Small Worlds

An Exhibition of Wall Drawing

by

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I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. This is a true copy of the thesis, including any required final revisions, as accepted by my examiners.

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Abstract

Small Worlds is an installation of wall drawing that explores the possibilities of shape and colour through repetition and scale. Combining drawing materials with printmaking techniques, I use my hands and body to replace the printing press in the creation of unique, yet reproduced shapes. Movement and rhythm are initiated by repetition, and through colour there is the opportunity to examine the relationship between the viewing experience and perception, cognition, and sensation. I am interested in the subjective experience of the visitor, and how both the brain and the body are involved in the relationship between the artwork and the audience.

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Dedication

I dedicate this paper to my sisters and to my mother.

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Figure 1. *Small Worlds.* Installation view.

Small Worlds is the culmination of a series of experiments that have been carried out over the course of the past two years. During this time, my material investigations in the studio have focused on my interests in colour and cross-disciplinary techniques. Combining drawing materials with printmaking techniques, the works are realized on paper or on the wall. I have been experimenting with grinding chalk pastels to a fine powder and rubbing this pigment directly into the wall, using a rag to guide the material into shapes defined by stencils, tape, or plastic film. I wanted to see if I could use this drawing material and somehow escape the uniqueness of the line or the mark that happens in drawing; the uniqueness of the mark is often a result of the artist's hand that guides the pencil, pen, brush, etc. My goal was to create a defined shape with this loose material that was not subject to the personality of my hand. My experience in

printmaking led me to use the stencil as a guide and a type of matrix for creating multiple hand "printed" shapes.

In printmaking, I enjoy the potential of simultaneously creating both a replica and an original. Once a permanent image is made on a plate, woodblock, screen, stone, etc., it can be used to create multiple additional images. In a professionally printed limited edition, the images are meant to be identical. But can they ever really be exactly the same? What I am interested in is the lack of sameness: when one sees the sameness yet, upon closer examination, tiny differences appear, whether in the colour of the ink, the way the image is printed, or perhaps a smudge or fingerprint on the paper itself. These are evidence of human error, or just a trace of the human touch.

I have seemingly contradicted myself in that I stated above that I wanted to avoid the personality of my hand. However, what I mean is I want to step away from the originality of drawing and move towards replication through the use of printmaking techniques and at the same time resist the creation of a perfectly identical reproduction. The stencil as a matrix is used to create forms, impressions rubbed onto the wall. The wall acts as substrate. I am using my hand to make the impression, to rub the materials into the surface using the stencil as a guide. In a way, I am replacing the printing press. I am the machine that makes the work but I am also subject to my own fallibility as a human. The works resulting from these cross-disciplinary investigations look initially like perfect reproductions of shapes but, upon closer examination, subtle variations appear – the quality of the edge, for example, or the nuances in the colour or the thickness of the material applied.

I am concerned with the impact of the scale of my work on the body – in the physical as well as neurological sense. The wall drawing stretches over sixty feet in length and reaches just over twelve feet in height. The scale of the work means that the visitor is surrounded, even dwarfed by the large shapes of colour on the wall(s). I wanted to explore this large scale as well as understand what happens when one moves from working on paper to working directly on the wall. Moreover, I wanted to be aware of how the experience of the visitor changes when he/she is surrounded by work that is much larger than their body. The visitors' exchange with the work can be less intimate as they do not need to get up close to experience it, however it can also be more intimate because of the increased physical engagement that results from being surrounded. In addition to the impact of scale, I am concerned with the impact of colour. *Small Worlds* uses colour as a main element and these colours are what surround the visitor. My experimentations with scale and colour are connected to several larger questions; especially how the visitors' experience of seeing the work on the wall is connected to both their brain and body. I therefore explore the relationship between the viewing experience and perception, cognition, and sensation. I am interested in the subjective experience of the visitor, and how they might respond to my work through their thoughts and feelings. I also examine the idea of embodied knowledge and, through this, how installation offers the possibility of turning the viewer into a visitor by engaging more than just their eye.

Small Worlds

The work starts on paper, line drawings made with a compass and a ruler, or sometimes freehand. These line drawings become stencils which are then used to explore compositional and colour strategies. Chalk pastels are broken into small pieces and ground into a fine powder. From a palette covered in small mounds of this powder, colours are lifted with a rag and guided into existence as shapes.

Figure 2. *Studio processes: palette.*

A stencil consists of a positive and a negative. In my work, the negatives are used as guides for the powdered pastel. The positives are used for the line drawing studies or as shapes to project onto the wall to test the large-scale compositions. Some of them are inspired by geometric and organic shapes that I observe in everyday life. I contemplate shapes in nature, architecture, or domestic objects: a semi-circle in a teacup handle, for example, or a shape in the space between two buildings, a teardrop shape in a leaf or a spoon, a shape in the light on the wall under a lampshade. Other shapes result from combining the positives of stencils used previously and playing with these to create new

shapes. The quadrant shape used for the current exhibition came from a semi-circular shape I had used for a previous body of work. In an attempt to draw a semi-circle I kept adjusting its scale and soon the drawing became a series of thick rings. The shape I finally decided to use is a quadrant of one of these rings.

