

Colour Action: An Exploration of Values and Shifting Modes in Painting

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Attestation of Authorship

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor material which to a substantial extent has been accepted for the award of another degree or diploma or a university or institution of higher learning.

Signed

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ekarasa Mara Doblanovic', written in a cursive style.

Ekarasa Mara Doblanovic

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ABSTRACT

This visual arts research project aims to investigate colour and composition. The interest relies in how an image that incorporates three-dimensional aspects emerges through interaction between monochromatic and modular components that are deployed within an expanded field of painting; that is to say, within a field of activity which deconstructs the frame of painting and explores colour, surface and plastic values, in a spatial context.

The study aims to investigate colour and its manifestations; particularly in it's potential to generate affective responses. The project's main interest arises from a question of how the image in art emerges from visual-material relationships, and, then transcends the bounds of the painted surface into pure sensation.

The approach taken engages interaction between the formal and the playful, between rational planning and contingency, within sites of visual and spatial potentiality where intuition, chance and improvised response generate unique configurations.

1. INTRODUCTION

This research project explores colour and how an image¹ and its spatial qualities emerge through painting, colour and modular compositions. By image I mean that of a figure/ground relationship, a dialogue between objects. The definition of image has long been a subject of philosophical consideration for example Henry Bergson (2004) in the introduction of his book "Matter and Memory" writes: "matter in our view is an aggregate of 'images' ...". Bergson uses the notion of image to close the gap between mind and matter by not absolutely differentiating between "matter-images," "perception-images," and "memory-images." Thus this project addresses how modularity in painting engages with an expanded field of painting, and how a traditional language of painting (i.e. materials, means, image and values in painting) might be used, referenced and married to a new set of codes or contexts by using the frame and/or deconstructing it to go beyond itself and its bounded physicality.

The project is defined by a physical engagement with colour, materials and processes. Discovering new pigments and fabricating paints in order to maintain their primal beauty and to develop an intensified Chroma/pigment and its applications are explored through considerations of scale and of the formal, spatial and plastic qualities of paint, resulting in a shifting field of compositional and surface relationships being made visible. I explore how colour and its agency operate in contexts of monochromatic painted surfaces articulated in space.

I use colour to generate and mediate compositional relationships between objects, also as a material signifier. Pigments perform not only as colours, but also as chemical compounds within the laboratory of the studio and its experimental making process. Employing unusual minerals, such as; soils, semi-precious stones and plant dyes (lake pigments), this results in specialized chemical and molecular configurations furthering the use of unprecedented tones and effects, bringing into play a material's own physical origin. The pigments are presented in their original monochromatic tone so their essential nature and connotations can be appreciated and contemplated by the discerning viewer.

These monochromes in an historical context define an origin of an image and or simultaneously an erasure of an image or departure from an image devoid of figuration.. My monochromes however do not act as a statement of erasure of an image nor do they negate a possibility of transcendental meaning and signification. But rather they are a celebration of colour and its potentialities.

There has been many an attempt in theory to describe colour and its affects with words, but its infinite tonal qualities seem to have only been mentioned in passing. Here we can clearly see the limitations of language, as Jacques Derrida says "colour has not yet been named"². Colour certainly demonstrates the impossibility of its being represented verbally, described or framed. It somehow describes itself through its actuality and yet paradoxically we can say colour is just an affect that we experience.

This investigation of colour and its field in this project has developed in a fluid manner,

¹ Bergson .H (1990) *Matter and Memory* Zone Books (NYC) p 7.

² Batchelor.D. (2008) *Colour*, MIT press, p 4.

allowing intuition to play a role in the outcome. Each new work revealed new compositional possibilities and affects shaping the inquiry and informing the works that followed.

In the creation process of these works there is a mediation of conscious decision-making; improvisation, chance and intuition play an important role. Henry Bergson developed a method for intuition with strict rules of “precision”³ as a way of accessing and intuiting the needed knowledge.

According to Bergson, through the act of intuition as methodology we are able to grasp from the whole, accessing all we need to know in a given moment.

Gestalt theory as discussed in visual and psychological studies operates to describe the viewer’s forming of an image and the phenomenological affects at play. Merleau-Ponty considers the body as the basis for perception, and his study on Gestalt theory forms the basis for an exploration on perception which is particularly germane to my thinking and making. Merleau-Ponty’s early philosophy attempts to provide an ontological foundation for the Gestalt. “A figure on a background,” Merleau-Ponty (1968) writes, “is the simplest sense-given available to us,” and accordingly “is the very definition of the phenomenon of perception”⁴ (p. 4). Thus the “Gestalt” or *whole form method* seeks to define rules of perception—naturally innate conceptual laws determine the way objects are perceived. These rules are based on the here and now, and in the way things may be seen. A relation to figure or ground can define images or form.

³ Deleuze, G. (1988). *Bergsonism*. New York: Zone Books. p.13

⁴ Ponty, M. (1968) *The Primacy of Perception and its Philosophical Consequences*, in Edie, p.4

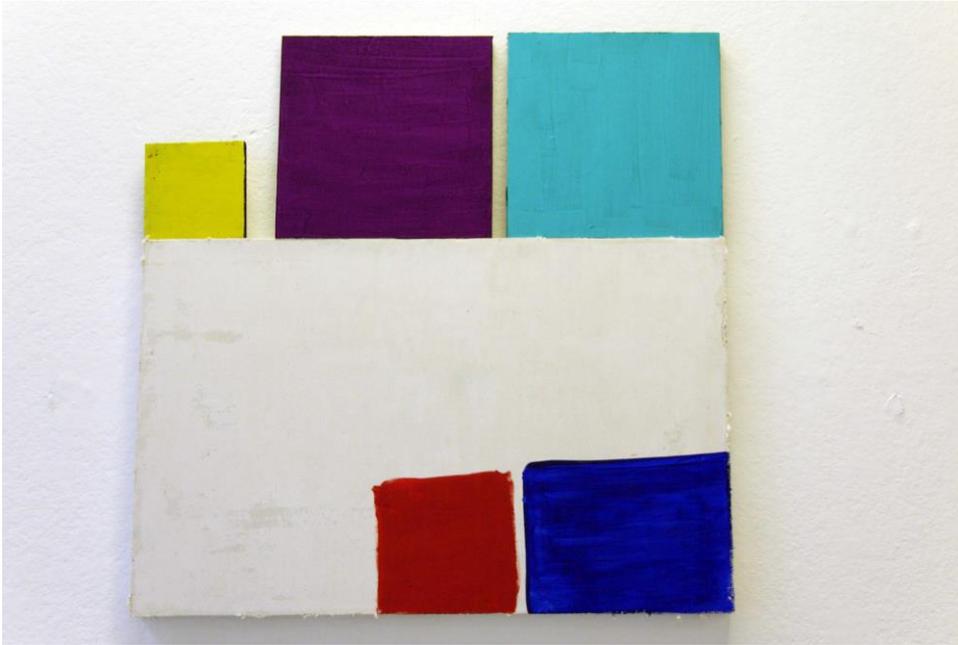


Fig.1 Ekarasa Dobalnovic

Untitled, 550 x 550 mm, Pigment and mixed median on canvas on board, 2014

2. MODULARITY

At the early stages of this research project I began with a playful exercise of resting smaller panel paintings on top of a larger white gesso panel work not yet completed which introduced a new methodology. While previously the works in my studio practice acted as individual pieces, now the possibilities of modular composition and assembly could be recognised and engaged with.

