

Ways of Perceiving, Curation Essay

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'Understanding Colour' is an exploration into colour theory, colour perception, and its ability to evoke feelings. The exhibition will be scrutinising how colour can form and rebuild connections and memories and distort and enhance an artefacts' properties and purpose. The key theory behind 'Understanding Colour' is Affect Theory. According to the Oxford Dictionary of Critical Thinking (2018) the term 'affect' describes how the body and mind suffers from imagination, instincts, and the unconscious. This exhibition is a play on colour, challenging what we are taught to see; how we each see and experience colour differently, and how colour, as an object, allows us to form connotations and associations based on our personal perception.

Colour's ability to represent a thought and an internal feeling through a physical form intrigues me. This resonates with Affect Theory and how it is less about what we see, but more about what we feel (Duke University Press). Wassily Kandinsky described colour as "the basic language", "a grammar of artistic elements", and the "ABC of means of expression" (Siebenbrodt and Schobe, 2009, p.48). This exhibition is going to explore colour as a language and the power it has. My interest in colour grew from the experience of placing quality street wrappers over my eyes as a child. The fact that a single colour distorted my surroundings, changing how a space spoke and felt to be in, excited me. Colour is such a powerful tool, and one that has layers of complexity. This exhibitions aim is to guide you through this experience, exposing you to the capabilities of colour whilst giving you a different perception of colour and how we use it.



Figure 1: The Treachery of Images, Rene Margrittes (1929)

The Treachery of Images (Rene Margrittes, 2021) by Rene Margrittes (see fig. 1) has long been identified as the universal example of representation versus interpretation. It was seen as part of the surrealist movement and creates a three-way paradox out of the conventional notion that objects correspond to words and images (Lecture notes). This inspired me to present colour in the same way. According to Oxford Dictionary of Critical Thinking (2018) Barthes' work on myth showed that even the most ordinary of objects

convey significance beyond more utility. 'Understanding Colour' embodies this central idea used in semiotics, with the object and idea of representation being colour.

'Understanding Colour' will be conducted in the Mission Gallery; it's layout will be effective in delivering the aims of the exhibition.

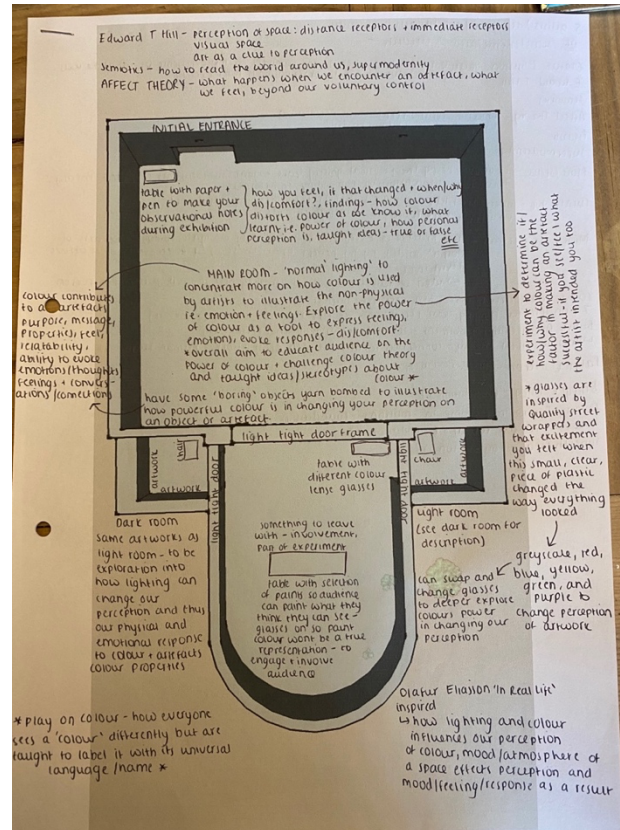


Figure 2: Mapping of Mission Gallery, Dela Ball (2021)