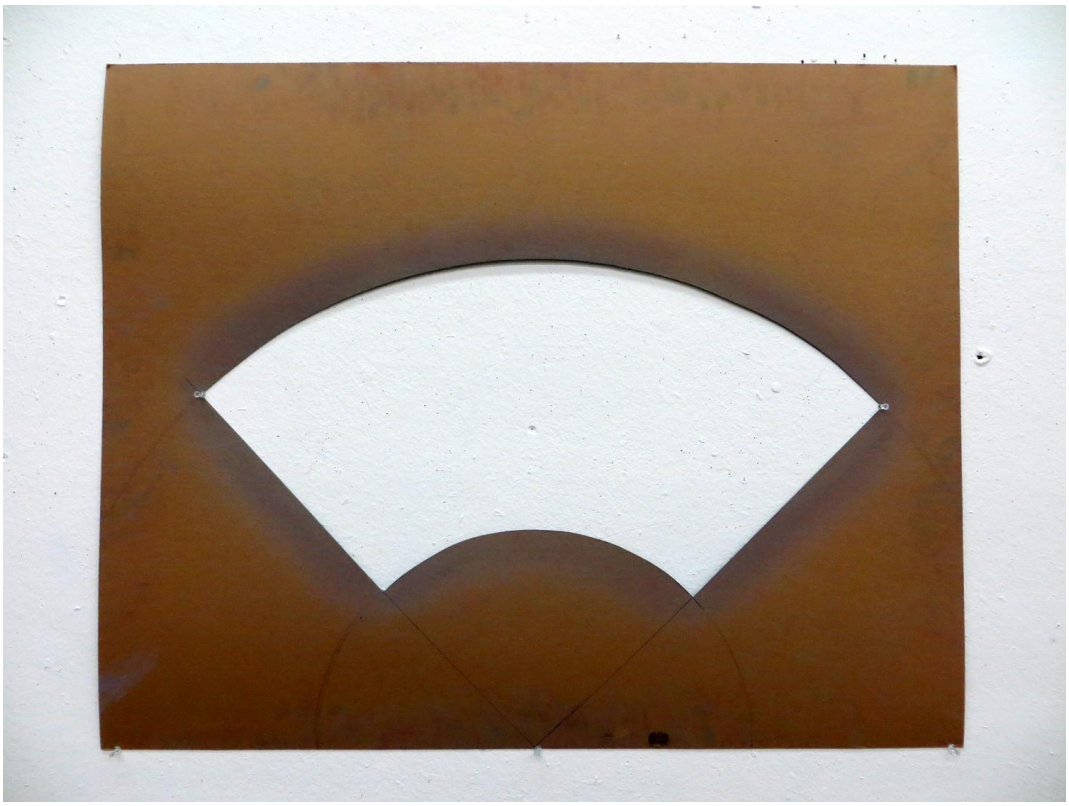

Figure 3. *Studio processes: stencil*

The process of searching and finding shapes is intuitive. I do not start with a plan, nor is my intention for these shapes to actually represent anything, even if I may have seen them in a thing or space. Painter Tomma Abts talks about this in her 2004 interview with Peter Doig. Doig comments that Abts pays "extra special attention" to forms, further noting that, as a result, her paintings become "living things," and resist becoming either abstract or representational (3). She replies that the special attention to forms is given because the shapes are developed without any preconceived notion of what they will look like. Abts further asserted that "the forms don't stand for anything else, they

don't symbolise anything or describe anything outside of the painting. They represent themselves."(3) In fact, in order to give them identity and meaning, Abts pays extra special attention to them, defining them with texture and shadow, coaxing them into existence (3). Similarly, I coax my shapes into existence, building up layers defined by a precise edge. I pay special attention to them, but my finished shape is not defined by shadow. It is flat and smooth, a soft surface of powdery consistency.

Allan McCollum used an altogether different route to find shapes in his 2006 work *The Shapes Project*. For this work, he used Adobe Illustrator to draw an extensive series of small shapes. These small pieces are combined to make larger pieces which are then combined to make larger pieces, and so on. The resulting work is a collection of unique shapes that continues to expand. McCollum claims that the system he designed will allow the creation of a unique shape for every person on the planet (McCollum). It also allows the artist to keep a record of the shapes in order to make sure that no two will ever be alike. McCollum has organized his system in order to produce over 31,000,000,000 unique shapes, to correspond to the prediction that the world's population will peak at somewhere between eight and twenty billion by the middle of the current century (McCollum). This production is still in progress and the artist has structured it so that it will continue after his death. Even though I do not use a prescribed system to design shapes like McCollum, I do see a link between my use of old shapes to create new ones, and McCollum's piecing together of small elements to create a unique whole.