This methodology suggested new ways of working in the studio. Studies and finished paintings ranging in size from small scale paint test modules to larger panel works all became potential readymade components for modular works.

Traditionally in painting the focus is on the surface or flat image within a given, usually rectilinear frame which circumscribed complete autonomy and independence of colours, shapes and forms. By contrast, constructing monochromatic paintings that function as modules and arranging them spatially, the focus is shifted from completely resting only on the painted surface to one of how the modules and surfaces interact. The space in between the modules and the background becomes an active part of the composition, with its surfaces, e.g., walls, floor and windows with even outdoor views, being included in an expanded pictorial potential. The viewer is invited to read and experience the work spatially in terms of scale relations from a variety of perspectives, while simultaneously being able to consider each painted unit or module as a single entity.

Ellsworth Kelly's panelled works and mainly monochromatic canvases in the 1950s became very significant in terms of deconstructing the frame of a painting. He was interested in relationship of shape, colour and form in such a way to create three-dimensional geometric shapes and place them upon his irregular shaped canvases or panels resulting in a relief like disruption of surface values.

He says: "I have worked to free the shape from its ground, and then to work the shape so

that it has definite relationship to the space around it; so that it has a clarity and a measure within itself of its parts (angles, curves, edges and mass); and so that, with colour and tonality, the shape finds its own space and always demands its freedom and separateness".⁵

His colored works are bold and of an immediate presence devoid of representational and gestural marks.

He was more interested in the viewer actively participating with the works spatially rather than analytically. He explored the possibility of painting installed spatially in a non conventional manner. But also how color might function as an idea, he says: "In "Red, yellow, blue" the square panels present colour. It was made to exist forever in the present; it is an idea and can be repeated anytime in the future".⁶

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<http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/kelly-black-square-with-blue-t07106>

Fig.2 Ellsworth Kelly

Black Square with Blue, 3048 x 3048mm, Oil paint on two canvases, 1970

⁵ quote retrieved from <http://www.theartstory.org/artist-kelly-ellsworth.htm>

⁶ Ibid.

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<http://www.gagosian.com/exhibitions/brice-marden--january-17-2013>

Fig.3 Brice Marden

Red, Yellow, Blue III, 1880 x 1829mm Oil and Wax on canvas, 1974

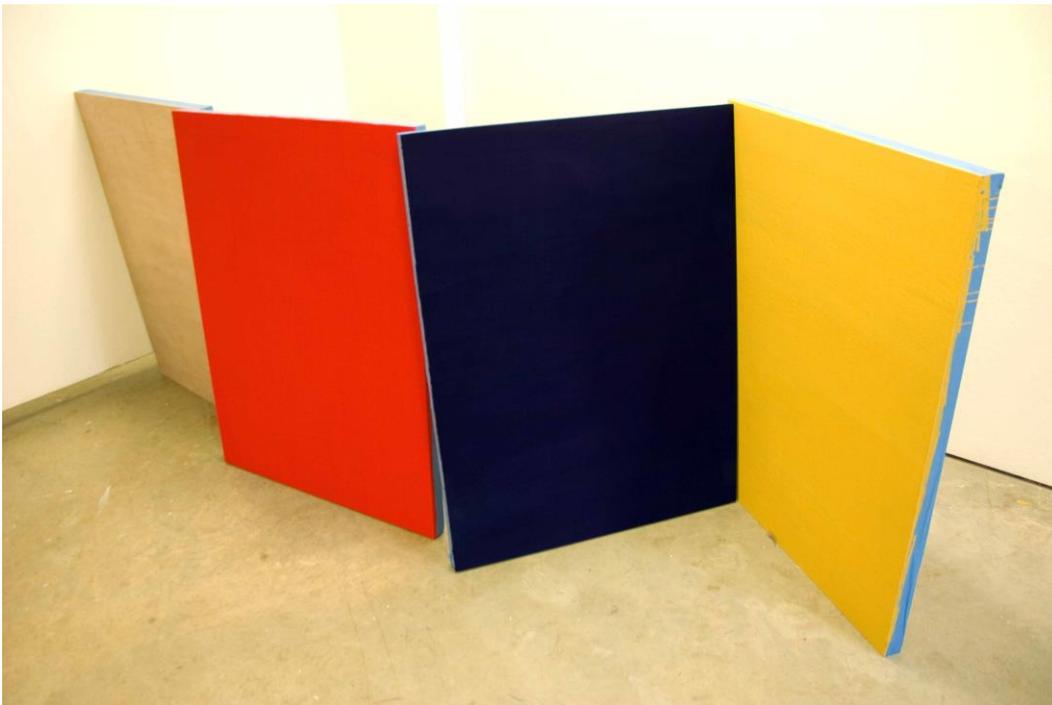


Fig.4 Ekarasa Doblanovic

Red, Blue, Yellow and Wood panel. 3x 1000 x 750mm, Pigment and medium on board, 2014

2.1 OBJECTHOOD AND GESTALT

Stacking or resting components on top of each other (Fig.1, Fig.5) produces a provisional and playful quality while at the same time creates an object in itself—one in which not only the surface plays a role but also the supporting sides of it and of the other panels.

Through such arrangements a new context for colour, form and surface relationships is created and the possibility for new readings is made evident.

The square composition reiterates itself through the repetition of squares and spatial activity between its components to become a visually connected responsive loop.

Michael Fried writes (1998), “All meaning is in the syntax... [or] abstract gesture.”⁷ (p.29) That is, the elements that constitute a painting, such as shape and colour, relate to each other and are interdependent. Fried implies an intrinsic logic and order within a painting: its elements present themselves to the gaze as self-sufficient and internally relational.

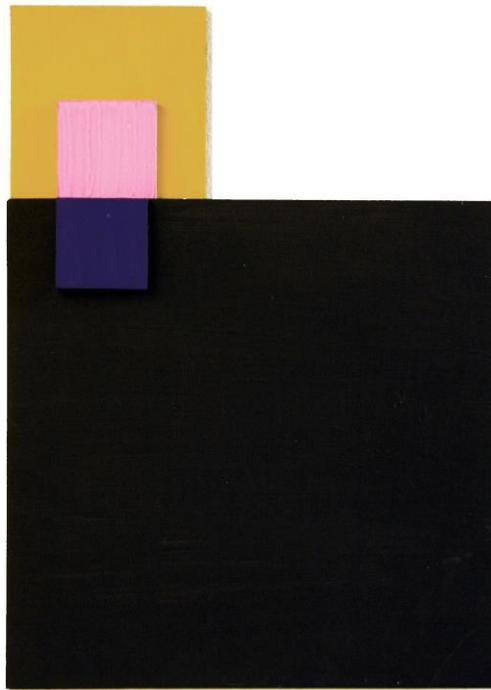


Fig.5 Ekarasa Doblancovic

Minus. 700 x 500mm, Pigment and medium on hematite ground on 4 wooden modules plus blue tape, 2014

