

un Interview with Beata Geyer

Ruark Lewis interviewed Beata Geyer following her recent exhibitions of "Coloris" at Blindside, Melbourne (31 March – 16 April 2005) and "Chromophobic" at Rocketart, Newcastle (18 Nov – 5 Dec 2004).

Ruark Lewis: What sort of paint do you like to use? Can you describe its qualities and how you employ it?

Beata Geyer: I use a vast range of commercially available industrial paints, such as Dulux, Wattyl and Solver; anything really as long as it comes in a can and could easily be matched with a colour chart. I like the idea of autonomous, random, accumulative, disposable and multi-relational colour. The actual properties of paint are not that important to me, although in Chromophobic and Coloris – as with other installation projects – the hand painted colour surfaces are flat and non-reflective.

RL: How and why do you develop a structural skeleton in the your installations?

BG: Architecture is heavily implicated in my installations, they are always generated as a specific and direct response to the spatial dynamics of the gallery. I use the same basic unit – a monochromatic rectangular panel – to construct complex polychromatic, 2D and 3D wall, floor and ceiling grid structures. In each project the number of panels changes, although the colour combination and final configuration vary. I try to avoid 'the logic of monument', as in a freestanding unattached sculptural form, focusing instead on a disjunctive relationship between colour, form and architecture.

RL: Can you tell us what your thoughts were about your show Chromophobic at Rocketart, Newcastle?

BG: The project was conceived as a very direct, conceptual engagement with the site, which attempted to explore the perceptual possibilities of colour in space and took the form of a collaboration. Working with the artist Lesley Giovannelli, there developed a simultaneously and rather eclectic abstract response to the architectonics of the gallery. We used lots of narrow, rectangular monochromatic panels that travelled in vertical and horizontal sequences through the gallery rooms, randomly turning at different points on the walls, almost like a game of Snake on a mobile phone; a simple, multiple, chromo-spatial interplay that never ends.



RL: When architecture is stimulating, it's because there is a sense of spatial anticipation operating, something that characterises the place or space. Can you consider if there is something prescriptive in the constructions that you undertake? And if so, what sort of 'atmosphere' informs your installations?

BG: Firstly, I agree with your observation about stimulating architecture, it's very exciting to come across such examples, although they are extremely rare and I cannot think of that many exciting gallery spaces around. Not that it matters in my projects anyway. The galleries I use are always random, accidental and never ideal. So my response to architectonics of a gallery is a negotiation, more about a compromise: dealing with difficulties and resolving problems. Though sometimes there is a surge of energy, a glimpse of the ideal, an excitement. It happened with Coloris at Blindside in Melbourne. This involved a direct and temporal response to site, that engaged with the outside rather than the inside of the gallery space. I was inspired by the location of the gallery (which I hadn't seen prior to this exhibition) and the actual view from its 7th floor window overlooking Federation Square, which I found very dynamic. It was this outside energy – a spatial anticipation as you might call it – that somehow permeated the space and I wanted to engage with it rather than with the interior of the gallery.

*Below & across: Beata Geyer
Coloris, 2005
MDF & paint
Dimensions variable
Image courtesy of the artist*



Secondly, on the subject of 'prescriptiveness' in my work, I think there is possibly a misunderstanding about function of geometry in a work of art. It could be, as Wladyslaw Strzeminski pointed out in 19281, as arbitrary and subjective as any other form. Even Rosalind Krauss likened the serial and repetitive strategy of geometric structures of minimalism to the 'outpourings and repetitiveness of obsessional mind'.² I don't see my installation as the 'abyss of irrationality', yet there is much less formulation and systematic approach than it might seem. Although there are deliberate steps I tend to follow, each game has it's own rules. Regardless, having some boundaries can be rather liberating. My initial response is always very intuitive, almost painterly. You have to start somewhere; the first mark and just take it from there. I attach first the panel, the first monochrome and then I negotiate my way through the space. I never redo or change anything because it 's always about addition and accumulation never about subtraction or reduction. Also it is much less about the colour composition than it seems. Yes, I do make aesthetic choices – it's unavoidable – but I leave myself a very small window to do that. Once the monochrome gets attached it stays there.

Lastly, I am sure not if my work is about 'atmosphere' at all. I am more interested in the concept of disjuncture, a

spatial strategy of perceptual and conceptual dislocation. It's based on a dialectical model: a confrontation between the fixity of architectural form and colour itself, which is uncontained, uncontrolled, not fixed and most of all irrational. Moreover, in Coloris the form has a strong narrative, almost cinematographic quality, all but replicating the movement of bodies in space, so it's perhaps more of a collision and dissociation rather than an atmosphere I am interested in.

Ruark Lewis is a Sydney artist and writer.

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¹ Polish art theoretician, painter, designer of 'functional' prints, pioneer of the Constructivist avant-garde of the 1920s and 1930s, creator of the theory of Unism.

² Rosalind E. Krauss, "The Originality of the Avant Garde", *The Originality of the Avant Garde and Other Modernist Myths*, The MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1985.