiscent splitting open of the seed pod, returning the gaze as the movement of life from one generation to the next. In the light and warmth of the sun humans are open to a similar process of looking as dehiscence. "Dehiscence opens my body in two, [...] between my body looked at and my body looking, [...] there is overlapping and encroachment." [55]

This kind of thinking about looking and light momentarily disturbs the current understanding of a self sufficient subject who grasps the world through a calculating gaze. It is no longer possible to say "we [...] have on the one hand, things identical to themselves which would afterwards give themselves to sight and on the other hand, a vision, at first empty, which would then open itself to the visible." [56] Something more primordial than an optical mechanism enables an encounter with things in the form of a shining out, where the one who looks is more correctly looked upon by what is seen. What shines comes into sight by virtue of an opening, where presencing, can take place. The seer can only see what appears because they have already gotten out of the way to some extent. The seer, in the moment of shine, has laid down a nominal subjectivity for the sake of a captivating absence, namely the immediate withdrawal of that which appears in favour of a shining out. "It is the prevailing absence in which the seer is held [...] responding to that which presences in its very withdrawal, in its unfathomable and multiple concealments." [57] It is literally and metaphorically a hole in vision, a blindness that is a pre-condition to sight, occurring at the point where the optic nerve connects with the retina, requiring a second sight to occult its absence. [58] The withdrawal from opticality coincides with the flash of radiance, occurring in that brief instant before presence is dulled down to a functional availability. It remains only as a lingering hint, an after image, that is strangely fascinating and 'enchanting.' As such, it "comes to radiance (Schein) in the fullness of its enchantment." [59] It is as enchanting as the twilight glow is for a single cell organism, holding the promise of the fullness of life. Further down the human evolutionary chain, but in the same lambent glow, it shimmers and irridesces, constantly showing different facets of appearing and being. [60]

As such light has the character of excess and unknowing, moving beyond scientific readability into the realm of the incalculable. It is both the light of our understanding and the shadow that surrounds us as an unthinkable limit, that defies being pictured. Art and expanded painting in particular, indicates this in its apprehensiveness, in the apprehension of being looked at by colour, caught up in its shine, shining out in the midst of being, an open place where colour, light and meaning occur.

CONCLUSION

The enduring mystery of colour has led to a scientific muddle, a linguistic aporia and an unspoken prejudice against its apparent excessiveness. Just in case it should overwhelm us in its elemental effusiveness colour is restricted by good taste that equates cultural maturity with a limited palette. Yet colour continues to break free of its constraints, it bursts out of the earth and sky in an audacious display of autopoiesis, tempting poets and painters to reveal, but not capture, its power. The science of colour based on image, mimesis, physiology of the eye and individual subjectivity has somehow missed the phenomenon of colour altogether. Colour rather than being seen and calculated, shines out, shimmers and reveals a world in much the same way that thinking does. This new understanding of what colour 'is' is exemplified by shifts in emphasis from the colour wheel in its rationality, to the colour chart in its availability, to the pixel in its shimmering intensity.

The ontology of colour and the phenomenon of shine stand apart and are incommensurate with the science of light, the psychology of seeing and the subject of vision. Understood phenomenologically colour makes things manifest by revealing them in their unique presence rather than merely facilitating communication, representation or spectacle. Before colour is seen, before colour can be looked at, colour looks at us in such a way that looking and seeing are provoked. In its ordinariness colour is captured and quantified by the grasp of scientific technical rationality. In its extraordinariness colour demands a certain attentiveness, a responsive lingering on the edge of the visible and invisible.