⁷ Fried, M. (1998) *Art and Objecthood: Essays and Reviews*, Chicago: University Press p.29

This makes sense analysed vis à vis shape, which is defined as the external edge, boundary or contour of an object. The manner in which edges relate within a painting will define the picture plane and an independent world can be created. Fried explains that the shape of a painting (its support) does not dominate its contents, as contrasted with works of Minimal art whose physical or literal shape seek a status in the world. He suggests that the “gestalt” of an object or its “objecthood” (term coined by Fried) forms a set of interdependent relationships among the object itself, the surrounding space and the viewer, in which the viewer is made aware that the object is there for them. Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1968) further says on gestalt:

“It is impossible to decompose a perception into a collection of sensations because in perception, the whole is prior to the parts—and this whole is not an ideal whole. (...) The perceived thing is not an ideal unity in the possession of the intellect, like a geometrical notion for example; it is rather a totality open to a horizon of indefinite number of perspectival views which blend with one another according to a given style, which defines the object in question. Perception is thus paradoxical. The perceived thing is in itself paradoxical: it exists only insofar as someone can perceive it.”⁸

In this sense there is openness to a variety of interpretations in which gestalt is not a finite whole but a reference to the “whole” as infinite space in which we enter a sphere of meaning.

Through this interplay of elements the viewer is invited to consider the traditional view of object and subject relationship and examine its boundaries and meanings. A spatial installation of the works entices the viewer into a more active dialogue and an experiential bodily encounter with the object or things in space which is defined from a multitude of view points. Merleau-Ponty defines human perception as not only rooted in the body but having no definite boundaries or localities, with no clear distinction between object and subject. Depth becomes an important dimension, not in terms of conventional meaning of space but a place where relationships and a set of processes are formed and initiated in which perception is not a mechanical response but an open and active organism, restlessly improvising its responses to the world.

⁸ Ponty, M. (1968) *The Primacy of Perception and its Philosophical Consequences*, in Edie, p.16

2.2 PAINTING IN THE EXPANDED FIELD

Modular arrangements of paintings spatially arranged within a given space can be seen as painting in the expanded field or as a quasi-installation.

In her 1979 essay, *Sculpture in the Expanded Field*, Rosalind Krauss has written on sculpture's intrinsic logic and its three-dimensional nature, as the "logic of the monument"⁹. (p.33)

Whereas the intrinsic logic for traditional painting lies logically in our conventional understanding of its surface and/or two dimensional image, my painting practice can be seen as painting that engages with its expanded field, as a parallel to Krauss' argument. Since the introduction of new media and conceptual art in 1960-70s, new movements and artistic expressions have been defined as existing within a "post-medium condition". A plurality of media tied together by a concept resulted in the hybridization of old and new media, and an artwork was freed from restricting itself to one single medium. This contrasts to painting at that time, which restricted itself to medium- specific, old-fashioned materials.

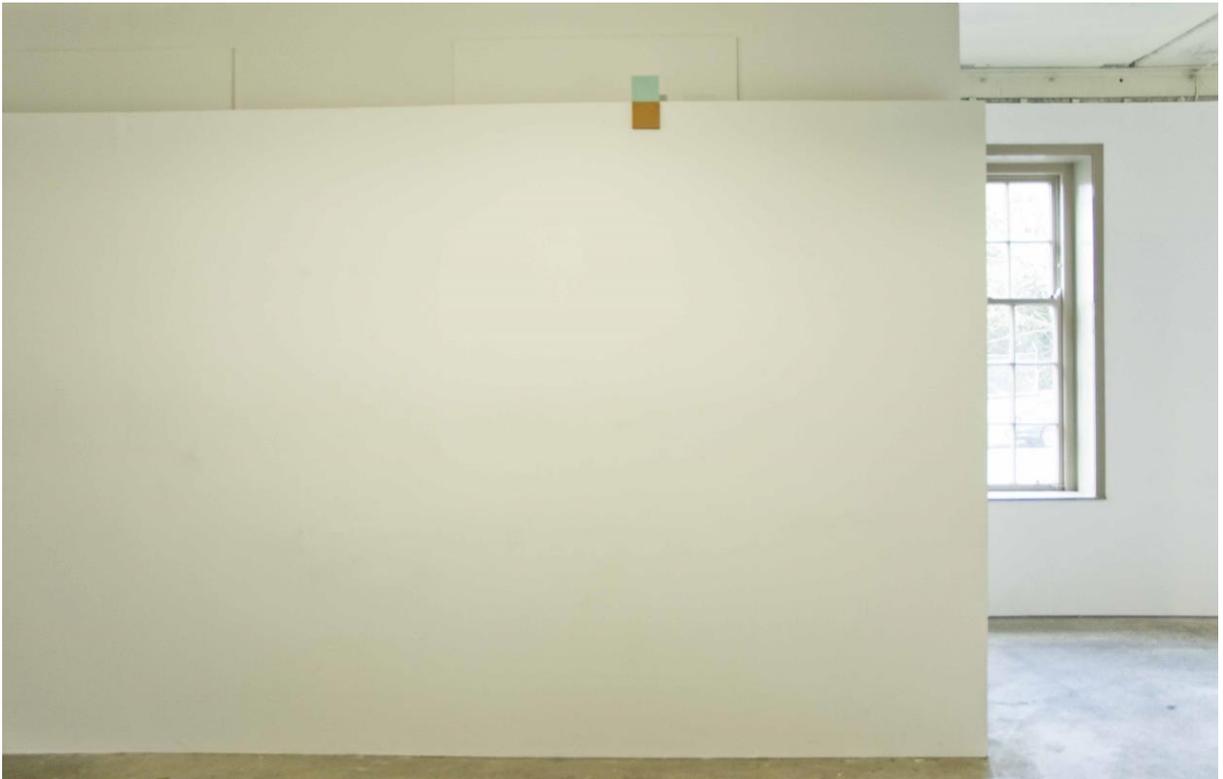


Fig.6 Ekarasa Doblanovic

Untitled, 2x 90 x 900mm, Pigment and medium on board, 2014

⁹ Krauss, R. (1979) *Sculpture in the Expanded Field* [Journal Article]. 8, 31-44, (p.33)

Referring to philosopher Hubert Damish, Yve Alain Bois cited in an essay by Jan Verwoert (2005) has argued that painting as a medium is essentially conceptual, through strategically positioning itself in a field of external contextual references; and through the way its installed creates a critical gesture whilst critically addressing internal references through its material qualities and its formal language.¹⁰

Painting has since evolved to generate further spatial potential by creating situations in which walking inside a painting or an image, an open-ended image or a set of structures in a state of flux—yet following a pictorial logic -- can function as modular and provisional. It can be said that a set of structures or modular components doesn't have the same relationship to the viewer as a traditional painting. Yet strong links to tradition are maintained in the single units. Each unit as well as each set straddles aspects of painting and installation: while presented as an installation in a site specific context, mostly in gallery spaces as art institutions, once dismantled, unlike most installation art, single modules of paintings are durable and easily sold.



