

Here Lies Colour:

The life, death, and resurrection of colour in art

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Abstract

Colour is inescapable. There are very little moments in our lives when we are not surrounded by colour. The places where the most variety of colour presides are the places where art and artists touch. This essay will discuss colour in art, using a quotation by Johannes Itten as the source of my argument. He proposed that when used, when thought, concept, and formulation touch colour, it is left for dead. Using artists such as Yves Klein, Anish Kapoor, and Ana Mendieta, and theorists such as David Batchelor and James Fox, I explore the ideas of colour as dead, colour as alive, and colour as having the ability of resurrection. Equally, I explore the same ideas as applying to non-colour with artists Robert Ryman, Anish Kapoor, Mona Hatoum, and Yves Klein. It can be found that colour and non-colour can equally die and thrive when used artistically and thought on, with colours only true killer being the tone vantage black.

Author's Declaration

I declare that all the material contained in this thesis is my own work

AI Acknowledgement Declaration

I confirm that I have not used any AI tools in the research and creation of this assignment. I confirm that I have not presented any AI generated materials as my own work. I confirm that I have copies of my drafts, notes, and other resources I used, which I may be asked to provide in evidence.

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“Colour is life: for a world without colours appears to us as dead [...] At the moment when thought, concept, formulation, touch upon colour, its spell is broken, and we hold in our hands a corpse” (van Hagen, E. 1970, p. 8).

Colour is all that is around us, it constructs everything we know, everything we are. Colour is a living organism when ignored, thriving when not acknowledged for the marvel that it is, and then dies as soon as it pervades human thought. Theorists and artists are forced to become murderers and necromancers in the face of pigments, their audiences bearing witness to these acts that will often leave them horrified at the miracle resurrection and in love with a cadaver. An artist who was quick to kill colour, abusing its corpse throughout his career was French artist, Yves Klein. Both canvas and object became drenched in his presence, simulacra of the people and atmosphere that stand before them. His main victim was a unique, “immaterial” blue that to Klein “had rendered the sum of [himself] inhuman and excluded [him] from the world of tangible reality”. It is almost an acknowledgment of this simulacra, the idea by Jean Baudillard of a superficial image or representation of a thing that either has no original or no longer has an original (1994); he is rendered a spirit in the face of killed colour, forced “outside of society, inhabiting space, and no longer capable of returning to earth.” (Klein, Y. 1958c). However, as Klein’s career progressed, his practice slowly became bereft of the dead and he began to work with air and the colourless; it was simultaneously something so devoid of, yet so integral to, the same themes of atmosphere and life. The lasting effects call into question if the killing of colour is worth it for the aesthetic value it holds.

Colour as a representation of person goes beyond Klein's practice, often contorting to conversation of whether it is equal to, above or below humanity. On trial alongside Klein is David Batchelor, a key figure whose several writings document how people interact with colour and how colour interacts with people, creating corpses of colour and person through excessive thought.

“Once again, the drug of colour begins to weigh heavily on our eyes; we become drowsy; we begin to lose consciousness as we fall under its narcotic spell; we lose focus; we lose our sense of the distinctions between things; we descend into delirium; we lose ourselves in colour as colour frees itself from the grip of objects and floods over our scrambled senses” (Batchelor, D. 2000, p. 43)

While Klein's philosophy proposed that colour became person through simulacra, Batchelor sets forward that colour becomes person through its own control; colour slowly possesses us, becoming corporeal through the ghosts of who, and what, were once lost to it. His writings engender life while simultaneously destroying it, enabling spirits that kill in a rampage of his creation. An artist with a similar effect (killing colour completely while not killing it at all as a result) is Ad Reinhardt. He proclaimed colour immoral due to the human inability to control it, resulting in a heavy focus on the non-colour, black (Rose, B. 1975, p. 153). He is one of few artists who demonises colour entirely, neglecting it in his later work; through murdering colour in his practice, it becomes more alive than ever.

When discussing the place of colour in art, Yves Klein is unavoidable. His IKB blue haunts the conversation entirely, pushing people to be ignorant of his earlier practice that was filled with further chroma; “I am not only the owner of blue [...] I am also the owner of “COLOR” [...] My paintings exist only as the visible title deeds proving my ownership.” (Ottman, K. 2016, p. 46). Monochrome squares fill the pages of *Yves Peintures*, a 1954 artist’s book that was the first public gesture of Klein’s practice; the ‘plates’ were mechanically reproduced paintings that seemingly did not exist.



Fig 1

In his essay for *Colour After Klein*, Nuit Banai describes Klein's personification of colour here as "a complete capitulation to kitsch" (2016, p. 38); a "debased and academicized simulacra of genuine culture", kitsch is synthetic mockery of 'real culture' with aim of commercialisation (Greenberg, C. 1939. P.12). Klein's speaking of each colour as an individual, each nuanced tone having its own distinct soul, is cited as the reason for the 'kitsch' title. His viewing of each colour as "a living being, an active force who is born and who dies after having lived a [...] life of colours" endows colour with great life, though it is partially by ridding it of all life (Klein, Y. 1955). *Yves Peintures* was free from human touch when created, void of brushstrokes, "expressive texture", accidental marks, "erratic pigment"; this lack of signs of creation make this colour so alive, colour executed at the hands and mind of an audience (Alison, J. 2005b, pp. 36-38). This book is a rainbow graveyard, not for colour but instead for the audience's thoughts and concepts on colour.

It can be said that the work of Robert Ryman is a series of "monochromatic and near-monochromatic white paintings" (Hudson, S. 2025, p. 152). He can be assumed to loathe colour, drowning it in white when it appears. The white layer is often uneven, full of texture that may be unsightly to an audience, as if the attempt to bury the colour was done with an aggressive need to rid it. His series of untitled works from 2010-2011 highlight this, comprising of canvases stained in colour that peak through the mortuary makeup of white.



