

David Batchelor

cecilia brunson projects



About the artist

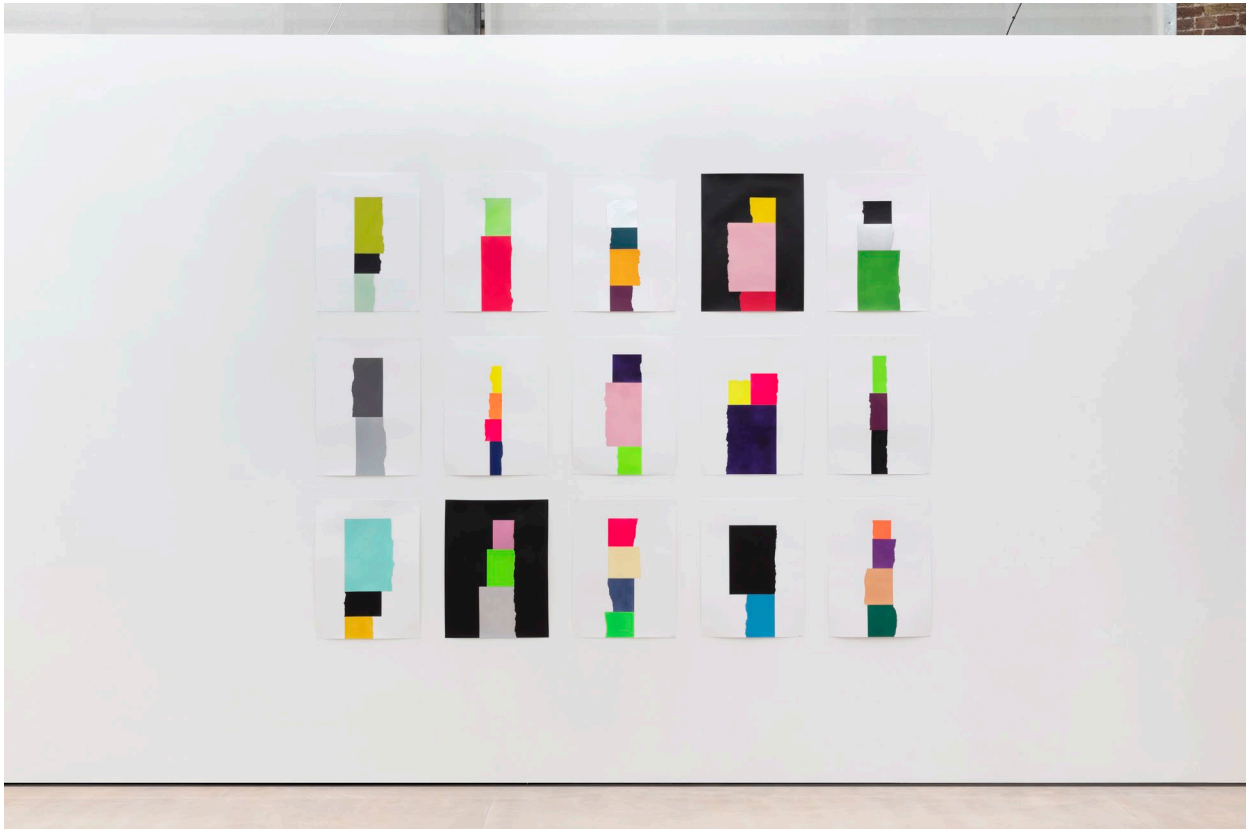
David Batchelor is an artist and writer based in London. He was born in Dundee, Scotland, in 1955. He studied Fine Art at Trent Polytechnic, Nottingham (1975-78), and Cultural Theory at Birmingham University (1978-80). For thirty years Batchelor has been concerned with the experience of colour within a modern urban environment, and with historical conceptions of colour within Western culture. His work comprises sculpture, installation, drawing, painting, photography and animation. He has exhibited widely in the UK, continental Europe, the Americas and, more recently, the Middle East and Asia. Batchelor has also written a number of books and essays on colour theory, including *Chromophobia* (2000).