Fig.7 Ekarasa Doblanovic

Untitled, 6 x 130 x 130,, Pigment and medium on board, 2014

¹⁰Verwoert, J.(2005)*Why Are Conceptual Artists Painting Again? Because They Think It's A Good Idea*. Retrieved 07.07.2014 <http://www.afterall.org/journal/issue.12/why.are.conceptual.artists.painting.again.because>. p.5/7

The work of Katherina Grosse exemplifies this open-ended installation aesthetic. Her large-scale colour field works generally take over entire gallery spaces or outdoor areas. Her works push the boundaries of space by exploring all of the cardinal directions. They create a strong narrative in which colour and gesture create an activated visual space. Her use of vibrant colour applied in a performative manner employs materials and their placements as dramatic and ambivalent. Her installations create a multifaceted synthesis of all sculptural, painterly, theatrical and ephemeral elements.

The image have been removed due to copyright

<http://ashleyklann.wordpress.com/2011/03/16/psychedelic-styrofoam-katharina-grosse%E2%80%99s-contemporary-installation-at-mass-moca/>

Fig.8 Katharina Grosse

One Floor up More Highly, large installation over many floors, dirt, stones, styrofoam, pigment and other, Mass MoCA, 2011

3. COLOUR

Colour has its own life, a nature of movement and fluctuations that has the capacity to unceasingly deliver new sensations and interpretations. It has the power to reinvent line and form through forces of expansion and contraction, repulsion or attraction, harmony or disharmony. Colour can mask and hide the surface beneath, with the power to transform and reinvent it; by adding a possibility of dimensions that speak of something other and to perhaps generate a kind of fiction or fantasy which might differ from its actual material qualities.

Colour engages the viewer in a perpetual intuitive and emotional dialogue. Nevertheless, colour when presented in a variety of ways can evoke intellectual responses.

Colour can never be “neutral”¹¹ (p.71) says David Batchelor (2000) in his book “Chromophobia”. Batchelor uncovers a set of languages and codes being played out through colour in a given cultural context and time in history. He interprets colour through analogies where choice of materiality and its applications becomes a language in itself and becomes a cultural statement. For example through an eradication of colour, by creating pristine “whitescapes”¹² (p.22); referring to architecture he says: “..design must maintain its preponderance over colour”¹³ (p.23). Here colour is consciously eradicated as an active statement; as being vulgar, inappropriate or dirty, somehow reflecting values of a patriarchal society over the feminine and as a parallel analogy where line and form has to subordinate colour. In his chapter “Chromophilia” colour gains a kind of “autonomy”¹⁴ (p.55) over line and form; as outlined by Charles Baudelaire, autonomy to be itself, as to be truth, or to lie; to be blunt, to seduce or to be vulgar.

I am not interested in cultural contexts of colour as such in my works, but more in exploring how colour articulates itself between feeling and thoughtful response, and between formal, tonal and spatial relationships.

Colour shifts, contracts and expands it responds to light through its values and simultaneously to the viewer’s feelings. The nature of colour is of movement and constant fluctuation. I wondered if the actual colour can be ever seen or known. As the tonal value of colour it’s always dependent on its external light source.

The question of how colour is perceived has furthered added to its spell and a subject of fascination for me. According to Merleau-Ponty there is an innate knowing in regards to the true nature of colour although we might never determinately see the true colour because of the shifting nature of light. He goes on to say that “The real colour persists beneath appearances as the background persists beneath the figure, that is, not as a seen or thought-of quality, but through a non-sensory [i.e., indeterminate] presence”¹⁵.

For Ponty the active dialogue of the seer and seen and an experiential bodily and visual encounter with the object (colour) is defined from a multitude of view points; this is crucial in order to perceive colours real shade.

¹¹ Batchelor, D. (2000). *Chromophobia*. London: Reaktion. p.71

¹² Ibid. p.22

¹³ Ibid. p.23

¹⁴ Ibid. p.55

¹⁵ Dorrance, K. S. (2003). *Seeing Things in Merleau-Ponty*.p.13 (in *Phenomenology of Perception* p.305) (<http://www.nyu.edu/gsas/dept/philo/courses/representation/papers/Kelly.pdf>)

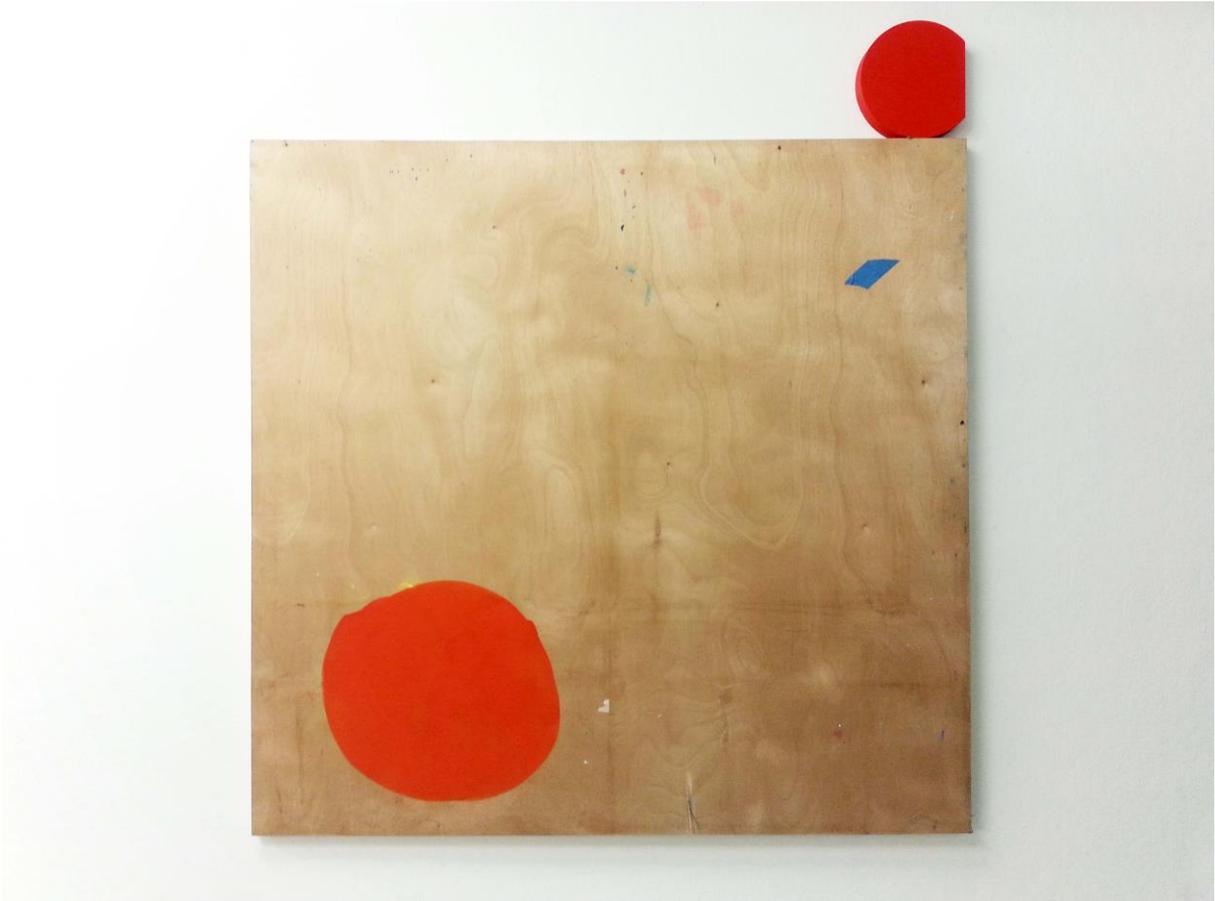


Fig.9 Ekarasa Doblanovic

Node, 1200 x 1450mm, Pigment and mixed medium on board with blue tape, 2014

Colour has the ability to create and occupy space, not only as an “illusion” but also through its physical properties, materiality and tangibility.