Fig 2

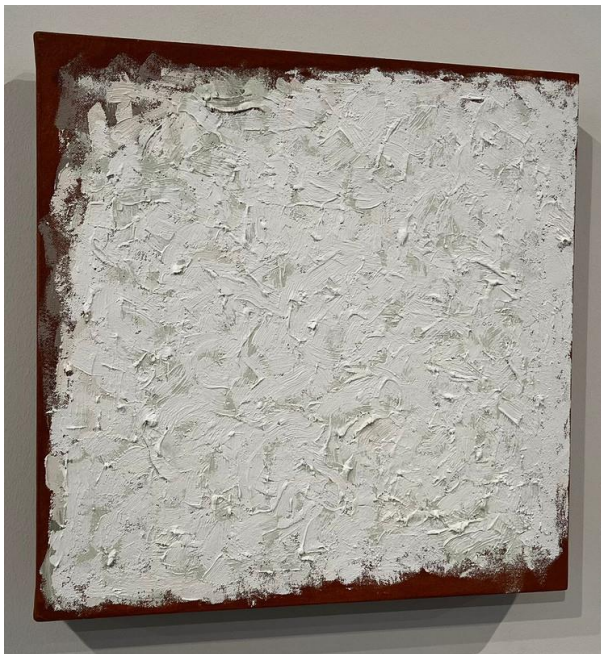


Fig 3



Fig 4

Bourse de commerce is an open casket, displaying these pieces of as part of the Pinault Collection *Minimal* exhibition. The curved wall they populate envelopes the viewer, forcing

them to confront all the detail within the works; this display paired with the stark white walls and floor force the colours to jump towards the audience. Further colour materialises as you near the works, showing through the white in tones of green and blue. It is easy to assume that Ryman's work has mourned colour since the late 1950's when the artist chose to reduce his palette to focus on the structure and process of creating but his work never broached complete monochromacy, it could even be argued that "nothing is less monochromatic than a Ryman painting" (Fremon, J. 2024, p.21). This sentiment is undoubtable when face-to-face with these pieces, able to pick out all the colours that cannot ascend to the digital image. This series of work can be seen in comparison to Klein's *Peintures*. While not through way of 'kitsch', Ryman's paintings give the same undeniable life to colour as Klein, all while killing it the same. His burying colour in a grave of white and human touch, taking focus and thought away from them entirely, gives them this life.

"White as a myth, as an aesthetic fantasy, a fantasy so strong that it summons up negative hallucinations, so intense that it produces a blindness to colour, even when colour is literally in front of your face" (Batchelor, D. 2000, p. 47).

Klein initially tried to mirror the pages of *Peintures* on gallery walls, drenching canvases in colours, only this time keeping the texture that indicates life by hand rather than machine. During a 1956 exhibition at Galerie Colette ALLENDY, Paris, he said of his *Monochrome*, *Untitled* series that the audience "being prisoners of a conditioned way of seeing the

relationships between the different propositions [...] were recombining the canvases in their mind into one single polychrome installation” (Klein, Y. 1958d).



Fig5

This undesired outcome pushed Klein’s focus onto one colour, a colour that he “had dedicated [himself] for more than a year to” in search of its “most perfect expression”; BLUE (Klein, Y. 1958d). A 1957 exhibition at the Galleria Apollinaire, Milan, saw 11 identically sized monochromes take over a room, the space disrupted by the most striking blue ever translated in paint. International Klein Blue (IKB) is a formula of ultramarine blue pigment and synthetic resin, patented by the artist in 1960; he created it alongside art paint supplier Edouard Adam out of necessity for Klein, a necessity for colour that’s vibrancy withstood the art binder that suffocated it. In creating this colour, Klein instilled the belief of colour as a living thing that the litany of benumbed blues used throughout history had made impossible.



Fig 6

“ “COLOR,” the sensuous pure space, winked an eye at me irregularly, yet with stubborn persistence. This sense of the complete freedom of sensuous pure space exerted upon me such a power of attraction that I painted monochrome surfaces to see, with my own eyes to SEE, what was visible in the absolute” (p. 80)

Colour had a complete hold on Klein, guiding him to create monochromes that showed the full beauty of it to himself and others; in that way, it could be interpreted that colour is

more alive than the artist, which is lost to its power, with IKB being the most alive of all. It is so alive in fact that Klein used it almost exclusively when representing existence.

In a speech to the Gelsenkirchen Theatre Commission, Klein said;

“Blue has no dimensions. “It is” beyond dimensions [...] All colors bring forth associations of concrete, material, and tangible ideas, while blue evokes all the more sea and the sky, which are what is most abstract in tangible and visible nature.” (Klein, Y. 1958d).

The most abstract ideas around us are the ones between sky and sea, the ones encapsulating human existence, the ones intangible; by invoking the sea, sky, and abstract ideas, Klein points to life and death. His plain canvases of IKB are them coexisting, causing neither life nor death of colour but making it more human than ever. It is alive, communicating with artist and audience. IKB represents life and people further in a series of sponges soaked in the paint.



Fig 7

“Phantoms and strange characters that belong to no one have emerged from this void filled with sensibility [...] these portraits of the “readers” of my monochromes” (Klein, Y., 1959). Sensibility is an omnipresent idea in Klein’s blue works, it is something that exists both alongside us and beyond us; “We hold no right of possession over life itself”, we are only able to purchase it through pursuing “life to the level of its base material manifestations”, this is allowed by sensibility (Klein, Y. 1961). Sensibility is abstract and intangible, it encapsulates our life and death. These strange sponge sculptures rose from

this sensibility, a mirror of those who indulge in Klein's monochrome; our lives and eventual deaths are put on display, our existence becomes pure colour.