All of these ways of being with colour are enabled by a formal evolution in painting whereby expanded painting addresses everything in the everyday world that carries colour. Expanded Painting, unlike painting, no longer addresses an audience directly, an audience that might validate it through critical and financial response. Instead Expanded Painting addresses a non-human respondent, the medium of painting itself. By analogy, the medium of painting however deconstructed or expanded, has become the entity to 'whom' the work of colour is addressed. ■

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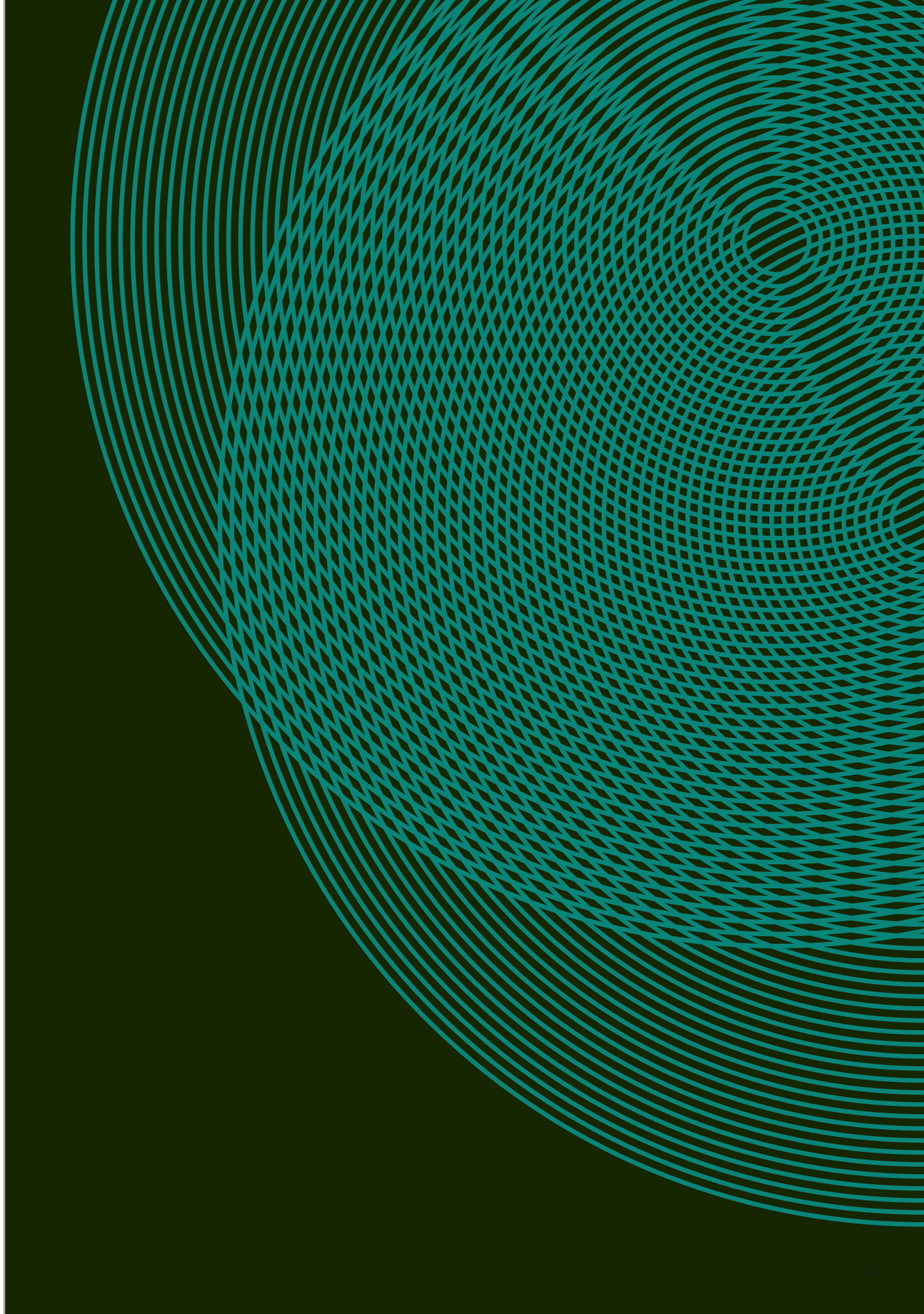

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