Merleau Ponty (1968) gives an example of a particular red on which he rests his gaze, and of which he says:

“ [This red]... is not, as is always said, a quale, a pellicle of being without thickness, a message at the same time indecipherable and evident, which one has or has not received, but of which, if one has received it, one knows all there is to know, and of which in the end there is nothing to say”.¹⁶

Ponty explains how there is much more to this red (or any other colour) if we fix our gaze long enough upon its unique visual structure. We then are able to perceive its voluminous existence in space and as well as it’s referencing to other red things as “a punctuation in a field of red things.”¹⁷— This field comprises memory and notions of knowledge we associate

¹⁶ Merleau-Ponty, M. (1968) *The Invisible and the Visible; The Intertwining-The Chiasm*. p.2
<http://timothyquigley.net/cont/mp-chiasm.pdf>

¹⁷ Ibid p.2

with the colour red, for example, a particular red coat, red tulips, war or the revolutionary red flags or communism. He further explains how colour is embedded in the material structure of being, which itself is embedded in the field of the invisible.

Therefore, colour functions not just as what it appears to be—a hard “indivisible being”¹⁸ — but rather as an opening between the exterior and the interior (of the visible and the invisible). By gazing at, or ‘becoming’ the colour the viewer can access the field of resonances even in the far distance between the visible and the invisible fabric of existence. Colour can be used as an access point from which we are enabled to enter the realm of the virtual, because between the visible and the invisible fabric of our existence lie our perceptions and associations both known and unknown to us.

Those relationships can entice a quality of emergence which produces various affects within the viewer’s experience. These sensory experiences, are generally described as, but not limited to, as being rooted in the body. Gilles Deleuze, cited in an essay by Simon O’Sullivan (2006), describes these sensory experiences as ‘affects’ and he explains: “art is made up of affects, as passages of speed, bundles of affects or blocs of sensations.”¹⁹ Affects primarily are felt through a direct experience, for example the effect an object of art or colour has upon our body. These are expressed as “rising and fallings – the becomings – or passages of intensity.”²⁰

As discussed above in regards to Merleau- Ponty, the visual response experienced when viewing colours is also felt immediately by our body. Colour has the capacity to evoke multilayered sensations in different degrees of intensity (rising and falling) that are unique during each viewing. Because of its dynamic nature, and how it perceived, colour is hard for our intellect to grasp and define.

Deleuze (2003) says (of the painter Francis Bacon): “Colour is in the body, sensation is in the body, and not in the air. Sensation is what is painted. What is painted on the canvas is the body, not insofar as it is represented as an object, but insofar as it is experienced as sustaining this sensation.”²¹

¹⁸ Merleau-Ponty, M. (1968) *The Invisible and the Visible; The Intertwining-The Chiasm*. p.2
<http://timothyquigley.net/cont/mp-chiasm.pdf>

¹⁹ O’Sullivan, S.(2006). *Art encounters Deleuze and Guattari; thought beyond representation*. Palgrave Macmillan. p.41

²⁰ Ibid.,p.41

²¹ Deleuze, G. (2003) *Francis Bacon: the logic of sensation*. University of Minnesota Press. p.35



Fig.10 Ekarasa Doblanovic

Untitled, 18x 140 x 140mm, Assorted Pigments and ground semi precious stones on board on painters trolley, 2014

3.1 PIGMENT FACTURE

Colour has a haptic ability to touch our eyes. This is especially true of dry pigment and its contradictory tendency to materialise and dematerialise despite its physical, highly absorbent, grainy surface. This is achieved through the absorption of light heightening illusionary depth or, conversely, appearing to be ‘popping’ into a space, thereby seducing the viewer into a closer study of the coloured surface, and sometimes leading it to be touched not only by our eyes, but our hands too.

Testing colour pigments for their effects and properties on small wooden squares has been a ritual I have been performing in my studio. These squares act as colour plates in which I test colour by using a variety of binders.

Part of my research so far has been to make paints that physically retain the quality of pigments’ ‘magic’—that is, their intense chromatic value and powdery non reflective surface which shows each pigment’s grainy individual structure. This has led me to an ongoing investigation of pigments’ properties as material substances. The physical properties of the pigment, of the support, and of the agency of paint combine to create a ‘facture’²², as

²² Singh, I. (2012). *Colour Facture Art and Design: artistic technique and the precisions of human perception*, Winchester: Zero Books p.46

described by Iona Singh, that effects how the visual qualities of colour will emerge through painting.

Pigment in its pure state as it is purchased in art supply stores has an incredible beauty, brilliance and immanent presence. Its fugitive nature makes its difficult to manipulate as paint within its raw state. The physical nature of any pigment is a unique molecular structure dependent upon its constituent chemical elements. To the naked eye, pigment looks like dust—coloured particles of variable size. Each pigment has an individual molecular configuration that will absorb and reflect wavelengths of light in a particular way. Also, different molecules will behave with each other and with paint media in distinct ways. There are an extensive number of pigments both natural and synthetic that can be combined with a variety of media – waxes, oils, resins and so forth – in a multitude of ways, creating the possibility for a wide range of paints, varnishes and grounds each with their unique and distinct visual, structural and tactile characteristics. This research project explored in reality only a few of those numerous possible combinations.



Fig.11 Ekarasa Doblanovic

Untitled, 18x 140 x 140mm, Assorted Pigments and ground semi precious stones on board, 2014

The manner in which these substances are chosen, blended and applied onto a painting support generates unique tones, textures and sensations.

The concept of facture comes from the importance for the artist of the painting materials themselves. For example, in this research project my interest in pigments and the exploration of the array of sensations derived from their arrangement or combination.

Facture manifests not only through the interaction of substances but also through the act of painting, marks, gestures and brush strokes. Facture implies the distinct way the paint is handled, and the virtuosity and skills employed in the execution of a painting in order to create emerging qualities of affects and sensations such as that of space and or scale.

At the close of the nineteenth century and into the start of the twentieth century, the status of facture as a criterion for evaluating a painting vanished. With the rise of Cubism and collage aesthetics, early abstract forms of paintings showcased their own status of construction or fabrication, and were revealed in a self-reflective manner namely their own processes of production, instead of presenting themselves as the result of a transcendental act of painting.