Anish Kapoor breathes further life into this polychromatic existence; his unusual shapes doused in loose pigment embodying life through their connections with the Western and Eastern cultural ties of the artist. Part of *Colour After Klein*, Kapoor's *Part of the Red* piece is the shining example of what is described as an exhibition showing "the monochrome paradigm at its most eloquent, colour transferred from two-dimensional painting to the object, with raw pigment taking on a new materiality and autonomous presence" (Alison, J. 2005a, p. 10). Like Klein, the idea of continuous space, of the void, is central to Kapoor's practice; here it is demonstrated through spills of chroma.



Fig 8

Kapoor has described red as an ‘inside-out’ colour; “Like our emotions, and like our blood, it wells up within us, speaking of and to the body [...] Red is the body made colour, and at times colour made body” (Kapoor, A. 2003). In the work Kapoor reduces the three primary colours, and by extension the surrounding space filled with tones of black and white, to the title ‘red’; he is equating the basis of all colour, and in turn all colours, to ‘red’. All colour is “made body”, something further highlighted when considering the sculptural shapes they consume.

“The saturated chromatic fields of Kapoor with their lips and crevices, mounds and poke holes, connect back to the sensual, if not erotic undercurrent that is a

subtext to Klein's entire output [...] it is also integral to the monochrome [...] as an abstract metaphor for the body" (Alison, J. 2005a, p. 20)

Kapoor's piece becomes a necropolis, buried sculptures that represent our bodies with colour standing victorious over us. Like Klein's blue canvases, colour is more alive than us, we are enslaved by it. Unlike Klein's monochromes, the colour made alive within this work has more freedom to overtake the viewer. Unbinded pigment has the ability to infiltrate their bodies through the senses so integral to existence: breath, smell, touch, taste.

The body transcends to red pigment in Ana Mendieta's *Siluetas* series. The silhouette of a woman's body is engraved into the surface of a beach, filled with powdered red pigment, mirroring a worldwide tradition of scattering red pigments into graves for the purpose of giving life to a corpse through the most living tone (Fox, J. 2021, pp. 61 & 76).



Fig 9

Red mummifies existence; “If you look the light of the world in the eyes, creation turns scarlet” (Jarman, D. 1994, p. 25). The pairing of the human form with a colour representing complete life brings sentience to both the work and to pigment itself; however, the colour reflected is not the colour possessed. The tone which penetrates the eye of the audience is a ghostly figure rather than a living, breathing thing (Fox, J. 2021, p.5). This idea makes this a figure of green and blue, sucking the soul that red bestowed out of it; the figures position highlights this idea of euthanasia through pigment, laying down in death. When this work is viewed with only our eyes, we see the vibrant red and the piece is alive, represents total

life. When the work is viewed with thought, it becomes completely dead; we see in front of us a corpse.

While it seems that Kapoor and Mendieta give permission for colour to enter the body, to take it over and turn it to pigment, they are just the organ for it to do so; colour does not need permission. In the 1970s, a disfigured skull is excavated beneath the Duomo in Florence; it is not until 30 years later in 2000 that it is identified as artist Giotto. What determined the remains to be those of Giotto was bone deep colour.

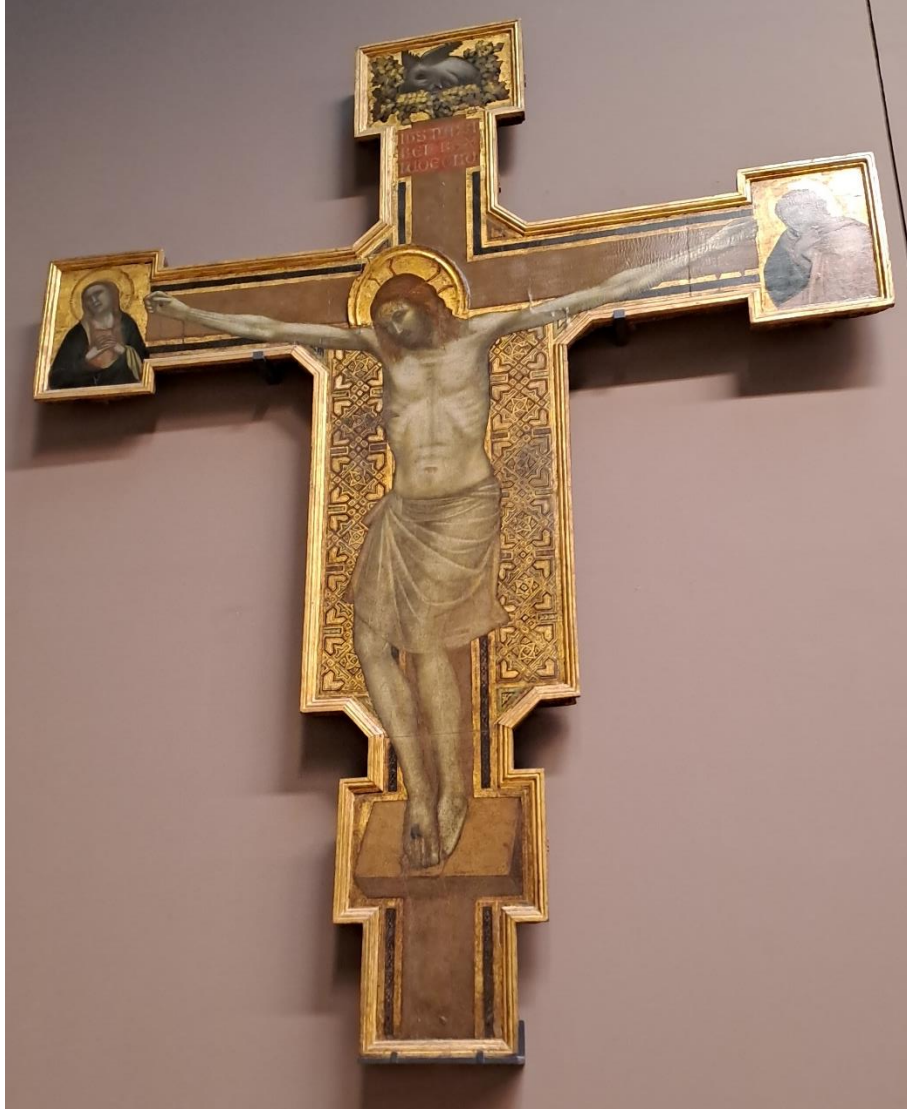


Fig 10

Giotto's *Croix peinte* as well as his extensive practice is undoubtably attention grabbing, pulling an audience into a world of bold tones and glimmering gold. His work often focused on religion as he slowly, unknowingly, became the Absolute Being of colour; "In the alchemy of death, Giotto, it seems, had become his own painting". His bones were laced with high levels of arsenic and lead, as well as traces of aluminium, manganese and copper; these were the main chemical elements that made up Giotto's paintings (Grovier, K. 2023, pp. 16-17).