In addition to the identity of the shape itself, I think of how shapes relate to one another, how the circle fits into the square, and vice versa; when the points touch or where they do not. I like to play with these shapes and try to see what relationships form

between them. Even in a simple composition, the shapes have a relationship to one another. A single shape involves the negative space around it. Other relationships are formed by joining two shapes, or layering one on top of the other. In a way these compositions could be seen as small worlds. When we meet someone that knows someone we know, or that is connected somehow to our world in a way that seems unlikely or a result of luck or coincidence we say "small world!" Small world refers to our connections to one another. We are amazed that on a planet with billions of others, chance connections happen and this is what makes our "world" small. I like to see these compositions as small worlds in that these shapes are connecting with one another in chance relationships resulting from my play in the studio.

Repetition and Movement

For the present body of work I choose a shape, make a stencil, and use it over and over to reproduce the shape. There is repetition in the actions I do, as well as in the shapes I create. What does it mean to repeat the action? What happens in the work when I repeat a shape over and over? Through the repetitive motions of the hand and body, the stepping up and down on the ladder, the placing of the stencil, the grinding of the pastel, I create a physical routine, a series of moves. This exhausting routine, this labour performed in the process of creating the piece, is equally as important as the finished work itself.

My interest in the execution of the piece sets my work apart from artists such as Sol LeWitt. In his "Paragraphs on Conceptual Art", LeWitt states that

> in conceptual art the idea or concept is the most important aspect of the work. When an artist uses a conceptual form of art, it means that all of the planning and decisions are made beforehand and the execution is a perfunctory affair. The idea becomes a machine that makes the art (1).

I, on the other hand, am interested in the execution of the piece. The process of repetition and labour is an integral part of my artwork, thus the execution is not at all a perfunctory affair. My decision to be involved in the making is a deliberate one. It is important that I am physically involved in the execution, for it is through this labour that I understand and connect with the work. This is not to suggest that the amount of physical labour invested in an artwork equates to its worth or value, but perhaps I cannot feel like the work is truly a part of me if I do not put labour in to it. Consequently, my labour is a crucial part of the content, whereas for LeWitt, the concept was paramount. While LeWitt would make the instructions for a piece and then sell or give them to others to complete, I need to take part in the act of making. I am the machine that makes the art.

Figure 4. Sol LeWitt. *Wall Drawing #1136.* Installation view.

There is a visual rhythm that is created by repetition, a movement that is initiated. Both Wassily Kandinsky and Paul Klee related their abstract compositions to sound or music. Canadian animator Norman McLaren also talked about the relationship between abstraction and sound. His early animations were abstract lines and shapes painted directly onto film stock with the intention of illustrating sounds. Speaking about his work, he said that "the most powerful common denominator between abstractions on the screen and music on the soundtrack is their motion" (wall panel, [Handmade Cinema: The Work of Norman McLaren; Talbot Rice Gallery, Edinburgh, 4 July 2014]). Sol Lewitt also regarded some of his works as "musical scores" that could be redone by any or some people. More recently, artists such as Julie Mehretu have evoked a visual movement in their work. Mehretu uses dense layers of marks on two-dimensional surfaces to create this rhythm. She describes the process of making her 85' x 25' *Mural* (2009) as "almost symphonic" (Lewis 4). While she does not directly describe her works as musical, her frenetic arrangements of marks become systems that suggest sound or music.

One of the best concerts I have ever been to was in Montreal in 2009. It was my birthday and I had tickets to see Ethiopian jazz saxophonist Getachew Mekurya at La Sala Rossa. There were several memorable moments that evening but his solos are what stand out most clearly. They started out in a meandering way, seemingly following the beat of the back-up musicians. Then the notes would start to carve their own path, rising and falling, twisting in surprising ways. While it was improvised, it always maintained a certain rhythm which I and the rest of the audience could follow, even if we could not predict what would happen next. Similarly, my shapes curve and connect to form waves

that move across and off the wall. Their path is not prescribed, yet they move regardless, up and down, around and off the wall. At some places, they almost touch each other but then they curve away. The shapes are connected end to end so that they continue, in a way, like a story or a song. These wave-like forms could be a melody or perhaps they are more like an improvised solo where the musician plays notes intuitively, responding to the one that came before. I do not intend these compositions to directly translate to notes or sounds but, like Julie Mehretu and Sol LeWitt, and Kandinsky and Klee before them, I am examining the relationship between the visual movement created by repetition and the suggestion of sound or music.

I build my compositions by repeating a simple shape, sometimes using a single stencil for the entire work. In his "Paragraphs on Conceptual Art", LeWitt stated

> when an artist uses a multiple modular method [s]he usually chooses a simple and readily available form. The form itself is of very limited importance; it becomes the grammar for the total work. In fact, it is best that the basic unit be deliberately uninteresting so that it may more easily become an intrinsic part of the entire work. Using complex basic forms only disrupts the unity of the whole. Using a simple form repeatedly narrows the field of the work and concentrates the intensity to the arrangement of the form (2).