So historically, one could say that facture shifts from interacting with the surface of the painting to the surface of the entire painted object. My interest in facture relies on both readings, of surface colour values and emerging qualities and the way the entire object is produced and reveals its own making.

Facture considers how something is made: by making we get in touch with various materials (in this case pigments), the earth, the mineral kingdom and its sensual nature. By manipulating those materials they can be potentised and poetized.

Compared to when they are mixed with media such as oil, acrylic or other binders the colour of pure pigments seems to lose some of their original brilliance, surface, structural and chromatic value.

Pigment and media are tested in my studio practice for their chromatic value, plasticity, viscosity, structural capacity and adhesion. I've used low adhesive types of binders, sometimes as mixed media; they retain their refractive and reflective qualities.

The downside of low adhesive binders are fragile surfaces, which need to be handled with as much care as one would handle a work on paper or even more so.

Plywood is often used as the ground, which is very absorbent and has a wood grain surface pattern often seen in the final result.

Some grounds are prepared with rabbit skin glue and hematite which provide a good tooth for the paint to grip and adhere to, adds shimmer to the surface and a blackness that intensifies the self-emanating light inherent within the pigment.

I also use a traditional white gesso on board, or canvas glued to board as alternative grounds.

Exploring the fabrication of paintings consists of experiments with colour, texture, structure; not necessarily of colour relationships and form although each monochrome square when placed next to another starts to play with colour/hue and compositional relationships.



Fig.12 Ekarasa Dobljanovic

Untitled, 6 x.750 x 1000mm, Pigment and medium and acrylic paint on board, 2014



Fig.13 Ekarasa Dobljanovic

Untitled, 4 x 750 x 1000mm, Pigment and medium and blue tape on board, 2014

4. MONOCHROMES

The works made thus far act primarily as monochromes of bright, motionless, uniform colour. Each of them carries a hue, chromatic value and surface that are thinly but deeply embedded in the material structure of the support. Although fragile to the touch, the effect is mainly achieved by the unique structure and quality of the pigment.

I focus my investigation on chromatic values rather than on tonal values. My colours are not tempered down or deepened in their tonal strength by adding black or white. However, variations of tonal strength can be achieved through a modulation of saturation and intensity. I make use of pure pigments, such that the pigments are not mixed to obtain lighter or darker versions of themselves.

The monotone fields have a spatialising and structuring function. Looking closely, some surfaces evidence gesture marks derived from the application of colour that are obtained through vertical and horizontal gestures, thus creating a subtle grid within the colour field.

The paint quality when applied is fluid, with a high content of water. This awakens every preceding layer and embeds it within the subsequent, following layer. Brushed application

creates minimal disturbance of each layer, so the grid-like strokes can be seen in the final result. Each new layer also seems to edit/delete areas or structures made previously by integrating them into the new layer, while also revealing the structure and material nature of the support, which is often wood panel or unprimed canvas.

The layers can be seen as skins, grids or web-like surfaces of colour substance that overlap and merge with their support, and that come into being through an organic, physical painting process. After painting them, the panels often seem to gain an illusory sense of weight or mass, further integrating the object's surface colour with its supporting structure and lending it certain gravity.



Fig.14 Ekarasa Dobljanovic

Untitled, 2 x 750 x 1000mm, Pigment and medium and acrylic paint on board, 2014



Fig.15 Ekarasa Doblanovic

Chroma, Angle view of exhibition at St Paul Street Gallery Three, 2014

At first appearance the monochromes are often read as a single colour spread across a surface. Yves Klein (2000) refers to the act of impregnation as linked to the “Blue” period, an operation that confers an artistic quality to matter, and is a central concept in his work. This is how he describes his monochromes:

“In the monochrome where all the “particles” are the same and surrounded by more of the same, the centre is at once the centre of each particle and at the same time what is peripheral to all of them. Here we must endeavor to perceive each of the effects distinctly and in isolation from one another. We must be attentive to the multiplicity of isolated points; move from one point to another without breaking the continuity of perception. And at times, we must give ourselves over, calmly and at length, to focus on a single point’.²³

Klein’s monochrome operates in isolation and with no reference to its surroundings. He describes below the process used in viewing his monochrome as a means for activating awareness in the viewer that resembles a viewing meditation technique.

Monochromes or colour fields appear to be liberated from the linear, formal and representational qualities as means to empty or eliminate the ground (physical and historical) of the picture plane. Monochromes invite us to reinterpret our understanding of how a picture is constructed in conceptual terms.

²³ Klein, Y. (2000). *Long live the immaterial*. New York: Delano Greenidge Editions.p56

The monochromes in a historical context define an origin of an image and or simultaneously an erasure of an image or departure from an image devoid of figuration. But also for establishing a new set of relationships of possibilities and potentials in an image.. Examples of these are the historical “Black Suprematic Square’ by Kazimir Malevich in 1915, or on the other side of the spectrum the white rectilinear “Found Monochromes” by David Batchelor, where from 1977 he finds and photographs hundreds of white monochromes in the heart of a city; or “The Blue Epoch” Monochromes by Yves Klein signifying the void, not as a space of nothing but rather as a space of absolute potential.

My monochromes do not act as a public statement of erasure of an image nor do they negate a possibility of transcendental meaning and signification. But rather my monochromes are a celebration of colour and its potentialities.

Each monochrome has the ability of being content in itself by presenting a colour in its fullness. Depending on how the edge is treated or how we install it, we can initiate a reading in a new set of codes, for example by painting the edge in a different colour or covering the edge with masking tape, or by placing a set or series of monochromes spatially for example within a linear structure or grid defined by the edges. Those structures create a spatial rhythm, which differs from colour rhythm achieved through a single colour or many hues



Fig.16 Ekarasa Doblancovic

Untitled, 4 x 750 x 1000mm, Pigment and medium and acrylic paint on board, 2014

COMPOSITION AND RHYTHM

Movement, duration and intuition each play an integral role in the painting process. The directness and immediacy of the medium is very rewarding: the monochromatic coloured surfaces come to being through the action of painting and through the self-reflexive quality of the material in action, staining the wood by simple horizontal and vertical gestures and movements.

Variables are introduced into this repetitive ritual to explore a variety of possibilities. Those variables consist of different colours, changes to repeated formats and a shifting spectrum of shapes and sizes. Each colour is presented monochromatically within a repetition of the support format; the mutability of a colour generates difference. A compositional pattern emerges through the repetition of a painterly approach within a spatially arranged format.

The pattern will have its rhythm and sequence. The sequence can be of different colours working with the size of the spatial intervals between modules. The shapes of the boards are geometric and formal. The sides of the panels are painted in a different colour: light blue inspired by the blue tape provisionally placed and then turned into actuality by being painted in that colour. I was drawn to using a different colour on the sides, as it simultaneously bounced off each monochrome surface while also unifying them. The blue line creates another rhythm. It also alludes to figuration with its marks, drips, spills and colour gestures. Individually the boards are somehow factual; they seem to describe themselves and imply ontology of painting.