“[P]igments are more than purely intellectual concepts. They are made of grit and grime. They have weight and texture. They pulse through our veins and seep deep into our bones. They are capable of resurrection and tell secrets from the grave” (Grovier, K. 2023, p. 16)

Klein writes of bones being the lines of the body, comparing human to painting (Klein, Y. 1958a). He later discusses “ordinary painting” as a “prison window” with its features, including its lines, “determined by bars”. These lines, our bones, make concrete our morality, our emotions, our spirituality. They make real what gives us life, giving us our humanity in the process; “They are our [...] skeletal framework”. We are then trapped behind these bars, only having freedom which we are allowed as a living being; colour killing us brings us beyond. By becoming possessed, having our bones mutated by colour, pigment resurrects us.

Yves Klein considered Giotto as the antecedent to the monochromes essential to his practice (Klein, Y. 2003, p. 163); if Giotto is the Father of colour, then Klein is the messiah. His practice is gospel, brining others to the “religion for absolute monochromy” (1960b).



Fig 11

In continuing to speak of line, Klein talks of it conquering man and forcing upon him its own personhood; humanity is consumed with its “intellectual, material, and emotional abstract rhythm”. Through this domination of the line, we reduce colour to slavery. What is “the universal soul in which the soul of man bathes in the state of terrestrial paradise” is dissected, compartmentalised, taken prisoner behind these bars of a painting (Klein, Y. 1960a). Just as colour can seep into our bones, so can the idea chromophobia; if line and bone is one in the same, this imprisonment of colour comes from deep within us. Our oppositions to colour keep us from a “state of terrestrial paradise”, a life beyond death. It is here that a hatred of colour is the killer.

By indoctrinating us to the monochrome, Klein ascends us. His practice drenched in a spirited blue, representational of human being and the atmosphere in which we live, separates us from oppressive line entirely; “Blue transcends the solemn geography of human limits” (Jarman, D. 1994, p. 86). No one is brought closer to this azure than Klein’s human paintbrushes.



Fig 12

Klein smothered nude bodies in his eponymous blue, instructing their movements from a distance as one would do with the inanimate instrument they mirror. The work was born out of the artist's mistrust of himself – though never of colour – and he no longer “wanted to remain alone with the marvelous blue void” that was only embryonic at the time.

“Personally, never would I attempt to smear paint over my own body and become a living brush; but on the contrary, I would rather put on my tuxedo and white gloves. I would not even think of dirtying my hands with paint. Detached and distant, the work of art must complete itself before my eyes and under my command.” (Klein, Y. 1961)

Klein baptising these models in paint, absolving them of their sins against colour, while clad in such formal attire creates a scene of rebirth. This act promises the paradise free from line to these models, Klein absorbing any trace of loathing towards colour while seeps into their bones, dissolving the omnipresent line. Yves Klein is ultimately sacrificing himself for the sake of humanity, his immunity only restored when he bathes in the tangible atmosphere created by his monochrome masterpieces.

His distance from the models, his refusal of contact, forbodes; baptism is something physical, the hand being the tools of enlightenment. Klein keeps his distance, refusing to get tarnished by tone. There is something funerary in this space, an idea of paying respect, of wanting to separate yourself from the solemnities. The choice word of “dirtying” spurs

an idea of something earthy, of what is piled on a casket to subdued life entirely. Perhaps in preaching, Klein gives us an awareness of the lines that imprison us, its reality tearing our souls apart (Klein, Y. 1960a). Perhaps in christening, he is commanding that the colour completely engulfs the live brush and brings them closer to pigment than to person. In manuscripts for *Mon Livre*, an unrealized book project by Klein, the artist shows intension to inhume France in IKB; “Each individual in my system will be considered by me during the creation of my painting “France” as a grain of pigment” (Klein, Y. 2003, p. XVII). He talks of holding the highest power in the country while doing so, raising himself above the citizens as a godly figure. Blanketing France in blue would transcend Klein to a status on omnipotence and omnipresence; his eulogy to France, painting such a grand picture of the place, as well as his assertion that he is worthy of such heights suggest Klein is also in a position of omnibenevolence and omniscience. Klein is pushing himself to be a god solely through his perceived ownership of colour. He alone dictated when colour was alive and when it was dead, when those who perceived it breathed or suffocated. Colour cannot become a corpse through thought, concept, formulation, unless Klein dictates it to be so.

Ad Reinhardt opposes the ever-present infatuation with colour; “there is something wrong, irresponsible, and mindless about color, something impossible to control. Control and rationality are part of any morality” (Rose, B. 1975, p. 153). His insinuation that colour is completely immoral makes it into something to be feared, Reinhardt is the biggest upholder to the lines Klein has been trying to annihilate.