In 2022 Batchelor presented his first large-scale survey exhibition at Compton Verney Museum in Warwickshire. Titled *Colour Is*, and comprising nearly 200 works, the show included his earliest surviving black and white works from the 1980s through a wide range of his colour-based works from the 1990s to the present. It concluded with a body of large- and small-scale abstractions made in concentrated periods during the pandemic lockdowns of 2020-21. A new book, *Concretos*, which focuses on a range of sculptures with concrete bases, was published to coincide with the exhibition.

Other recent exhibitions include: *I-Cons and Ex-Cons*, Kestle Barton, Cornwall (2023); *David Batchelor / Alfredo Volpi*, Cecilia Brunson Projects, London (2022); *My Own Private Bauhaus*, Ingleby Gallery, Edinburgh (2019); *Chromatology*, Ab-Anbar Gallery, Tehran (2017); *Monochrome Archive 1997-2015*, Whitechapel Gallery, London (2015); *Flatlands*, Fruitmarket Gallery, Edinburgh and Spike Island, Bristol (2013-14); *Light Show* (2013-16), Hayward Gallery, London, MAC Sydney, Sharjah Art Foundation and MAC Santiago; *Chromophilia: 1995-2010*, Paço Imperial, Rio de Janeiro (2010); and *Color Chart*, Museum of Modern Art, New York (2008) and Tate Liverpool (2009).

Since the early 2000s Batchelor has received a number of commissions to make works in the public realm, some temporary and some permanent. These include: *King's Xmas* (King's Cross Station, London, 2019); *Richard of York Gave Battle in Vain* (Eddington, Cambridge, 2018); *Homage to Dr. Mirabilis* (Wesgate, Oxford, 2018); *Sixty Minute Spectrum* (Hayward Gallery, London, 2017); *Chromorama*, (Broadgate Estates, London, 2015); *19-20-21*, (Lyric Theatre, London, 2014); *Plato's Disco* (Whitworth Galleries, Manchester, 2014); *Chromolocomotion* (St Pancras International, London, 2014); *Spectrum on the Hill* (Hannan the Hill, Seoul); *Spectrum of 1st. Street* (NoMA, Washington DC); *Hong Kong Fesdella* (British Council, Hong Kong, 2010), *Ten Silhouettes* (Gloucester Road underground station, 2005); and *Evergreen* (More London, 2003).

