



Amuse

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"I Exist Because I See Colours"

Matisse, Kandisky and 91-year-old Lebanese artist Etel Adnan grapple with colour in art

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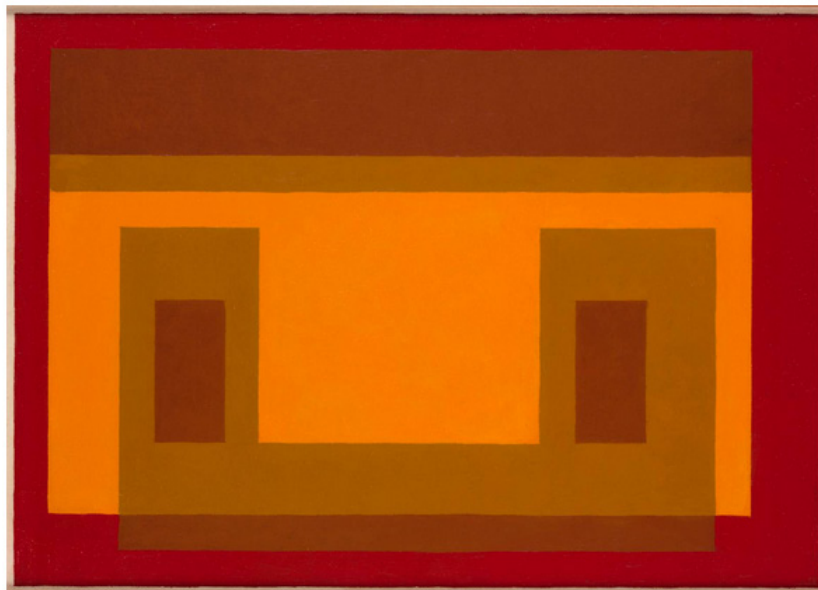


With Anish Kapoor buying the exclusive rights to the Vantablack pigment last year, and Richard Nicoll recently being commemorated with his very own Pantone shade of blue, it's a reminder of the significance of colour.



DAVID ANNESLEY, ORINOCO, 1965, STEEL, PAINTED YELLOW, 56 X 96 X 26 IN, 142 X 243.8 X 66 CM, COURTESY OF WADDINGTON CUSTOT

On 1 March, Waddington Custot will host *Colour is*, a new exhibition looking at the wide-ranging investigations of colour from the 20th Century to present day. The relationship between colour theory and art over the last hundred years has been complex, varied, and often contradictory. Here's what we found out from the show.

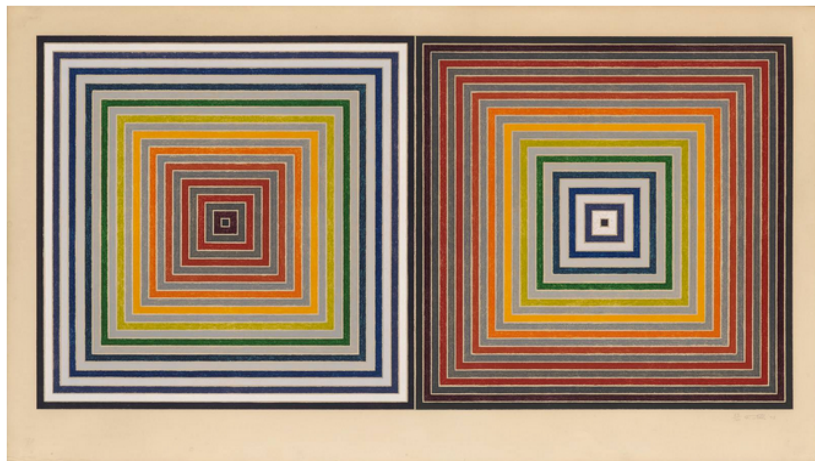


JOSEF ALBERS, VARIANT ADOBE (JAAF 1976.1.1166), 1956, OIL ON MASONITE, 17.75 X 25.4 IN, 45 X 64.5 CM, COURTESY OF WADDINGTON CUSTOT

Colours Interact

In 1963, Josef Albers published his landmark text – *The Interaction of Colour*. His theories were based on decades of teaching at legendary institutions, including the Bauhaus and Black Mountain College, believing that in order to make art of any type, his students (including Eva Hesse and Robert Rauschenberg) needed to understand the nature of colour.

Prolific in nature – an accomplished designer, photographer, printmaker and photographer, alongside being a theorist and artist – Albers' most famous works are the *Homage to the Square* series, in which he used disciplined compositional structure to examine colour relationships and visual perception.



FRANK STELLA, DOUBLE GRAY SCRAMBLE, 1973, SCREENPRINT ON ARCHES 88 MOULD-MADE PAPER, 23.4 X 47 IN, 59.4 X 119.5 CM, COURTESY OF WADDINGTON CUSTOT

Colour Is Material

Early work by the American artist Frank Stella pursues Albers' ideas of 'pure' colour. In resistance to the expressive use of paint by those associated with Abstract Expressionism, Stella perceived paintings as "a flat surface with paint on it – nothing more."

Stella's smooth use of industrial house paint in his early work, kept "as good as it was in the can". The non-representational stripes and patterns were a catalyst for Minimalism – the element of simple, bold colour worked in tandem with shape and composition in order to create the artwork.