In a similar way to LeWitt, I am exploring various compositional possibilities available from limited elements. My wall drawing is an example of this method of repetition and modular construction. Part of my reason for choosing the quadrant shape was for its potential and for its simplicity. I wanted to use a shape that could join with another of the same and continue infinitely. Hypothetically, this shape could connect to

itself and carry on forever as long as they were joined end to end. This is what I want to suggest with the composition in Gallery Two of UWAG (University of Waterloo Art Gallery). The shapes connect and continue, extending off the wall above and below. We can imagine where they unite and curve out of our vision, only to eventually return and resume their path, moving like a melody across the white wall. In this context, a single shape is only significant in its potential to contribute to the final composition. LeWitt states that "this arrangement becomes the end while the form becomes the means" (2). *Small Worlds* is the end while the simple quadrant shape is the means.

Figure 5. *Small Worlds.* Installation view.

In addition to the repetition of shapes, the repetition of colour can be employed to create rhythm and visual movement. Bridget Riley uses colour as the main element in her works and talks about how she organizes colours in such a way that the eye can "travel over the surface" of the painting (Riley 34-36). Likewise, I have used colour that

shifts from hue to hue, leading the eye around the space of Gallery Two in UWAG. The tone varies from barely perceptible pinks to densely layered greys made up of many colours. Both pure and less saturated colours are used to create a push and pull throughout the composition.

Colour

My concern with colour is not purely practical. Nor is it purely philosophical or scientific. My curiosity lies with the multifaceted nature of colour and the way it permeates multiple disciplines. From artist pigments to the physics of light, from tropical fish to pure sensation, colour can be viewed from a diverse range of perspectives. Artists, pedagogues, philosophers and physicists (to name only a few) have been exploring the complex nature of colour for centuries. Colour can be viewed as purely physical or it can be symbolic, an aspect of culture whose meaning is purely contextual. Some see colour as a physiological event or attribute psychological significance to it. The investigation of colour flows between disciplines. It is "truly fluid", as David Batchelor says, "and no one area can mop it up and claim a privileged or proprietorial relationship with the subject" (*On Colour* 15). Batchelor identifies the difference between "colour" and "colours". "Colour", he says, is a more general concept whereas "colours" is more specific and refers to a perceptual experience (18). "Colour is universal" while "colours are contingent" (*Chromophobia* 94).

Colour is often discussed in relation to language (Batchelor, *On Colour* 18). It is useful in showing the limits of language. Notably, most languages contain fewer than a dozen colour terms while the human eye is capable of distinguishing several million

different hues (18). Perhaps colour is a language itself, or is beyond language. Batchelor says poetically: "To fall into colour is to run out of words" (*Chromophobia* 85). He believes that words are insufficient when it comes to colour, that colour says what words cannot convey (85). Daniel Buren expressed a similar sentiment: "For me, colour is pure thought, therefore totally incapable of being expressed in words. It is just as abstract as a mathematical formula or a philosophical concept" (222).

It is important to note that these affirmative views on colour are from two artists that use colour as a main element in their work. Batchelor points out, however, that in the Western art world, and culture in general, colour has often been seen as a lesser element in comparison to line and form:

> Colour has often been regarded as superficial, supplementary and cosmetic… Often regarded as feminine, as too connected to the senses and the emotions, to the body and to pleasure, colour threatens to get in the way of the more serious, intellectual and masculine business of drawing and forming (*On Colour* 19).

Batchelor also talks about colour in relation to white. He identifies a forceful exclusion of colour and how this points to a fear of colour, or *chromophobia*. He discusses an extreme prejudice against colour in western culture and how this prejudice is masking a fear of many things that colour supposedly represents. Colour is trivialized or rendered superficial because it represents "the feminine, the oriental, the primitive, the infantile, the vulgar, the queer, or the pathological" (*Chromophobia* 22-3). Colour is dangerous, representing the unknown, the alien, and the sensual (23). Colour is also sometimes thought of as a drug, something that can cast a spell over us, intoxicate us, and make us fall into a delirium (43). Aristotle identified colour as a drug and named it *pharmakon*

while Plato said a painter was "merely a grinder and mixer of multi-colour drugs" (31). These prejudices mean that colour is "routinely excluded from the higher concerns of the Mind. It is other to the higher values of Western culture" (23). Aristotle believed that line was the "repository of thought in art" and colour was secondary or unnecessary (29). Jean-Jacques Rousseau also believed that line was superior to colour and said that colour merely gives the eye sensory pleasure, while drawing gives the colours life and soul (30).