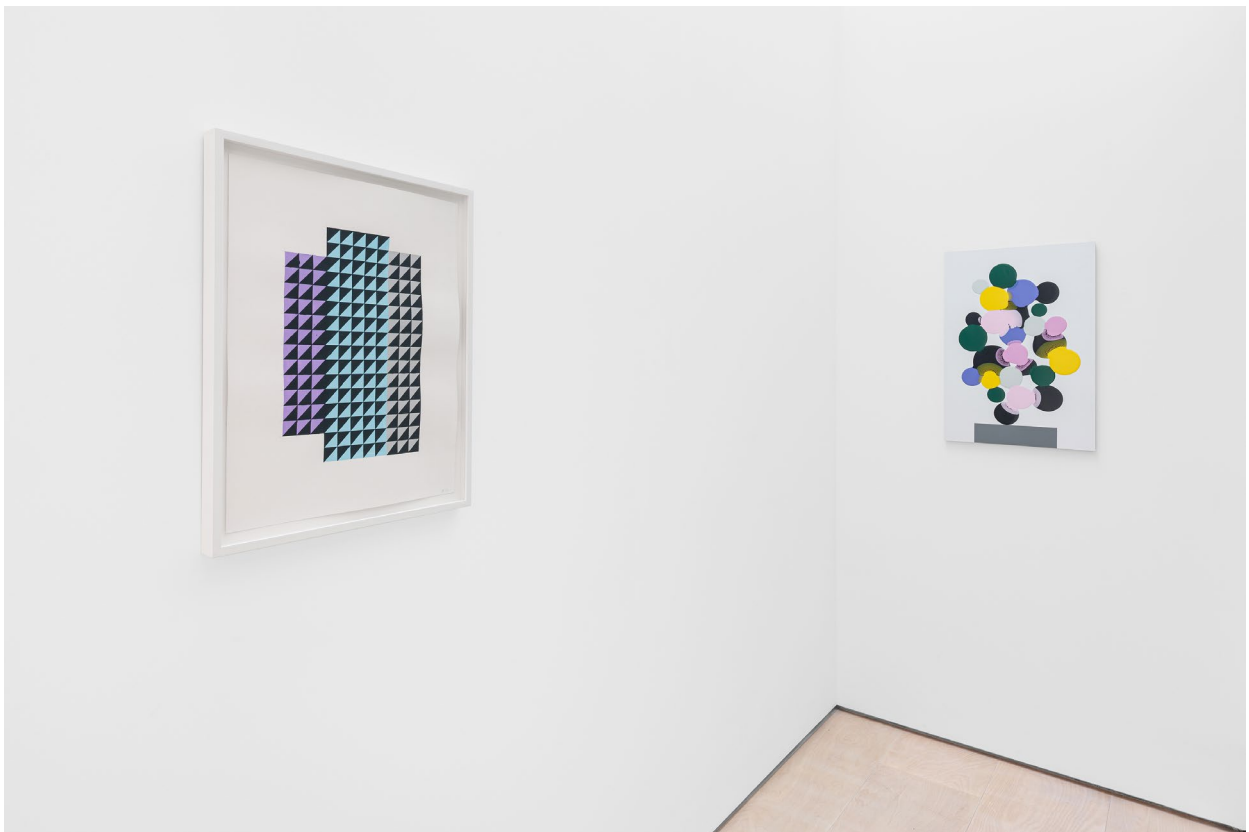
Chromophobia, Batchelor's book on colour and the fear of colour in the West, was published by Reaktion Books, London (2000), and is now available in ten languages. His more recent book, *The Luminous and the Grey* (2014), is also published by Reaktion. *Colour* (2008), an anthology of writings on colour from 1850 to the present, edited by Batchelor, is published by Whitechapel, London and MIT Press, Cambridge, Mass. His book of photographs, *Found Monochromes: vol.1, nos.1-250* (2010), is published by Ridinghouse, London; his suite of drawings, *The October Colouring-In Book* (2015), is published by Common-Editions, London.



David Batchelor: New Skin for the Old Ceremony
Cecilia Brunson Projects, London, UK
11 April - 10 May 2024



David Batchelor | Alfredo Volpi
Cecilia Brunson Projects, London, UK
11 May - 11 June 2022



David Batchelor | Alfredo Volpi
Cecilia Brunson Projects, London, UK
11 May - 11 June 2022



David Batchelor: I-Cons and Ex-Cons
Kestle Barton, Cornwall, UK
25 March - 11 June 2023