Fig 13

Starting in the 1953, Reinhardt's practice was leached of colour. His work grabs the audience, demanding a commitment equal to Reinhardt's. The black paintings have a depth, translated through different shades and paint finishes creating shapes and/or patterns that can only be seen through close inspection, requiring an audience to be dead still; "For Reinhardt, painting was about seeing. Deliberately straining vision beyond its normal limits by creating nearly invisible works" (Rose, B. 1970). As his exploration into black as a quality continued, his paint shifted to a dark grey with the goal of a more matte finish. Reinhardt leaned matte to suck any traces of life from his paintings, including that of an observer. He has described a shiny black surface as "surreal", like a mirror; it holds and projects all the life that surrounds them, absorbing and becoming the atmosphere akin to Klein's IKB canvases. Reinhardt saw this as a distraction, craving disconnection between

the human world and the esoteric world of his paintings (Reinhardt, A. 1967). In his aim to make “nearly invisible works” through tone and texture, he risks making them completely see-through: “For when with our bodily eyes, our glance travels over material forms, as they are presented by perception, we never see darkness except when we stop seeing” (Fox, J. 2021, p. 21). His paintings haunt the gallery space, illustrating the lifelessness of all other work that surrounds it, the only difference is that it is not masked by vibrancy.

In her writing for the *Ad Reinhardt: black paintings* exhibition catalogue, Barbara Rose writes that “the black paintings are not actually monochrome is also of the utmost importance” (Rose, B. 1970). There is an ongoing argument as to whether the epitaph of black should read shade or colour, its achromaticism creating doubt of its status. 1666, physicist Issac Newton dismembered white light into a rainbow spectrum. The omission of black in this spectrum led Newton to conclude that black is the opposite of colour, its killer as darkness disfigures it when present. Black is weighed down by negative connotation, a stealer of light and vibrancy. This total bastardisation can be seen somewhere no clearer than in the writings of Shakespeare. Descriptions of tones make up 800 of the 800,000-plus words used in his discography, the most frequently mentioned being black with 202 references. These hues became strictly properties of objects at the end on Shakespeare’s pen, smelling foul, tasting better, creeping over out floors and flying high in out sky; it was these writings that inspired much hatred towards black, as “the Bible had given unpleasant figurative meaning to darkness, so Shakespeare smeared them over in black” (Fox, J. 2021, pp. 23 – 30).

Black is the “pedestal of colours” (Bolton, E. 1610, p. 114). Black is the stealer of light, absorbing all the colour is highlights and so bustles with tone. It could be proposed that this blanket of black suffocating colour is what keeps colour so lively as if it were all we consumed, it’s effects would be extinct. When black as a shade is discounted and it appreciated as a colour, the conversation surrounding it shifts greatly. Auguste Renoir, when confronted with the idea exclaimed “Black a non-colour? Whereon earth did you get that? Why, black is the queen of colours!” (Vollard, A. 1990. p. 52). Likewise, Picasso said of black that it was ‘the only real colour’ (Richardson, J. 1991, p. 417). These artists whose practices breathed vibrant hues heralded black as above all else, that all other colours are an “artifice, a cosmetic (like the kind used to paint corpses)” (Barthes, R. 1981, pp. 80-1). Black a mass grave, the ghosts of colours it holds sometimes visible to an onlooking eye; “this supposed non-colour [can] produce a rainbow of effects [...] there is nothing monotonous about black”. It can be said that “chameleonic blacks can become any colour in the spectrum, in ever-changing combinations” (Fox, J. 2021, p. 41). It would be easy to gaze upon Reinhardt’s black canvases and mourn what black pigment buries but the human response to dream up the colour that makes black the most alive of all colour.

Mona Hatoum's *The Light at the End* highlights the brilliance of black even further.