Figs. 13 and 16 demonstrate how compositions may utilize tension. The modules are arranged in a contingent and provisional manner; they are leaning and sustaining each other in balance but not quite fully resting on a particular surface. This imparts to them a sense of belonging, maintaining strong links and reference to its parts. At the same time, this same placement entices a sense of restlessness, displacement and movement, when considering the unanchored relationship to its surrounding space.

We can see how the composition may further activate components of the room. In Fig. 16 in particular, we see the activation of the space occurs particularly in the left corner, and Fig. 12 where the wall and the floor merge, and mainly for the works that are leaning against the wall, making this space become pictorial.

The interplay of colour, shape and interval is emphasized by the sensuous, material quality of pigment. This dynamism creates an engaging and challenging tension in the work. The unstable exchange and conversation between elements instigates a reciprocal activation and is attained through the use of opposing forces in varying degree. By employing pure hues and juxtaposing differing colours new chromatic values result. Foreground and background interpenetrate, contend with and annul each other to create an emerging quality.



Fig.17 Ekarasa Doblancovic

Untitled, 11x 750 x 1000mm, Pigment and medium and acrylic paint on board, 2014

A relationship of the parts to the whole is evidenced by a first analysis of how emergence might operate within a gestalt. The “whole” is not only the sum of its parts but is also an entirely different entity (this is perhaps the ‘whole’ Merleau Ponty describes, explained above in Chapter One), in which the activity and tension of the forces generated within and between the parts generate difference and emergent phenomena. According to John Fromm (2004), emergent phenomena appear as a result of the “repeated application and combination of two complementary forces”²⁴. Fromm analyses emergent phenomena from a scientific perspective, yet he understands that such opposing forces are also at work in other fields such as art, literature, music or painting. For example, in music voices can merge, and tones may split or diverge, producing overtones or counterpoints of resonance. Harmonies emerge and rhythms or melodies come into being. Occurring in a parallel fashion in visual art, we can also experience music visually.

This phenomenon is identified as synaesthesia. Synaesthesia is a simultaneous multi-sensory experience of senses overlapping. For example, we can experience a sound by seeing a colour, or hearing a sound might evoke a colour. We have divided our senses into systems such as sight, touch, taste and hearing; although in actuality they continuously overlap and blend. Wassily Kandinsky spoke of colour and shapes being musical tones. And perhaps Yves Klein’s “Monotone- Silence Symphony” (1949) was an expression of his

²⁴ Fromm, J. (2005). *Types and forms of emergence*. arXiv preprint nlin/0506028.p.23

Monochrome paintings.

I am interested in these resemblances and resonances and how they might operate within a painting although not directly addressing sound as such.

In respect to the expanded field of painting, we have shown that the depth of actual space functions as the ground for a composition of all elements in the specificity of that given space to become activated and resonate within a range of registers.

Colour, time structure and space can also be identified as dimensions of a painting. Brazilian artist Helio Oiticica added one more dimension: the “infinite dimension”²⁵, in the sense of being unlimited, in the non-particularity that exists between empty and full, colour imbalance, and spatial and temporal direction. Oiticica goes on to say, “The aim of the relationships of those dimensions such as colour, structure, space and time is not to be interlocking, but a fusion achieved through juxtaposition”²⁶. Fusion describes an ‘alchemical’ process, where the meeting of those elements transforms itself into a new whole, thereby bringing forth an emergent property.

Jan Verwoert (2005) describes emergence being a “quality which makes the whole more than the sum of its parts”²⁷, therefore transforming itself into something new, bringing forth a new emerging property which is often seen as an affect or sensation. An emergent property is unexplainable and irreducible. I cannot examine and reduce the components of an artwork or examine an effect or sensation, or its processes in order to predict an emergent property or quality. In other words the property of emergence can not be arrived at through a reductionist or analytical approach.



Fig.16 Ekarasa Doblanovic

Untitled(detail), 18x 140 x 140mm, Assorted Pigments and ground semi precious stones on board, 2014

²⁵ Lind, M. (2013) *Abstraction: Documents of Contemporary Art*, London Whitechapel Gallery. p.23

²⁶ Ibid. p.23

²⁷ Verwoert, J. (2005). “Emergence: On the Painting of Tomma Abts.” *Tomma Abts*, 41-48. p.1



Fig.18 Ekarasa Doblanovic

Untitled, 24 x 100 x 100mm, Assorted Pigments and ground semi precious stones on board, 2014

5. INTUITION

This research project establishes a meeting between intuition and the integration of painting through modular components and their spatial activity. A continual reshaping of the deployed methods through a feedback loop of adjustment and response allows each piece to function as a unique entity within a given space. For me, intuition is a subconscious judgment as well as a method to access immediate knowledge as it unfolds during the painting process and installation of the work.

Henry Bergson developed a method for intuition with strict rules of “precision”²⁸ as a way of accessing higher knowledge. Gilles Deleuze has written: “Intuition has become a method; or rather method has been reconciled with the immediate.”²⁹

In addition to intuition, an applied methodology of experimentation is also pertinent when constructing an image through modular components in space. In order to grasp the arrangement and its most inherent variables or registers achieved through rhythmic spatial arrangements, a direct testing of objects in space allows chance to play its part,

²⁸ Deleuze, G. (1988). *Bergsonism*. New York: Zone Books. p.13

²⁹ *Ibid.*,p.33

accompanied by observation and intuitional insight.

This intuitive process described by Bergson requires us to go beyond our intellect and normal daily experience and to merge with the object within the present moment. The present moment continues or renews itself through time, and is in constant becoming. This method enables the viewer to experience and intuit the “wholeness” of an object and all its shades of difference and degree, thus allowing her to intuit the object in its full potential.

In contrast, Jean-Luc Marion (1946) refers to the act of painting as the emergence of something that already exists in the form of subconscious impressions. The painter brings the image forth into the realm of the visible: the artist creates an access point or viewpoint from which the intuitions erupt. Thus, using intuition, inspiration emerges. Marion says:

“The painter does not trace any lines, nor does he define any form. He allows the forms and features to impose themselves upon the surface, the forms and features that claim to reach the visible.”³⁰

These philosophers share a common thread—to go beyond ordinary knowing and experience, to grasp insight from the whole or infinite potential. This new knowledge, whether obtained from the unconscious mind as Marion may refer to it, or from the memory as in Bergson, is often the result of prior effort of the conscious mind, yet it comes suddenly. This new knowledge can then be thought about critically, intellectually dissected, and used by the conscious mind in innumerable ways.

³⁰ Marion, J-L. (1946). *Crossing of the visible*. Stanford, Stanford University Press. p.36

CONCLUSION

The first monochrome (painted by Kazimir Malevich) marked a zero point or tabula rasa in art history—when painting momentarily defined itself only by its material self. In keeping with the huge transformation painting experienced during the last century, the monochrome went on to become a defining paradox: a point of arrival or departure with regard to its potential.