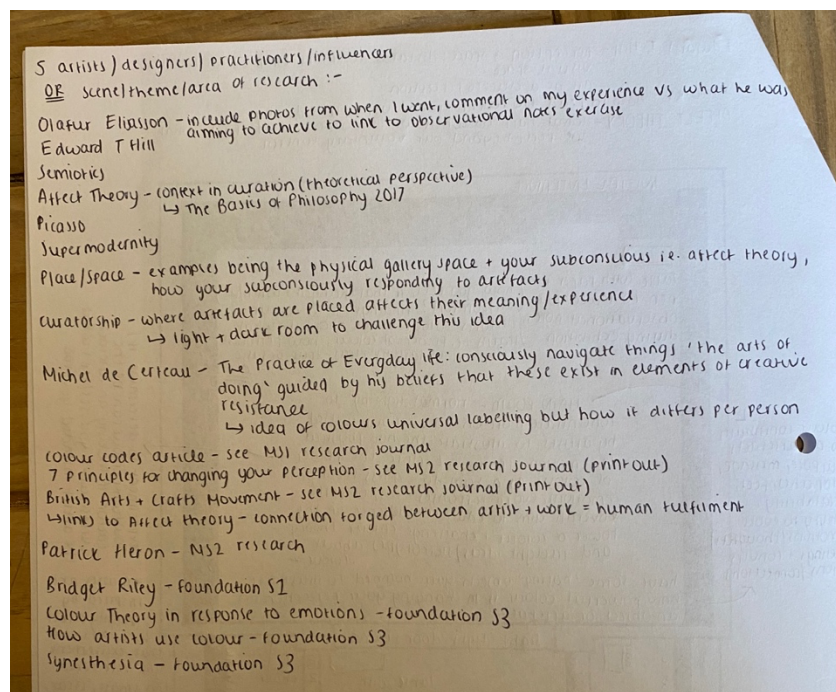


Figure 3: Mapping of Mission Gallery, Dela Ball (2021)