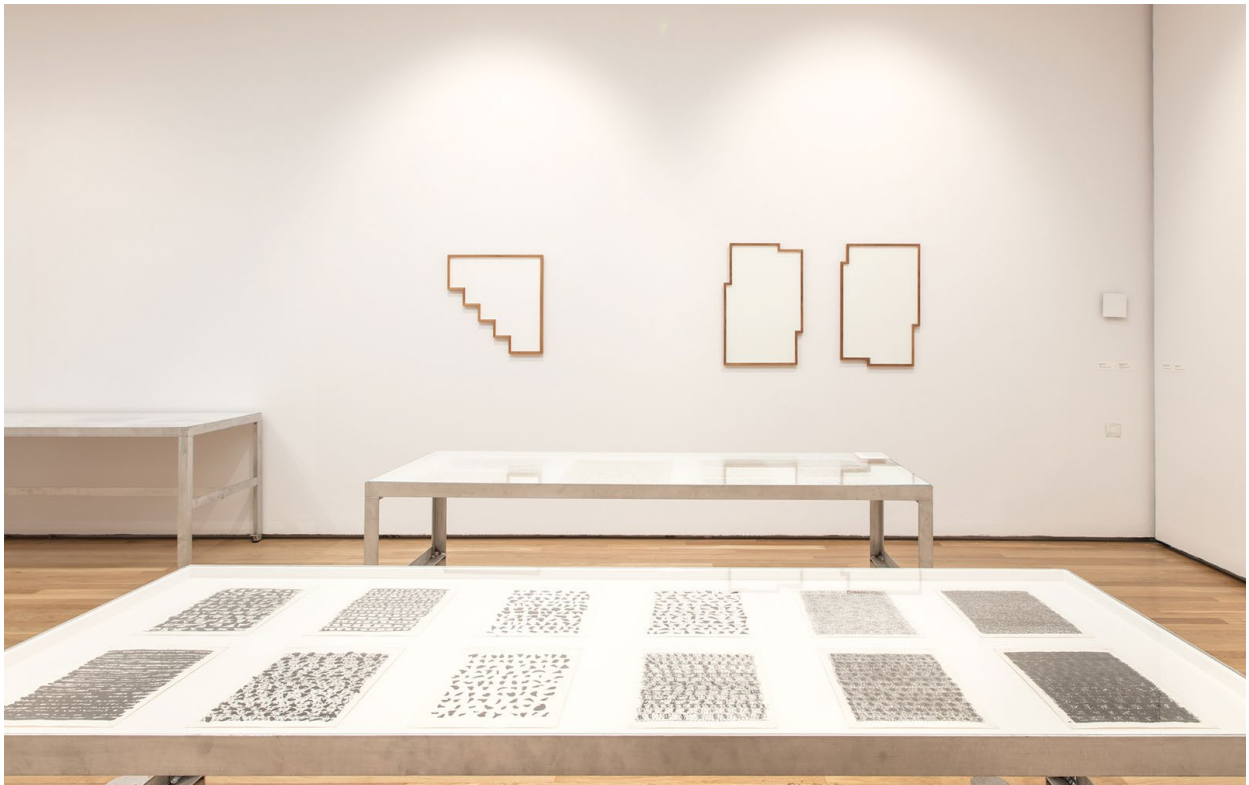
Disco Mecanique
Salisbury Cathedral, Salisbury, UK
21 November 2022 - 15 February 2023



Sixty Minute Spectrum
Hayward Gallery, London, UK
10 November 2022 - 31 January 2023



David Batchelor: Colour Is
Compton Verney, Warwickshire, UK
25 June - 2 October 2022



David Batchelor: Colour Is
Compton Verney, Warwickshire, UK
25 June - 2 October 2022



King's Xmas

Temporary site-specific installation, Granary Square, London, UK

21 November 2019 - 2 January 2020



David Batchelor: My Own Private Bauhaus
Ingleby Gallery, Edinburgh
24 July - 28 September 2019



David Batchelor: Psychogeometry
Matt's Gallery, London, UK
26 April - 11 June 2017



David Batchelor: Monochrome Archive, 1997-2015
Whitechapel Gallery, London, UK
22 December 2014 - 3 May 2015



David Batchelor: Flatlands
Spike Island, Bristol, UK
23 November 2013 - 26 January 2014

Selected works



CV Quilt 03, 2024

Cotton, silk, nylon, synthetic fabrics, cotton wadding, cotton embroidery thread. Machine pieced, hand quilted by Catherine-Marie Longtin