HELIO OITICICA, V6 SPATIAL RELIEF, RED, (V6 RELEVO ESPECIAL, VERMELHO), 1959-1991, PAINTED WOOD, 38.75 X 30.75 X 4 IN, 98.4 X 78.1 X 10.2 CM, COURTESY OF WADDINGTON CUSTOT (2)

Colour Needed Liberating

Brazilian artist Hélio Oiticica's unique and radical oeuvre was highly significant in the development of contemporary art. Oiticica's uncompromising desire to liberate colour from flat, two-dimensional planes occupied his career. In his 1960 theoretical text *Colour, Time and Structure*, he referred to colour as "a supreme order similar to the supreme order of architectural spaces."

V6 Spatial Relief, Red (V6 Relevo especial, vermelho) (1959/1999) has been composed as a folded construction, designed to hang in space, and enabling the viewer to experience colour and light from every angle.

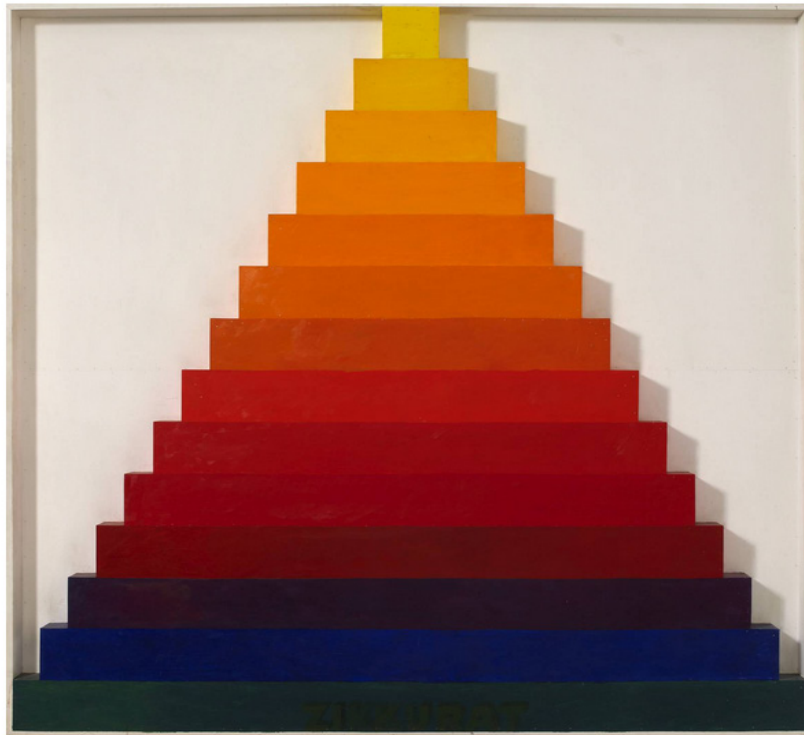


PAUL FEELEY, DUBHE, 1965, PAINTED WOOD, 35.75 X 36 X 36 IN, 91 X 91.3 X 91.3 CM, COURTESY OF WADDINGTON CUSTOT

Colour Is Spiritual

Beirut-born artist Etel Adnan, who recently had her first public UK solo show at the age of 91, is typically associated with colour field painting. Adnan works directly from the paint tube, applying pure planes of colour in order to convey the immediacy of beauty around her. Her work also references specific and significant places and landscapes, like her encounter with the landscape of Mount Tamalpais after moving to Sausalito in 1970.

Spirituality and colour are intertwined for Adnan, who's also an accomplished poet, citing colour as the meaning for energy and inspiration; "My spirit is anguished by colour. Colour is the sign of the existence of life. I feel like believing, being in a state of pure belief, of affirmation. I exist because I see colours."



JOE TILSON, ZIKKURAT 1, SPECTRUM, 1967, OIL AND ACRYLIC ON BOARD (RELIEF), 85.5 X 85.5 IN, 217 X 217 CM,
COURTESY OF WADDINGTON CUSTOT

Actually, What Is Colour?

The exhibition text, titled *Colour...*, is an ongoing project by the artist and writer David Batchelor – whose work also features in the show. The text cites divergent statements from a multitude of well-known artists. Matisse may have said that “colour exists in itself”, whereas Kandinsky believed that “colour cannot stand alone”. Clive Bell held that “colour becomes significant only when it is used as an attribute of form”, however decades later Carlos Cruz-Diez stated that “it is an autonomous event that does not require form.”

Credits:

Main image: Hélio Oiticica, V6 Spatial Relief, Red, (V6 Relevô especial, verme ^lho), 1959-1991, painted wood, 38.75 x 30.75 x 4 in, 98.4 x 78.1 x 10.2 cm, courtesy of Waddington Custot (1)

Topics:

[Anish Kapoor](#), [Art](#), [Colour](#), [Colour Is](#),
[Etel Adnan](#), [Eva Hesse](#), [Frank Stella](#),
[Hélio Oiticica](#), [Josef Albers](#), [Kandinsky](#), [Matisse](#),
[Richard Nicholl](#), [Robert Rauschenberg](#),
[Vantablack](#), [Waddington Custot](#)