I am concerned with both *colour* and *colours*. The colours used in my works are carefully selected on the basis of their relationships and behaviour to one another. In that way, it could be seen as a very controlled approach. But I also recognize this thing that both Batchelor and Buren said was beyond words. Buren states that

> if a work of art (which can be a painting, a sculpture or an object which has yet to be defined) has a single reason for being, it is to show in the clearest, the most intelligible and the most sensual way its characteristics which cannot be described in words, and if possible, allow them to be shared (222).

Figure 6. *Sway.* (detail).

I believe that by using colour, my work can be understood and shared with viewers/visitors in a more holistic way than just through visual pleasure. I use colour with the intent of offering another level of connection with the visitor. Colour is experienced through both mind and body, contrary to what Western prejudices suggest. Colour does affect the senses, and therefore the body, but this need not be perceived as negative or something to be feared.

Sensation, Perception, Cognition

I am interested in the subjectivity of perception and how this relates to the reception of colour and the experience of a visitor with an artwork. In his seminal book *Interaction of Color,* Josef Albers claims that colour is the most relative medium in art and cautions that "color deceives continually", therefore we must be aware that we almost never perceive colour as it really, physically is (1). Albers discusses this relativity in detail, using the colour red as an example. He talks about how the mention of red conjures up a multitude of different versions of red in people's minds. He observes how even when a specific red is mentioned – the red in the Coca Cola logo for instance – everyone imagines it differently. Furthermore, even when the colour is actually shown, everyone will receive the same colour on their retina but it is impossible to ascertain whether each perceives the colour in the same way (3). What this means is that because of psychological factors, what we see is mostly subjective and therefore it is nearly impossible to accurately compare the visual perception of colour in different people (Rainwater 90). Within our brains, the sensation of sight is involuntarily linked to other sensations such as taste, touch, smell, and sound. Based on our individual history, our

brain will modify the information it receives and compare it with past experiences and remembered sensations before it produces information in our conscious minds about what we see (90). Therefore, the colours that we see are not properties of light itself but inventions of the nervous system (Baylor 103).

Not only does Albers talk about the subjectivity of colour perception, he also discusses its relativity – or the way that colours are perceived in relation to one another. He uses the analogy of dipping each of your hands into separate pots of water, one hot, one cold and then afterwards dipping both into a pot of warm water. Your brain will perceive two different temperatures when there is in fact only one. This also applies to the perception of colour. We can perceive one colour as two different colours based upon which other colours surround or are adjacent to them (Albers 8). The same applies to the perception of lightness. If one shade of grey is placed next to or on top of two different shades, it is perceived as two different shades (Albers 9). Taking these analyses into consideration, it stands to reason that each viewer's perception of an artwork would be entirely unique.

Affect theory addresses the complex relationship between image and emotion, language, cognition, and meaning. Brian Massumi discusses affect theory in terms of psychology. Often confused with emotion, affect can be defined as a sensation that occurs a split second before our brain consciously registers an action-reaction response. Massumi describes affect as "intensity" and goes on to explain the difference between it and emotion. He states that affect is intensity whereas emotion is a qualified intensity (3). He explains that "intensity is embodied in purely autonomic reactions most directly manifested in the skin – at the surface of the body, at its interface with things" whereas

"depth reactions belong more to the form/content (qualification) level" (3). He states that "the skin is faster than the word", consequently an emotional qualification is a re-registration of a state that was already felt through intensity (4). Emotion is tied to meaning and symbols in the brain, whereas affect is something happening in and to our body that is not necessarily connected to cognition, rather it is connected to pre-cognition (Massumi 6). This, however, does not mean that affect is a primal experience. Massumi is reluctant to identify affect with "experience" at all because "something happening out of mind in a body directly absorbing its outside cannot exactly said to be experienced" (8). Furthermore, "higher" functions such as volition and cognition that are usually associated with the brain are present in this affective state (8). In her article, "Affect", Erika Doss argues that "modernist assumptions that privilege human intelligence as distinct from human emotion (the basic binary of the Cartesian mind/body thesis) need to acknowledge how cognition itself is embodied, sensate, interested, and invested" (10). Massumi "proposes affectivity as crucial to an understanding of the absolute inseparability of thought and feeling" and maintains that there should not be a distinction between synesthetic and cognitive states (Doss 9). Affect theory thus offers the possibility of both including and transcending thought and feeling. I see affect as directly related to the aesthetic experience.

I also see a link between Kandinsky's views of colour, the aesthetic experience and the concept of affect. In *On the Spiritual in Art,* Kandinsky wrote about the physical effects of colour, comparing the physical sensation of colour to the physical sensation of touching ice: "Just as in touching ice we experience a physical feeling of cold that is quickly forgotten once the finger has been warmed again, so the physical effect of colour

is forgotten once the eye is turned away" (39). He explains how the intensity of the sensation can be increased by prolonging the duration of exposure. He was interested in the spiritual in art, believing that specific colours corresponded to specific feelings or emotional states: "Colour embodies an enormous though unexplored power which can affect the entire human body as a physical organism. Therefore, colour is a means of exercising direct influence upon the soul" (43). While I do not agree with Kandinsky's categorical association of colours with specific feelings or emotional states, I do believe that colours can have a direct effect on a person, for instance by influencing one's appetite or mood. I see this as being linked to affect and the aesthetic response.