Since the early twentieth century, painting has continued to renew itself by way of the flat surface of a conventional plane, as well as within multimedia practices, concerned with an expanded field of painting and its pictorial potentials. Somehow, monochrome and other painting styles continually fold into and transfigure themselves, revealing new aspects or nuances. As Ellsworth Kelly stated, yellow, blue and red painting is an idea that can be painted indefinitely...³¹

Yve Alain Bois wrote:

“The strategic reading is strictly historicist; it does not believe in the exhaustion of things, in the linear genealogy offered to us by art criticism, always ready, unconsciously or not to follow the demands of the market in search of new products, but neither does it believe in the order of a homogeneous time without breaks, such as art history likes to imagine.”³²

Colour and painting in themselves are seductive in their simplicity and directness, as evoked through paint’s own virtue. For me, by means of pure colour speaking through its own voice, song and rhythm, I find the roots of creativity in the very material qualities of the substances I use when painting.

In my practice, colour has been used in a non-hierarchical manner in which all colours and their attendant tonal values are equally important. Once modules are placed spatially, equal importance has been given to the colour of their very edges, in order to seek a visual balance and stability, somewhere between an area and a line drawn whilst maintaining a contingent and provisional approach to painting and composition.

New compositional possibilities and affects are at play as each new work has revealed itself. At times, I have used the same modules within different installations, yet each installation has acted as a unique entity, using the architecture of a given space as an innovating compositional impetus. Each monochrome has the ability to be equally presented as a single unit or to be placed within a group in new spatial configurations. Colour has initiated a journey through its transformation/codifications to diagrammatic and/or emergent composition of colour imagery within a modular and spatial dynamic.

³¹ quote retrieved from 01.10.2014 <http://www.theartstory.org/artist-kelly-ellsworth.htm>

³² Bois, Y. A. (1993). *Painting as model*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press. quoted in Vervoert, J.(2005)*Why Are Conceptual Artists Painting Again? Because They Think It’s A Good Idea*. Retrieved 07.07.2014 <http://www.afterall.org/journal/issue.12/why.are.conceptual.artists.painting.again.because>. p.5/7

7. APPENDICES

The following images are the documentation of the final work displayed at St Paul Street Gallery as part of the Graduate Show AUT, from 12-15th November, 2014. The instalment is comprised of seven monochromatic wooden panels measuring 7200mm wide by 2200 mm high placed respectively on the right wall when entering the room and opposite the large glass window wall. Each panel is 2200 x 1150mm. The works are placed in a provisional manner, leaning on the wall and slightly overlapping over each other. The overlapping of the monochromes creates a sequence but also brings to a view the sides of the panels, painted all uniformly in a light blue colour and showing the drips of the surface colour. Each panel is painted in one colour pigment; from the left: Orange Chrome, Prussian Blue, Cobalt Blue, Copper Blue, Ultramarine Red, Yellow Ochre, Madder Lake and Acrylic Blue paint on the sides. The monochromes have a horizontal gestural rhythm, while the vertical grain of the wood can be seen merging with the structure of paint and horizontal subtle brush strokes. Studies for this final work or smaller versions were made leading up to the exhibition although this works were made in the gallery itself in three weeks leading up to the opening.



Fig.19 Ekarasa Doblancovic

Untitled, 7 x 2200 x 1150 mm, (from left) Orange chrome, Prussian Blue, Cobalt Blue, Copper Blue, Ultramarine Red, Yellow Ochre, Madder Lake, Acrylic Blue on wood panel. 2014



Fig.20 Ekarasa Dobljanovic

Untitled, 7 x 2200 x 1150 mm, (from left) Orange chrome, Prussian Blue, Cobalt Blue, Copper Blue, Ultramarine Red, Yellow Ochre, Madder Lake, Acrylic Blue on wood panel. 2014



Fig.21, 22 Ekarasa Doblanovic
Untitled, 7 x 2200 x 1150 mm (detail)



Fig.23 Ekarasa Doblancovic

Untitled, 7 x 2200 x 1150 mm, (from left) Orange chrome, Prussian Blue, Cobalt Blue, Copper Blue, Ultramarine Red, Yellow Ochre, Madder Lake, Acrylic Blue on wood panel. 2014

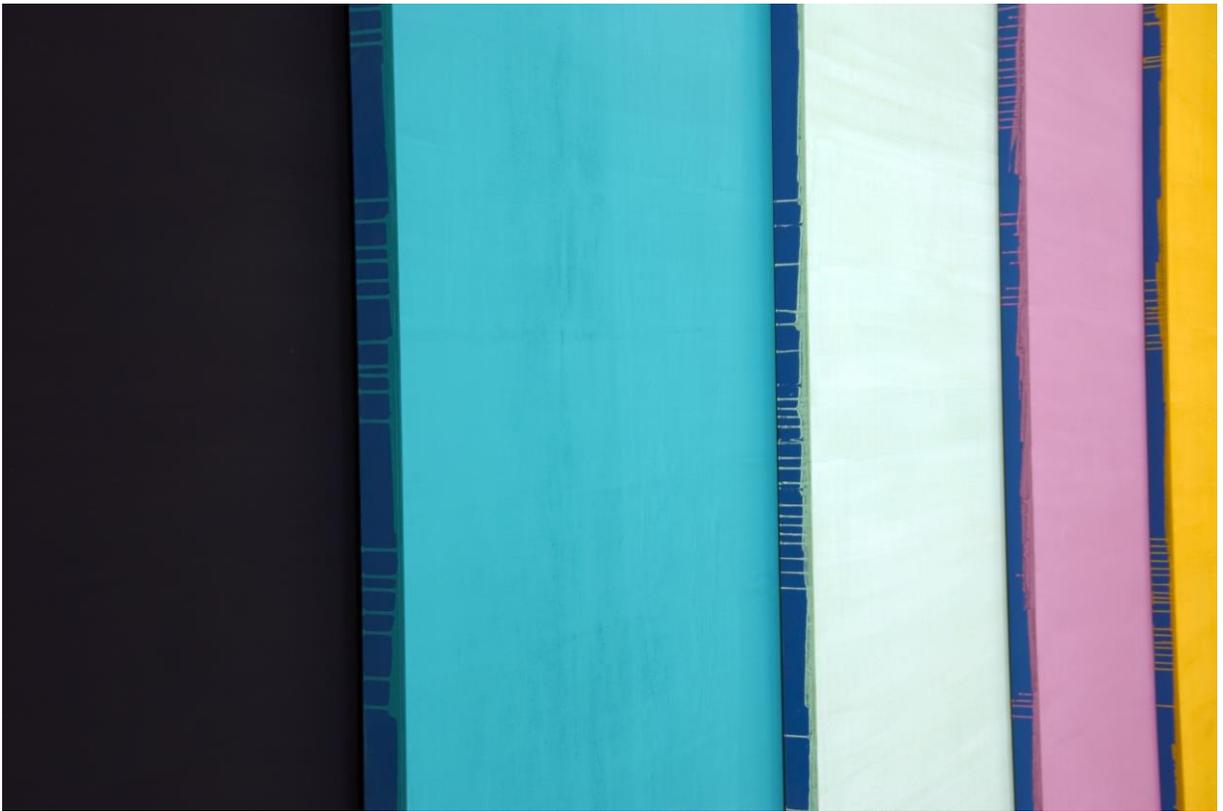


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