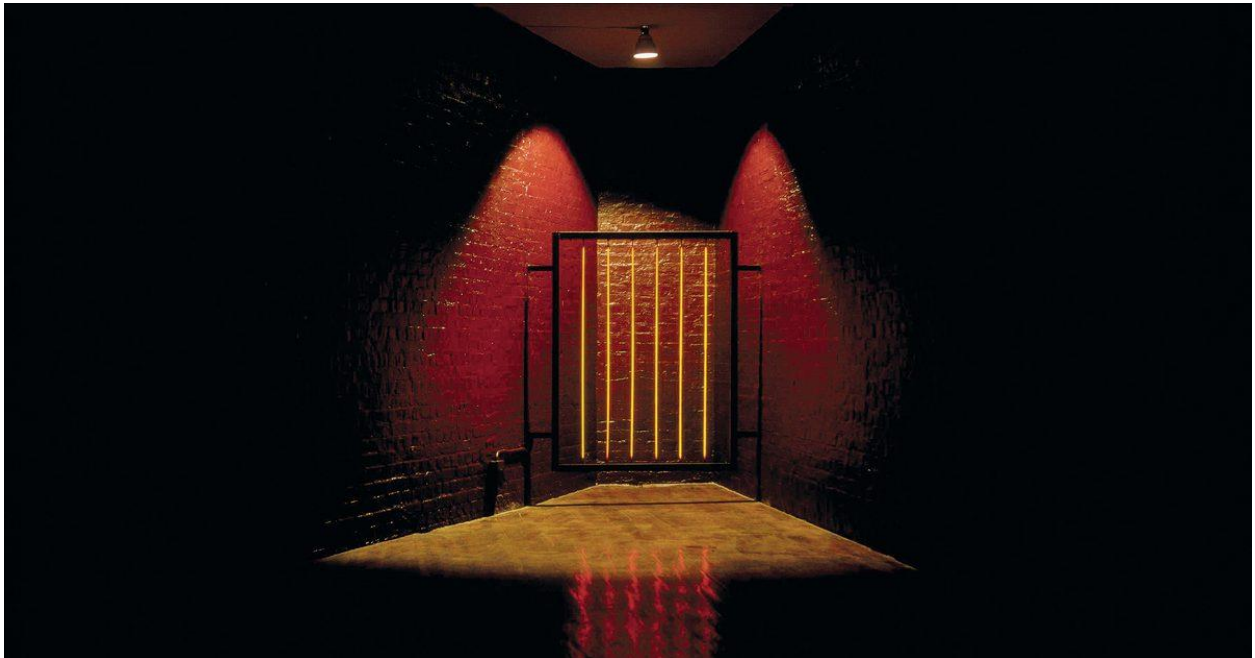


Fig 14

Hatoum's practice can oftentimes be defined as a highlighting of complex relationships in opposing forces, a key motif being the representation of the corporeal in minimal form. Much of her focus on chroma is that natural to the materials that she uses, only using colour beyond to draw attention to her practice's darker corpus. *The Light at the End* is constructed of a red-black dark space, broken up by six heating elements that omit an intense yellow. As the piece is sat with, approached, absorbed, the heat becomes uncomfortable; "Retinal pleasure is replaced by physical discomfort and psychological disturbance" (Alison, J. 2005b). It is the intense colour within this space that causes distress, pushing an audience away to the dark comfort that surrounds them. The dead space of black becomes a solace as the aliveness of colour stares you down; the frame is the corporeal, the heat omitted comparable to that of a living being. The buzzing of the

heater, the talking of the yellow, also suggests that there is life in the vibrant hue while the comparable quite of the surrounding black suggests a voidness of life; “Black is something burnt out [...] something motionless like a corpse. The silence of black is the silence of death” (Kandinsky, W. 1977). It is the aliveness of colour here as its heat swallows the room, consequently slaughtering the black, that causes discomfort. It pushes an audience to pray for its burial in black.

A reprieve from colour is not only seen in black but also in white. David Batchelor’s *Chromophobia* starts with a chapter on ‘Whitescapes’, detailing his experience in a “world entirely purged of colour.” He posits the entirely white space as something tyrannical, a world ignorant to colour. These whitescapes have emerged throughout art history, done most prominently (and perhaps most shockingly) by Yves Klein.

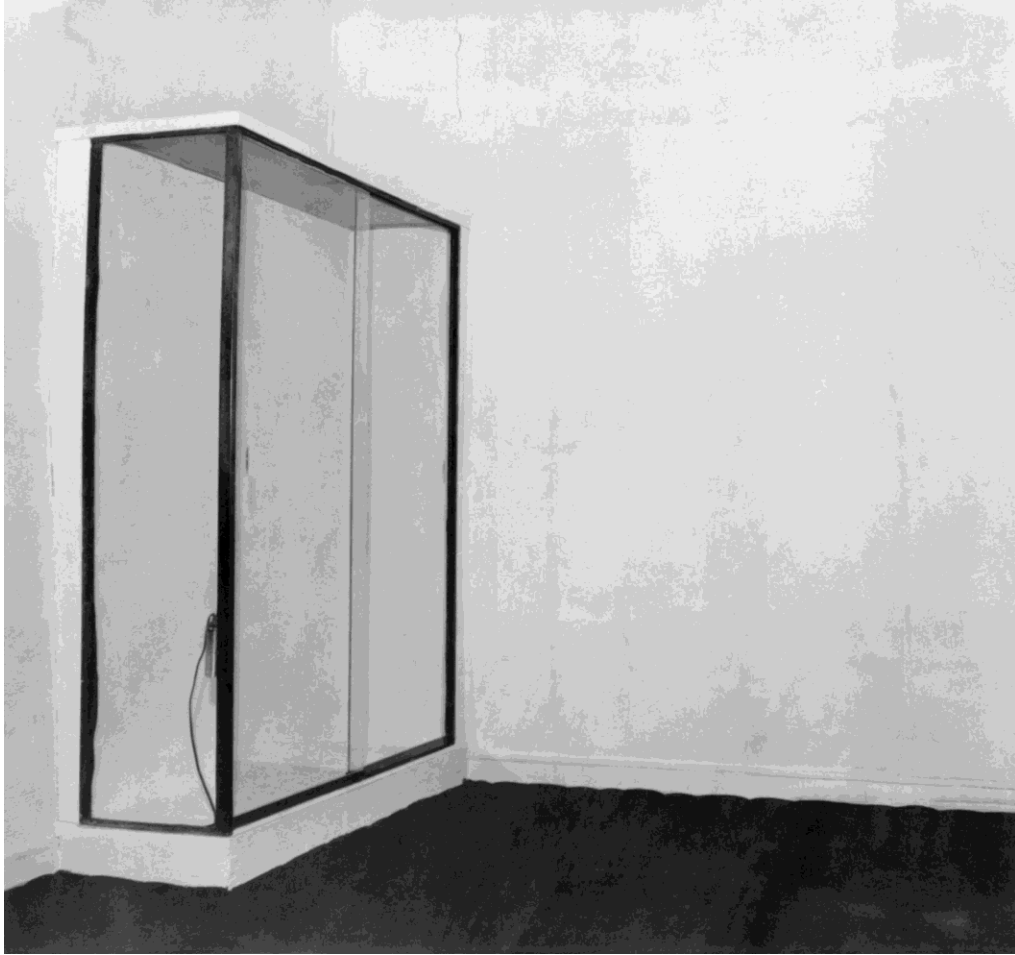


Fig 15

Alongside his focus on chromatic squares, Klein drowned Galerie Iris Clert completely in white. Even the belongings of the gallery such as the glass of a display case and the entrance door were not spared the fate. The goal here was for every object to “receive the pictorial climate of the sensibility of dematerialized blue” (Klein, Y. 2003, p. 52). In doing this painting, the artist mirrored the techniques he used when filling canvas, making this room as true a painting as them; the white paint is also a uniquely personal mix, similar to his patented blue. Klein provided free admissions tickets in 3,500 invitations, with them reading:

“the spectators endowed with a body vehicle receptive to sensibility would be able, despite all my effort and all my strength to keep the entire exhibition in place, to rob me, by impregnation[...] whether consciously or not.” (p. 49)

The body is a vehicle to white not only in *The Void* but in every aspect of our existence. It is the hue that we grant “intimate access to our bodies” through skincare, toothpaste, pills that cure our sickness (Fox, J. 2021, p. 142). White also heavily pervades our existence before our “body vehicle” through sperm and after, when it is no more; it is often the colour that lines a casket, the encases a tombstone, that our bodies return to when skin and muscle have melted away. An audience cannot help but steal from *The Void*, white is our lifeforce.