Painter Bridget Riley also discusses the physical effect of colour. She talks about sensation in her work, focusing on visual sensation and its relation to pleasure. Some viewers of Riley's work have reported that it has elicited a painful sensation, yet she claims that she has never experienced this. On the contrary, she states that the work is stimulating and gives her pleasure (Riley 95-6). She adds that the sensation is "an active, vibrating pleasure" comparable to "running…early morning…cold water…fresh things" (Riley 96). For example, she entitled one painting *Static* "in the sense of a field of static electricity. It is visual prickles." (Riley 98) Riley's work is primarily concerned with the eye and the brain. Does this mean that for her the physical effect of colour is not a sensation in the body as well?

Theories of affect and perception can also be found in the field of neuroaesthetics. This combination of neuroscience and aesthetics provides an interesting consideration of both art and science in relation to the aesthetic experience. If we see sensation and perception as phenomena that involve both brain and body, we can see why

neuroaesthetics would be relevant to any discussion of these issues and their relationship to art. Author Sally McKay discusses this in her recent paper "Repositioning Neuroaesthetics Through Contemporary Art". She talks about "embodied knowledge" and the active role of the art audience. The viewer/visitor is not a blank slate or an empty vessel, rather viewers are active entities with past experiences and "collective cultural knowledge" (3). She talks about how human perception and the senses are intrinsically linked to the "cultural contingencies of an individual's lived experience" and because of this it is impossible to have a detached or omnipresent point of view (3). Neither art theory nor neuroscience offer a complete explanation of the aesthetic experience but through the interdisciplinary lens of neuroaesthetics, we gain a more holistic view (5). After all, the word "aesthetics" comes from the ancient Greek word *aesthesis*, which means sense perception (15).

Figure 7. Olafur Eliasson. *360 Degree Room for all Colours.* Installation view.

McKay uses specific contemporary artists and artworks as examples. One of these is Olafur Eliasson. Many of his works address this idea of embodied knowledge and use colour as a way to explore the subjectivity of the visitor. Eliasson's works

> facilitate awareness of the physiological limitations of human colour perception… how vision operates as a subjective and culturally conditioned mode of interactive engagement with the environment, rather than an objective window on the world (26).

This relates to Albers's earlier investigations, even though he was not using scientific evidence to support them. Both Albers and Eliasson came to the conclusion that it is impossible to accurately compare the perception of colour in two different people because no two persons will see colour in exactly the same way. Eliasson is using colour to make people aware of the subjectivity of their experience. Colour thus offers a lens through which we can examine the relationship between the viewing experience and perception, cognition, and sensation.

Viewer and Visitor

I seek to understand how the experience of the viewer changes in an installation from the experience of looking at a piece hung on the wall or placed on a plinth. Brian O'Doherty discusses this in Section 2 of *Inside the White Cube: The Ideology of the Gallery Space*. He talks about how the role of the viewer has changed throughout the 20th century. He divides the viewer into the Eye and the Spectator, each with its own role, explaining that "the Eye goes along with Synthetic Cubism as it takes up the business of redefining the picture plane. The Spectator, as we have seen, copes with the

invasion of real space from Pandora's picture plane, opened by collage" (O'Doherty 50). He talks about how these roles evolve: "the Spectator's other senses, always there in the raw, were infused with some of the Eye's fine discriminations. The Eye urges the body around it to provide it with information" (52). Here we can see the link to installation. The body becomes involved in this relationship between the artwork and the audience. Where before it was the viewer, now it is the visitor. The idea of embodied knowledge is tied to the experience of a visitor in an installation. Installation offers the possibility of stimulating more than just the eye.

Boris Groys discusses the particulars of installation in his article "The Politics of Installation". He says that installation "changes in a very radical way the role and the function of the exhibition space" (2-3). He explains how, in a traditional exhibition, the body of the viewer is not as engaged:

> The body of the viewer in this setting remains outside of the art: art takes place in front of the viewer's eyes – as an art object, a performance, or a film. Accordingly, the exhibition space is understood here to be an empty, neutral, public space – a symbolic property of the public. The only function of such a space is to make the art objects that are placed within it easily accessible to the gaze of the visitors (2).

On the other hand, in an installation, the space itself is the material support and it invites the viewer in (3). Groys states that this space which was previously empty, neutral, and public is transformed into an individual artwork when it becomes an installation (3). In creating an installation, the artist creates a space that is, symbolically, their private property whereas before the gallery was a public space. Previously, the gallery was

subject to the "laws" of that specific museum or gallery. In an installation, the artist creates the "laws" of their space and the visitor is subject to them (4). So it is not only the space that changes, but the role of the artist as well.