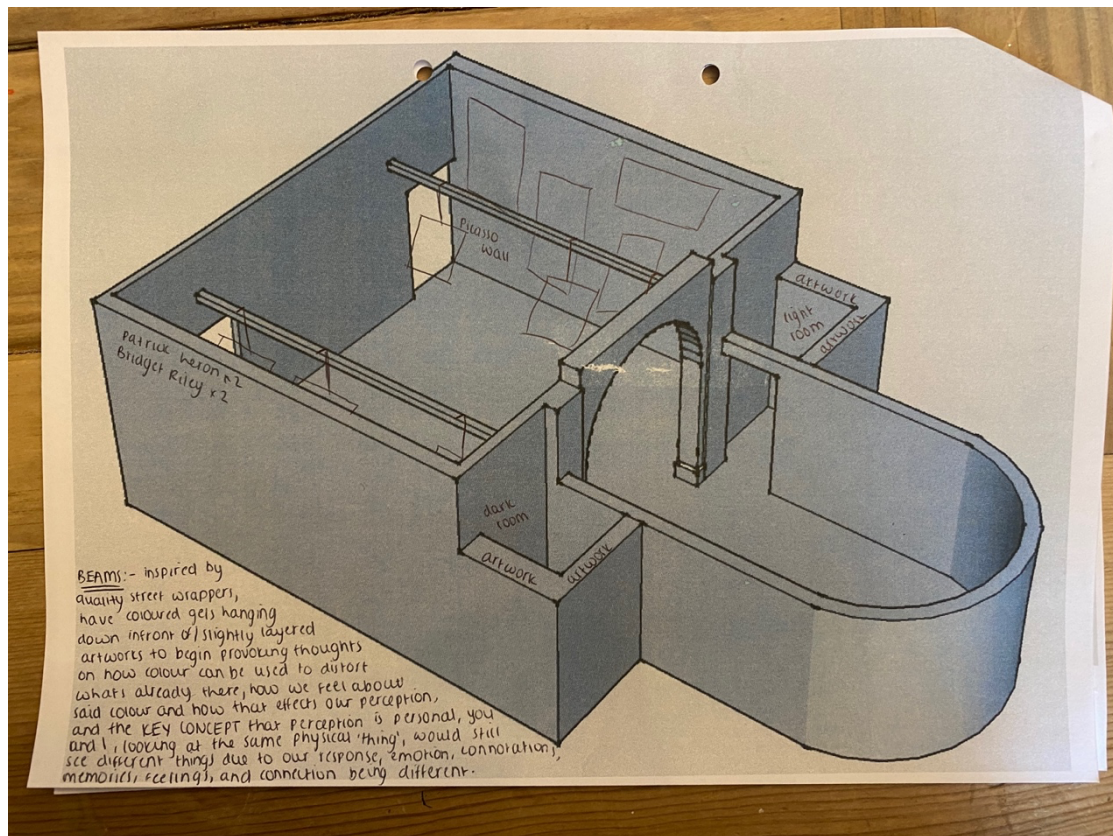


Figure 4: Mapping of Mission Gallery, Dela Ball (2021)

The feedback obtained from the viewer during these interactive activities will help inform my enquiries. When curating this exhibition, it was important to make sure that the start and end point were the same; it is symbolic of a full finished cycle representing a complete understanding and acquisition of knowledge for the viewer.

Upon entering, the viewer will pick up and use the paper and pen to record their observations throughout. I want them to record how they felt and responded to each artefact and if they made any connections. These observations will aid the enquiries of 'Understanding Colour' and help fulfil its aims. The viewers will be asked to compare their findings in hope that the key concept behind this exhibition will become evident; every individual perception will evoke different thoughts, feelings, interpretations and responses exposing the idea that we all see colour differently. In this case, the understanding of semiotics is determined by our personal perception and experiences. Charles Sanders Pierce's symbol/index/icon triad is a relational means of understanding semiotics. Pierce argues that "every thought is a sign, and every act of reasoning consists of the interpretations of signs" (Pierce, 1998, p.12) which marries with the idea behind 'Understanding Colour'. Although the object, in this case colour, is presented in an identical physical form, our perception and interpretation of this colour is completely different.

The main room in the Mission Gallery (see fig. 2), is going to be lit with normal lighting to allow full concentration on the artefacts; how colour is used by artists to illustrate the non-physical. The purpose being to explore colour as a language to express feelings, emotions, and evoke conversations and responses. This room will also demonstrate how and why colour can be the factor in making an artefact successful in relation to the creators desired purpose. There will be coloured gels hanging from the ceiling beams to introduce the distortion properties of colour. Having the primary-coloured gels over areas of the

artworks will distort the feel of them and evoke different responses. This physically illustrates how colour can completely transform an artefact and how it makes us feel. The images below are artworks by Bridget Riley (see fig.5), Pablo Picasso (see fig.6), and Patrick Heron (see fig. 7), and will be included on the walls of this space to aid the enquiries and conversations mentioned.



Figure 5: Shadow Play, Bridget Riley (1990)

Bridget Riley is a key figure in the Op Art movement, creating pieces that produce “a disorientating physical effect on the eye” (Tate, 2021). She began investigating colour in 1967 and her work explores “the fundamental nature of perception” (National Galleries Scotland, 2021). Riley’s Op Art style artefacts are a “deep investigation into the act of seeing” (National Galleries Scotland, 2021) and Shadow Play is a perfect example of this. Her paintings are often concerned with the visual and emotional response to colour, resonating with Affect Theory. The viewers will innately respond to her work, recording their observations and experience. Affect Theory will be central to this, recognising any emotions that occurred beyond their voluntary control. This will inform the explorations inspired by The Treachery of Images (Rene Magrittes, 2021) idea of representation versus interpretation, to confirm that we all interpret colour differently.