When discussing the exhibition, Klein states that this work is him abandoning the materiality and physicality of blue, however the idea of colour continues to plague (Klein, Y. 2003, p. 52). The artist treats the white as his signature blue, not affording the tone a liveliness, or deadness, away from it. He also discusses a separation from blue, not all colour, but BLUE; in doing so, he paints the space with word even if he doesn't touch it with brush or roller. Regarding his admission tickets, it is stated that an audience needs to be “a body vehicle receptive to sensibility”, a corporeal form that he can manoeuvre for his own means. His means are blue, just as “the blood of sensibility” (pg. 73). Klein is a masquerader. He invites into a void, a space where everything and nothing should just be, a space completely empty. His claim of

strength to keep the exhibition in place is deception, he wants the impregnation of the audience as the impregnation is with colour. Just as he later tried to seep colour into the bones of models, he is trying to seep then into the bodies of his audience; “My active presence [...] of the artist endowed with a true power; a sensuous density that is abstract yet real, existing and living, by itself and for itself.” (pg. 51)



Fig 16

“Come with me into the void” An invitation from the artist to fully occupy the air that inspired his use of blue (Alison, J. 2005a). *Leap into the Void* is a black-and-white photograph of Klein jumping from a great height, seemingly flying or aiming for the concrete below. The first interpretation suggests a liveliness and freedom beyond that afforded to

human beings while the latter makes this image a moment before death, preluding life being sucked from the artist; in this image, Klein becomes his colour. What is not clear in this image is the manipulation. Klein's wife and friends caught the artist in tarpaulin, saving him from his demise and making his freedom short lived. What is most interesting about this image is the lack of colour that Klein is so iconic for, mirroring his short exploration into the aesthetic of *The Void*. The invention of colour photography predates this image by a century and despite the medium still lacking in popularity in 1960, it is shocking that Klein wouldn't seek it out as colour is so essential to him. Perhaps it is because the achromatic palette makes the photomontage an easier process, but that then creates the question of why colour wasn't added in that process. Perhaps it is him fully embracing the colourless void.

The most prominent void in art is that created by the tone vantablack. The material absorbs 99.96 percent of light that hits it and has been monikered the world's blackest black. Within the art world, the material is controversial due to the right to use it being solely given to Anish Kapoor (Artforum, 2016).



Fig 17

Becoming a prominent part of Kapoor's pigment spills, his shapes doused in vantablack undoubtedly stand out. The complete darkness cast over them makes them appear to be void of the complexities of all his other shapes despite them being no simpler. It can even be purposed that these shapes become exceptionally more complex because of the material due to it comprising of carbon nanotubes with the width of a ten-thousandth of a human hair; it is these tubes that abduct light so effectively (Lewis, D. 2016). While the ability to see colour in black can be argued with every other shade, it is impossible here. Vantablack is the total undoing of colour in art.

Perhaps the void of vantablack is what Reinhardt or Klein craved, though it is totally inaccessible. The only reprieve from colour in our world is only used in military and by one

man in the world of art, it has almost unbeatable barriers built up around it, ones that can only be avoided if permitted and supervised. Vantablack is something dangerous, something only a few can control. It swallows all colour it touches, a black hole not permitting escape; vantablack could lead to the complete eradication of colour. Though, its danger is not only aimed at chroma. Everything we are is colour; "It seeps deep into our lives, saturating our words, thoughts, and feelings, belonging to a larger web or significance that our species wraps around itself" (Fox, J. 2021, p. 225). Colour is the wool overcoat that encapsulates our every moment, something we cannot escape, something that is solid and unmovable. It is our epitaph, our eulogy. Vantablack being the ultimate weapon against colour makes it the ultimate weapon against us. Klein using it in powder form allows it to enter our bodies, to be the only thing to break into the casket of colour. It overtaking us will lead us astray from Klein's "terrestrial paradise", damning us eternally. Klein and Reinhardt's void were not this, they utilised the achromatic to highlight colour while Kapoor strives to kill it with absolutely no chance of resurrection; is it not thought that makes colour a corpse, the only thing with that ability is the sprinkling, spilling, spreading, of vantablack.

No one was as vocally opposed to Kapoor's control over the colour-killer as artist Stuart Semple. The modern-day Klein, though with a far grander range of colour, Semple's all-consuming passion for pigment pushed him to create in direct spite of Kapoor. His first product was dubbed *The World's Pinkest Pink*, a powdered paint only purchasable with the caveat:

“By adding this product to your cart you confirm that you are not Anish Kapoor, you are in no way affiliated to Anish Kapoor, you are not purchasing this item on behalf of Anish Kapoor or an associate of Anish Kapoor. To the best of your knowledge, information and belief this paint will not make its way into the hands of Anish Kapoor.” (CultureHustle, 2016)

If Kapoor wants the tool for colour's assassination, then Semple aims to forbid him from the tools for colour's liberation. Despite the disclaimer, Kapoor eventually got his hands on the pink pigment, posting an image mocking Klein for the acquisition. The artist seemingly sees himself as entitled to rule the Kingdom of all chroma.