178 x 119 cm



Concrete-Concreto 09, 2024
Concrete, spray paint
105.5 x 29 x 11 cm



Covid Variation, 2020

Wool tapestry, produced by Taller Mexicano de Gobelinos, Guadalajara

255 x 322 cm



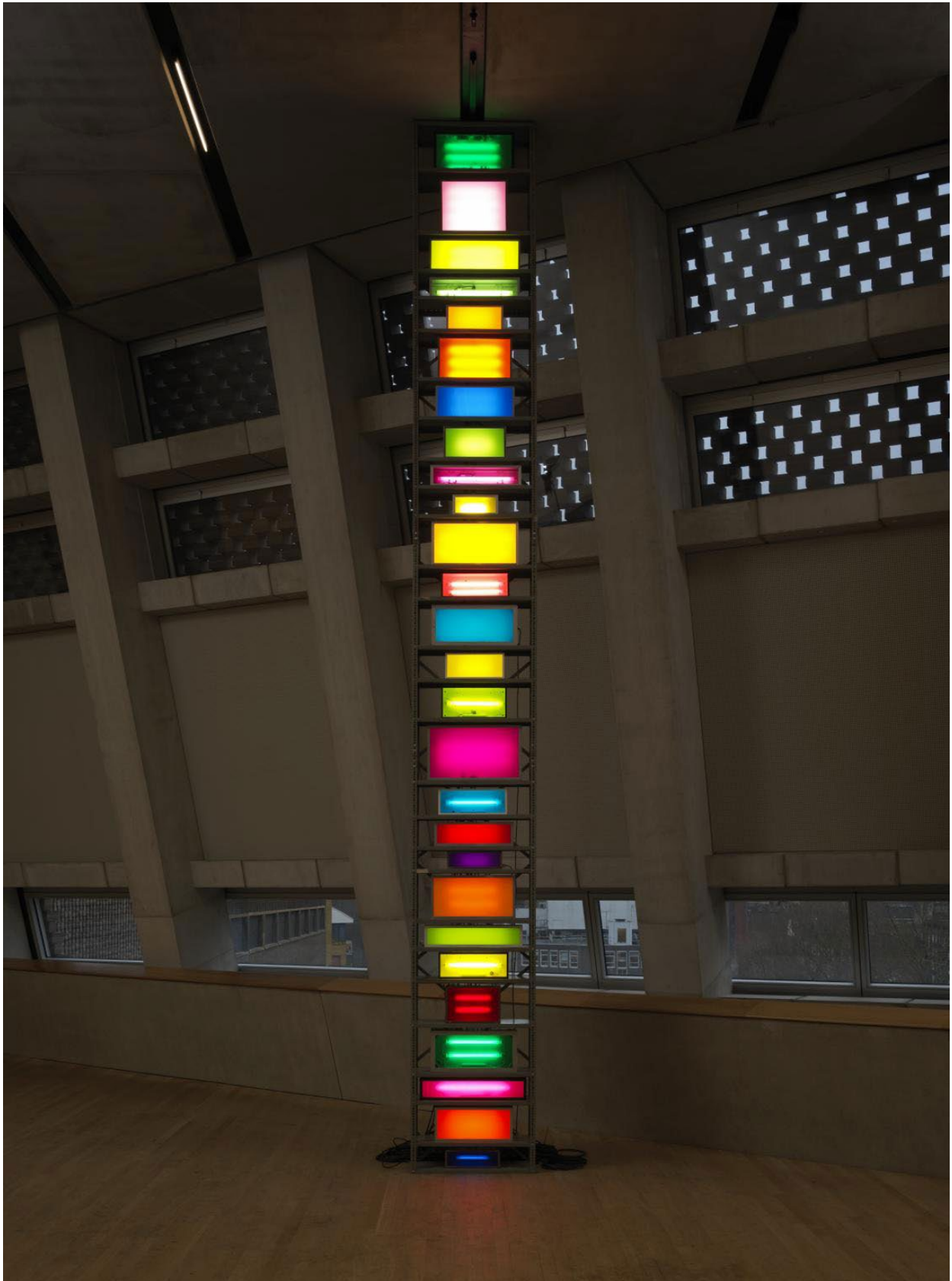
Covid Variation (04), 2022
Acrylic on aluminium
180 x 160 cm



Parapillar 7 (Multicolour), 2006

Steel support with plastic, metal, rubber, painted wood and feather objects
267 x 78 x 78 cm

Saatchi Gallery



Spectrum of Brick Lane 2, 2007

Lightboxes, steel shelving, acrylic sheet, fluorescent lights, cable and plug boards
520 x 90 x 31 cm

Tate Collections



Domenico Veneziano, The Annunciation, c.1442, 2021
Acrylic on postcard
12 x 17 cm



Rachel Whiteread, Untitled Six Spaces, 1994
Acrylic on postcard
12 x 17 cm



Multi-Colour Chart 34 (multicolour), 2018
Gloss and spray paint on Dibond
73.5 x 48 cm

