

Colour Bars and Colour Research

Artists: Michael Morris and Vincent Trasov

Work:

Endless Painting. Two colour bar paintings, each comprising 640 hand painted yellow cedar bars (4.2 x 17.5 x 1.8 cm.) are presented on the floor. The dimensions of each painting are 140 x 328 x 1.8 cm., making up a total of 4.592 sq. meters. One set is painted in monochrome, each colour bar painted in one colour of the spectrum with the gradation of light to dark occurring in nine stages. The second set is painted in the colours of the spectrum. By gradually adding white to the enamel pigments, the intensity of the colours gradates in nine stages as one goes through the set.

Date of work: 1972-1973

About the work: the work was purchased in 2007 by the Morris and Helen Belkin Art Gallery, Vancouver.

Colour Research

Colour Research is an ongoing pursuit of over 35 years and represents a significant holding of the Morris/Trasov Archive. The colour bars are part of this research and at present are in the archive.

Colour Research is developed in 5 parts:

Endless Painting
Collaboration
Culture and Nature
Interactive
Chronology

Endless Painting. The existing system of monochrome and spectrum variations can be deployed formally, or as random/chance arrangements; e.g., wind and water, light and shadow, in or out of urban, social, cultural landscapes, to explore and transform the colour bar units in as many media as possible through the expediency of reproducibility. The process is shared through collaboration, documentation, presentation in whole or in part from time to time along the road.

The rainbow is a timeless departure point for the imagination. The physics of light and the perception of colour have engaged both artists and scientists.. The colour bar project grew out of informal collaborations in the late 1960's between artists involved with the Intermedia movement in Vancouver and developed as a model for art and life experiments in the 1970's. It remains a reference for

continuing research.

Culture and Nature

Numerous “props” have been created to act as cues or visual aids to articulate and draw attention to the role of colour in the environment. The colour bars are an intervention that increases our awareness of our surroundings and can be thought of as a kind of “cultural ecology”. While it marks the (visual and material) differences between nature and culture it also maps out the complex interdependency between nature and culture and the fluid boundary that lies within this relationship.

Interactive

To encourage experiment and participation, the interactive possibilities include architecture, design, graphics, network and archive. Visitors to “Colour Research” on the Morris/Trasov Archive link at the Morris and Helen Belkin Art Gallery website were invited to share their ideas, artwork and observations with regard to this research. www.belkin.ubc.ca

Chronology

“Pathe”; Michael Morris, acrylic on canvas in the shape of a chevron; 1967; a comment on film colour process.

“Prisma”; Michael Morris and Gary Lee-Nova, 5-sided mirrored environment with disco lighting, 1968; commissioned by the Vancouver Art Gallery.

“Dot Depth of Field Studies”; Michael Morris, Warren Knechtel and Vincent Trasov’ 1969; slide and film documentation of “animation” with props at Spanish banks.

“Colour bar prototypes”; Michael Morris, Gary Lee-Nova and Vincent Trasov, 1970; prototypes developed for a series of workshops for the National Film Board.

“Colour bar studies”; Gary Lee-Nova; 1970-1971, felt pen on paper and gouache and ink on paper.

“Room with Props; Michael Morris and Vincent Trasov, 1971; colour props and documentation exhibition at the Vancouver Art Gallery.

Colour bars; Michael Morris and Vincent Trasov, 1972; painting of the first set of colour bars. Enamel on wood.

“Leopard realty”; Kate Craig (Lady Brute) and Eric Metcalfe (Dr. Brute) 1972-1974; plywood triangles painted with spectrum and greyscale. Enamel on plywood

File Megazine, Vol. 2, Nos. 1/2 Special Double Issue (May 1973). General Idea; extensive photo documentation of colour bars in the landscape. Cover photo by Vincent Trasov.

Colour bars; Michael Morris and Vincent Trasov, 1973; painting of second set of colour bars.

“Light on mirror research”; Michael Morris, Gary Lee-Nova and Vincent Trasov, 1974; colour bars photographed with mirrors..

“Ziggurat banners for the Georgia Viaduct”; Michael Morris, 1976; commissioned by city of Vancouver.

“TV dinner plate from the Colour Bar Lounge”; General Idea, 1979; General Idea’s concept for a colour bar lounge, to be part of the 1984 Miss General Idea Pavilion.

“Magic Cocktail Palettes”; General Idea, 1980; magnetized aluminium coloured cups clinging to a mirrored palette; project for the 1984 Miss General Idea Pavilion.

“Colour bars accessioned at The Banff Centre”; Michael Morris and Vincent Trasov, 1990; start of accessioning and data base for the Morris/Trasov Archive.

“Morris/ Trasov Archive Colour Research”; Michael Morris and Vincent Trasov, 1994; exhibition curated by Wayne Baerwaldt for the XXII Bienal Internacional de Sao Paulo.

“Colour Research”; Michael Morris, Gary Lee-Nova, Eric Metcalfe, Kate Craig, General Idea and Vincent Trasov, 1996; artefacts, documentation and correspondence from 25 years of collaborative projects, curated by Scott Watson, Morris and Helen Belkin Art Gallery.

“Colour Research 1967-2000”; Michael Morris and Vincent Trasov; website designed by Patrick Chan.

“Dot Depth of Field”; Michael Morris, 2006; DVD produced at The Banff Centre in the residency “the future of idea art”.

“The Monochromatic Field”; Michael Morris and Vincent Trasov, 2007; monochromatic colour bar set exhibited at the Morris and Helen Belkin Art Gallery.

“Search for the Spirit”, a chapter of a larger exhibition entitled “All that is solid melts into air” programmed by the Museum van Hedenaagse (MuHKA) as part of the City Visions Festival (Mechelen Belgium), 2009.