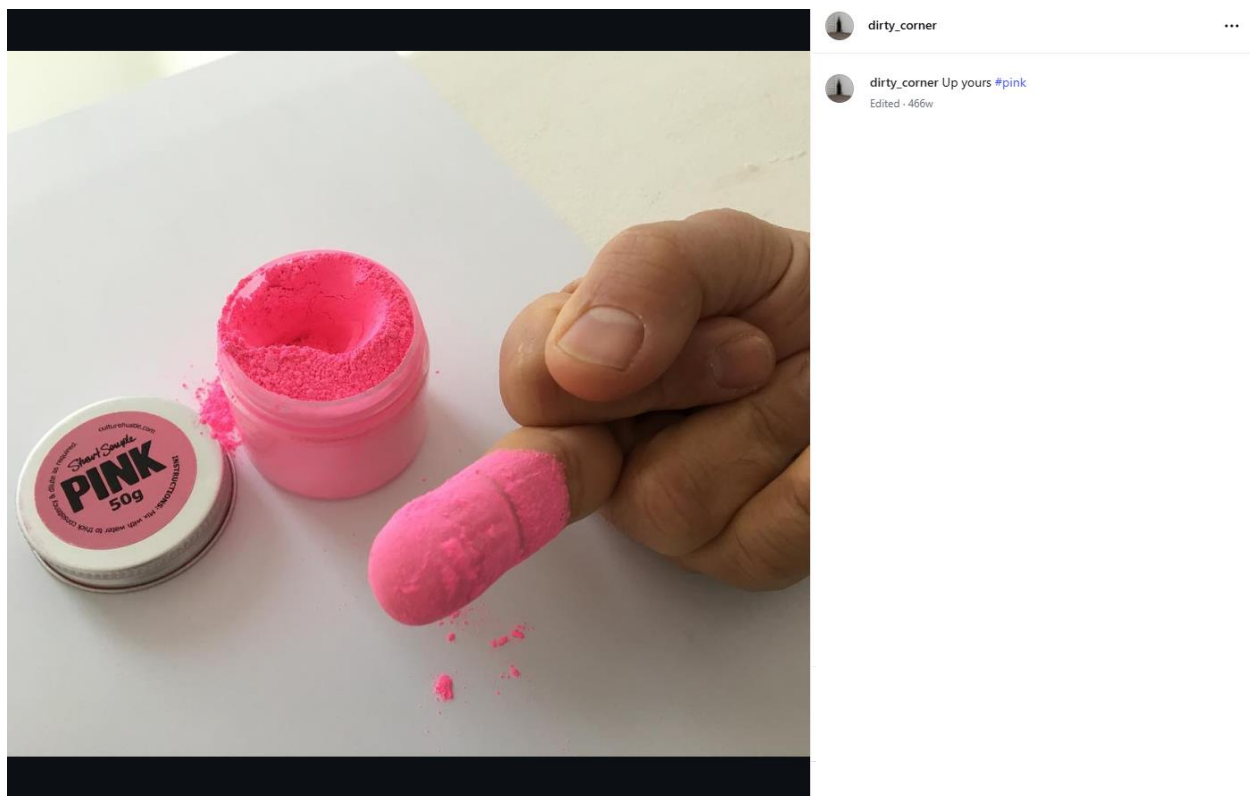


Fig 18

The image of him dusting his body with pigment makes him one with the work he betrays with vantablack. He gives the pink a pulse while tearing colour from the pedestal Semple places it upon; what should be unattainable to him is not, simply because he has power above it. The gesture and caption of choice, 'Up yours #pink', gives the suggestion of bodily intimacy with colour. Kapoor separates himself further from colour by using second-person colour, calling for colour to overtake others once again.

Semple does not allow Kapoor's dismantling of colour as a higher being, however. Another of Semple's products is 'Diamond Dust'. Dubbed The World's Most Glittery Glitter, it is made entirely of glass shards. While it was not made in response to the image, it in fact had been in production for years prior, they work in incredible tandem with each other; "I thought it made sense because the blackest black absorbs light and this stuff reflects it like nothing else!" (Semple, S. 2016) It not only does is oppose the black tone at the centre of Semple's ire with Kapoor, it threatens Kapoor. If Kapoor attempted to recreate the image above, he would more so expose his body to entering pigment. Cuts on his finger would allow the powders he often worked with to effortlessly sink deeper than skin. Diamond dust kills colour by being devoid of it, often even dulling other colour if peered through. Diamond dust keeps colour alive by threatening its biggest threat, the threat a death by chroma.

“Colour is life: for a world without colours appears to us as dead [...] At the moment when thought, concept, formulation, touch upon colour, its spell is broken, and we hold in our hands a corpse” (van Hagen, E. 1970, p. 8).

Colour’s use throughout this history of art leaves it dead, resurrected, alive, in a constant rotation. Non-colour’s use throughout this history of art leaves it dead, resurrected, alive, in a constant rotation. Colour is seen as a religion with Giotto as a god and Klein as the messiah. Colour was bone deep for Giotto, something that returned to him is name, recognition, and life far beyond death. Klein attempted to spread such a thing, enveloping the world in an atmosphere of IKB, making every person within a vibrant blue. This colour could not possibly be killed if it so effortlessly kills all that consume it, all those exist in the same world as it; “One of the paradoxes of colour is that is at once truly universal and unaccountably particular; it is something vividly experienced by almost all people almost all the time, and yet our understanding [...] remains rudimentary and contested” (Batchelor, D. 2008, p.18).

Non-colour was seen within the practices of Ryman, Reinhardt, Hatoum, and Klein himself, though primarily in the context of showing the beauty and inescapability of colour. They highlight the impossibility of escaping colour. They make colour a ghost that haunts their pieces, killing it for their benefit of making their non-colour beautiful. True, devastating, non-colour can only be seen in vantablack. Colour is killed within Kapoor’s

practice due to his sole users right to the pigment. His spill of the powder threatens to overtake all other colours in its presence, all well as the colours that comprise us.

Perhaps it is thought, concept, and formulation, that kill colour. We can see colour as a corpse in many works the second thought it placed to them but equally, it is this thought that can make the same colour livelier than ever. Perhaps formulation did once dull colour to death but since Klein's creation of IKB, colour is art has allowed to be livelier than ever. It appears that the tone of vantablack is all that could decimate chroma, a tone than will never be able to engulf the world in the same way colour can; "The history of colour, therefore, is also a history of humanity" (Fox, J. 2021, p. 226).

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