Figure 6: Blue Period, Pablo Picasso (1901)

Pablo Picasso's Blue Period consisted of sombre monochromatic paintings to reflect a multitude of negative times that he experienced, including "poverty and instability" (Pablo Picasso, 2021). Picasso used the colour blue to help illustrate the depression and misery he was feeling (Bouvier, 2019, p.137). The viewers will record their experience with and without the coloured gels to inform the idea and concept behind the exhibition, that our responses are a fluid construct; both spontaneous and personal.



Figure 7: January 1973, Patrick Heron (1973)

Patrick Heron's artworks are most noted for his exploration and use of "colour and light" (Heron, 1979). Again, the viewers will record their experience, reflecting on physical and emotional responses. This process will aid a better understanding into how our individual perception determines connotations of colour, strengthening the idea of representation versus interpretation (The Treachery of Images, Rene Magritte, 2021).

Moving through the doorway, you are presented with two smaller rooms with different lighting. Kandinsky explored "colour and shape temperature" (Siebenbrodt and Schobe, 2009, p.49) which is why an element of the exhibition explores lighting. Lighting is hugely influential on how we perceive things and has the ability to alter an artefact's properties, in some cases even diminish them. Both rooms will have the same artefact on display (see fig.8) to elevate the enquiry into how lighting can change our perception. Olafur Eliasson's exhibition 'In Real Life' inspired these rooms (Godfrey, 2019, p.249). He explored how lighting and colour as well as the mood and atmosphere of a space influences our perception.



Figure 8: Yarn Bombing Bench

Yarn bombing subverts the norms of knitting and how it should be employed (McGovern, 2019, p.30). This idea of challenging the norms that we've been taught resonates with the aims of 'Understanding Colour' which is the reason why this yarn bombing bench is the artefact in both of these rooms (Greer, 2014, p.63). It is important that the viewer physically interacts with this artefact in both lightings to understand how their experience changed. These observations inform how lighting changes our perception.

The final stage of 'Understanding Colour' scrutinises how colour changes our perception. Coloured lens glasses will be worn during this final activity, resonating with the inspiration for this exhibition. The viewers subconscious decision of glasses choice links to the connotations and perception they have with that colour, further feeding this exhibitions enquiries. The aim is to replicate the artefact wearing the glasses with the paints on the table. The idea being to experience first-hand the power colour has in changing your perception. Once satisfied, the glasses can be removed to inspect the replica in comparison to the original Henri Matisse artwork (see fig.9).



Figure 9: Henri Matisse

The viewer will now reflect on their experience, considering how they felt during the activity, and how they think colour changed their perception. These final observations highlight to the viewer the power colour has to make you feel and think differently. It is this underlying concept that informed 'Understanding Colour' and greatly illustrates this exhibition's point of enquiry.

Upon leaving this exhibition the viewer should be more appreciative and knowledgeable about colour. Colour is such an extraordinary tool and expressive language. As the viewer has had the opportunity to learn more about themselves, they should have more of an insight into what colour means to them which is the sole purpose of 'Understanding Colour', bringing the entire experience full circle.

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List of figures:

Figure 1. *The Treachery of Images* (1929). Available from: <https://www.renemagritte.org/the-treachery-of-images.jsp>

Figure 2: Mapping of Mission Gallery, Dela Ball (2021)

Figure 3: Mapping of Mission Gallery, Dela Ball (2021)

Figure 4: Mapping of Mission Gallery, Dela Ball (2021)

Figure 5: *Shadow Play*, Bridget Riley (1990). Available from: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bridget_Riley

Figure 6: Blue Period, Pablo Picasso (1901). Available from: <https://www.artsy.net/article/artsy-editorial-emotional-turmoil-picassos-blue-period>

Figure 7: January 1973, Patrick Heron (1973). Available from: <https://www.jennaburlingham.com/artists/59-patrick-heiron/works/categories/3/>

Figure 8: Yarn Bomb Bench. Available from: <https://www.coloradoboulevard.net/yarn-bombing/yarn-bombing-elephant-bench-photo-geograph-org-uk/>

Figure 9: Henri Matisse. Available from: <http://www.redhouseoriginals.com/artists/henri-matisse>