

EMMA COULTER | CHROMINANCE
| AT ANNA PAPPAS GALLERY



Emma Coulter, *Multichromatic Synesthesia #2*, 2015
Courtesy the artist and Anna Pappas Gallery,
Melbourne

Emma Coulter limits herself to a distinct, eye-catching palette of colours. There are shades of cyan, lime, orange and blue. There's a bright green, a rusty red and a Tyrian purple. Across canvas, walls, floors, and timber and metal sculptures, Coulter lays on her hues in solid, hard-edged blocks. Her colour scheme seems familiar. It looks as though it might correspond to fixed points in a colour model – RGB or CMYK – a set of primary and secondary shades arranged in complementary combinations. But that isn't the case. "It's sort of a spectrum but

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not really," says Coulter, "It's not a true spectrum, it's *my* spectrum."



Emma Coulter, *Multichromatic Synesthesia #1*, 2015
Courtesy the artist and Anna Pappas Gallery,
Melbourne

We tend to turn our noses up at colour, explains Coulter, especially when it comes to the vivid rainbow variety. Colour is often dismissed as vulgar, frivolous, decorative, superficial, feminine, infantile, queer and primitive. Or more specifically, as David Batchelor argues in his book *Chromophobia*, colour is dismissed as vulgar and frivolous etc *because* it's associated with the feminine or queer, and vice versa, all those qualities being fairly interchangeable in the bad taste soup of Western culture.

With her new exhibition *Chrominance* (at Anna Pappas Gallery until 27 June), Coulter says she's interested in challenging our snobbery about colour. "I guess I'm not really interested in elitist art and maybe that's part of the reason why I'm interested in colour, because it is accessible." Talking to Coulter it's clear that she takes colour seriously. She calls it her language. She says colour theory, colour models, colour families, colour hierarchies and so on are second nature to her. When I try to understand why *these* colours in particular, Coulter says it's a mix of intuition and research, "the source of the colours

is something that I've arrived at from a period of practice of about ten years, I've refined and eliminated as a process of reduction." Ten years of trial and error, that's what she means when she says it's *her* spectrum.



Emma Coulter, *Spatial Deconstruction #12*, 2015
and *Adaptable Structure #3*, 2015
Courtesy the artist and Anna Pappas Gallery,
Melbourne

On all the different surfaces Coulter works with - canvas, timber, metal, interior walls and floors - the paint and the colour is always uniformly flat. The colours and the materials are rendered one and the same thing. With works on canvas like *Multichromatic Synesthesia #2* (2015) or *Centreless Vortex* (2014), solid geometric shapes create the illusion of three-dimensional corners, corridors and voids. When applied to the interior walls and floors of a gallery the effect is more complicated; flat surfaces in a three-dimensional setting are given the appearance of depth, edges, contours and continuities that may or may not be there in the physical space.

As Coulter explains, colour is her way of exploring "the spatial properties of paint." She's interested in the way colour affects visual perception and the way it can alter our experience of space. But more than that, Coulter is also interested in the way our cultural perception of colour - that is, our collective anxiety about the 'low', 'frivolous' pleasures of pretty colours - can affect our experience of art.

>> **Maura Edmond**

>> **29 May 2015**

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Chrominance

15 May - 27 June, 2015

Anna Pappas Gallery

2-4 Carlton Street, Prahran

Tues - Fri 10am - 6pm | Sat 11am - 5pm

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