Claire Bishop also discusses the changes in the visitor's experience in her book *Installation Art* (2005). She points out that 'the awareness of the body' is as an important element in installation art which "creates a situation into which the viewer physically enters" (6). Also important is the regarding of the space as a singular entity rather than a group of elements coming together in the space (6). She explains that

> rather than imagining the viewer as a pair of disembodied eyes that survey the work from a distance, installation art presupposes an *embodied* viewer whose sense of touch, smell and sound are as heightened as their sense of vision (6).

From Bishop's expansive study, I would like to focus on her discussion of the literal presence of the viewer in installation art. While it seems that the shift from viewer to visitor puts more emphasis on the individual's subjective experience – and this is what I am concerned with in my work – Bishop suggests that this may contain a contradiction:

> What installation art offers, then, is an experience of centring *and* decentring: work that insists on our centred presence in order then to subject us to an experience of decentring. In other words, installation art does not just articulate an intellectual notion of dispersed subjectivity (reflected in a world without a centre or organising principle); it also constructs a set in which the viewing subject may experience this fragmentation first hand (130).

This first-hand experience, whether centred or decentred, is of great interest to me. I am intrigued by how the body and the mind of the visitor relate to the space in which they find themselves.

Because I am working in a traditional gallery setting, the white cube also concerns me, especially its other-worldliness or transcendental quality. Brian O'Doherty discusses this when he talks about how we treat the gallery as if it were a sacred space cut off from the outside world and how, consequently, the objects we put inside also become sacred (15). He compares the gallery space to a church. Inside this white cube, we do not eat, sleep, go to the bathroom, etc. We paint everything white, bleach out reality, and create another world. He critiques the white cube:

> The white cube was a transitional device that attempted to bleach out the past and at the same time control the future by appealing to supposedly transcendental modes of presence and power. But the problem with transcendental principles is that by definition they speak of another world, not this one. It is this other world, or access to it, that the white cube represents. It is like Plato's vision of a higher metaphysical realm where form, shiningly attenuated and abstract like mathematics, is utterly disconnected from the life of human experience here below (11).

I see this otherworldliness as less a problem than a possibility, the potential to create another world via an installation. What will happen if we exaggerate this other-worldliness instead of resisting it (ie. make it more alien)? One example of a contemporary artist who deals with this in her work is Yayoi Kusama. She creates fantastic environments of pattern and colour that surround the viewer and play with

perception. Her 1998 piece *Dots Obsession* is a room covered in multi-coloured polka dots. Performers – including the artist herself – are covered in this dot pattern in an attempt to blend in with the environment in an act of "self-obliteration" (Bishop 90). James Turrell also transforms white cubes into other worlds using colour and light. His spaces are disorienting and often the viewer is unable to perceive the boundaries of the room they are in or see their own bodies (Bishop 84). Take for example *Brigit's Bardot* (2009). Like Eliasson, he uses colour and light to play with perception.

Figure 8. James Turrell. *Bridget's Bardo*. Installation view.

My exhibition of wall drawing is an attempt to embrace the artificial environment of the white cube and work within it. I use the temporality of installation to express this. While I have not transformed it into a completely other world, it still functions as a sort of alien space. It only exists for the duration of the exhibition. The ephemeral nature of

the materials I am using connects with the ephemerality of working on the wall. Chalk can be washed off the walls and can also be smudged and easily damaged. This "aura of the here and now" relates to the special quality of installation in which I am engaged. (Groys 5).

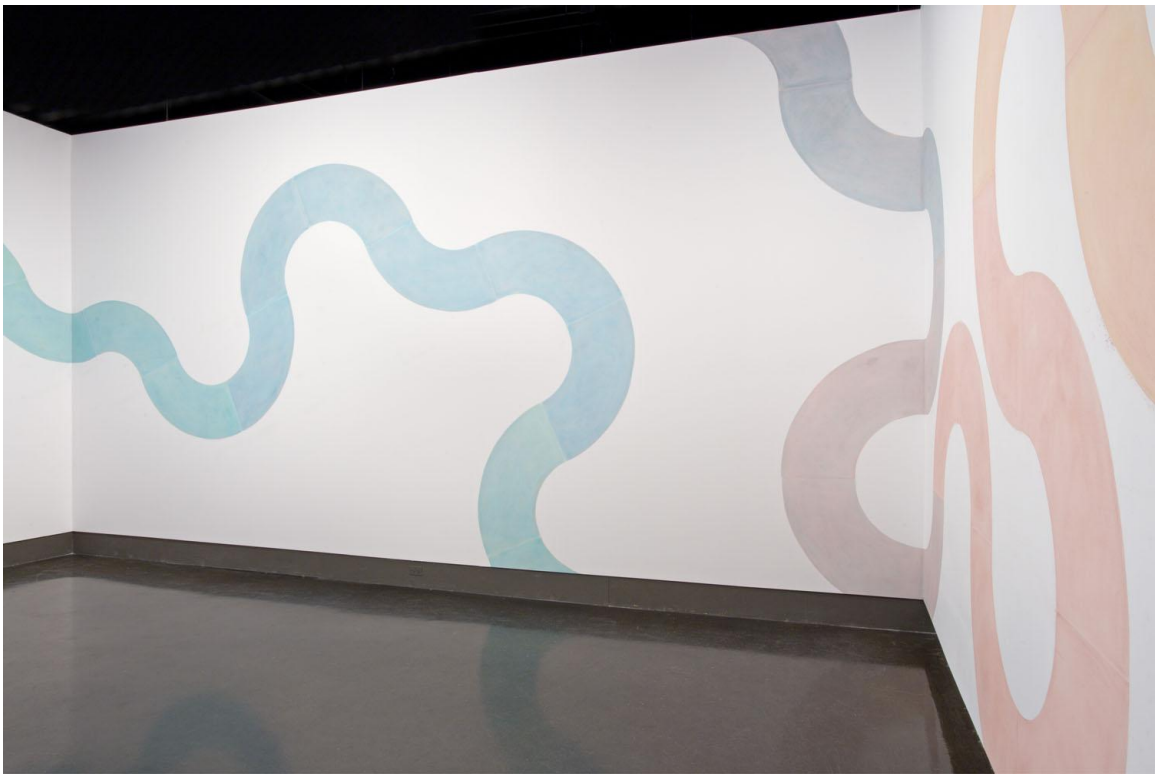

Figure 9. *Small Worlds.* Installation view.

Is it Print?

What is the definition, and where are the boundaries, of print? Could I place my work in the context of contemporary print media? If not, where does it fit in? In fact, these works on the wall hover between the three disciplines of printmaking, drawing, and installation: drawing through the use of materials, installation through the direct engagement with the space, and print through the execution and methods used. Repetition and reproduction, by way of a stencil, are important in this connection to print.

Perhaps the earliest method of image reproduction is the stencil, yet I am interested in it not so much for its rich history but for its future potential, outside the context of print and mass production. I use the stencil as a tool to replicate shapes, to "print" them, using my hand and my body. In doing so, I expose the element of human error that technology seeks to prevent. I believe there is a great and unexplored potential in this area, this hovering between something unique and something replicated – something perfect, yet imperfect – something handmade in the digital age.

Other contemporary artists such as nominee for the 2014 Turner Prize, Ciara Phillips, are helping print come out of its perfectly editioned shell. For an exhibition at the Tate Britain in London, Phillips screenprinted large sheets of wallpaper in bold colours and then pasted them on the walls, surrounding the viewer on all sides and transforming the gallery space. Her work is self-referential, exposing the process of screenprinting in her textured patterns on the paper. She uses a limited number of screens with different stencils to produce numerous sheets of varying textures which she alternates on the wall to both discover and disrupt the patterns that emerge through repetition. Although the end results of our works differ visually, we both temporally activate the space of a gallery through work on the wall that surrounds the visitor, engaging them through colour or pattern, and addressing the embodied experience.

Cologne based artists Gert and Uwe Tobias also traverse the boundaries of print and explore where they meet painting. They utilise colour and abstraction to create woodcut prints which are then assembled and mounted on wood panels to form large scale compositions. My modular approach echoes their method of building and I share their visual aesthetic favouring hard-edged geometric shapes and bold, flat colours.

Conclusion

Small Worlds has been created out of shapes and colours. Through visual repetition I have generated a rhythm and movement that draws the visitor into and around the gallery space. Colour is the language of *Small Worlds*, but there are not any words. This language is absorbed through sensation, perception, and cognition and is thus understood and felt by both the brain and the body. Filtered through the lens of the visitor's past experiences and knowledge, this experience is unique. Through colour the work is able to connect with every visitor in a holistic yet truly subjective way. For this exhibition, I have embraced the alien white cube and created my own territory where the body of the visitor is surrounded and all of their senses are engaged. I, too, engage with the work through my body. Through my labour I become the machine that makes the art. My hands and body are the technology used in the making, and in this way, the process is an integral part of the completed whole.

I have referenced painters, printmakers, and installation artists, all of whom bear some connection to my practice. However, the work cannot be identified as painting, drawing, printmaking, or installation. It is ambiguous, hovering between disciplines and taking what it needs from each of these areas. *Small Worlds* finds strength in this ambiguity, applying cross-disciplinary techniques to arrive at a distinct aesthetic. The shapes in *Small Worlds* are individual units yet they are all connected, their relationship to one another like the relationship between notes in a song or words in a story. They are interdependent, lacking meaning as singular units, only realizing their potential through their contribution to the final composition.

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