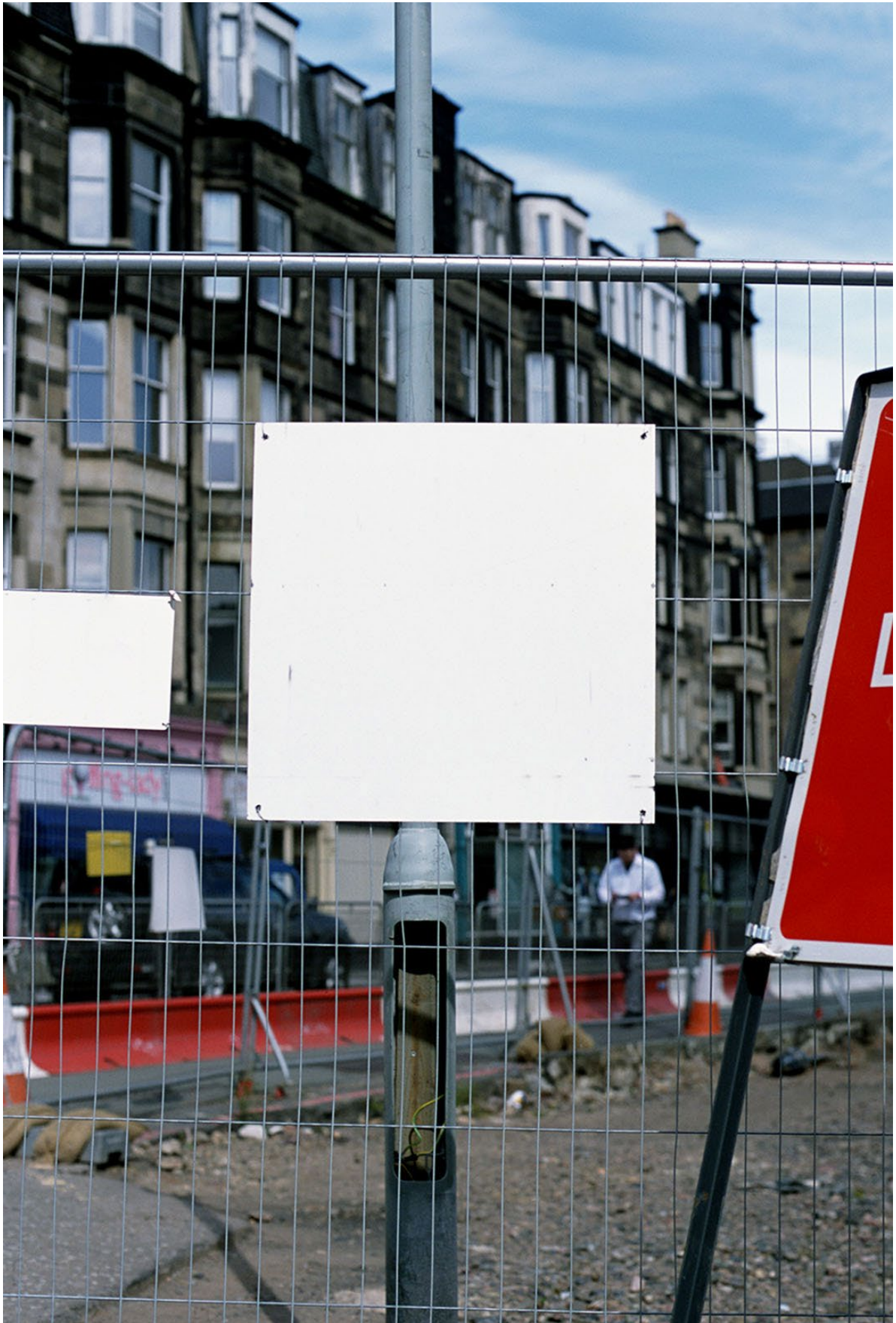


Concreto 1.0h/01, 2012
Concrete and coloured glass
20.5 x 21.5 x 6.5 cm



Candelabro de Santiago, 2005
Plastic containers, low energy bulbs, cable
Dimensions variable

MAC, Santiago, Chile



Found Monochrome 473, Hoxton, London, 07.05.11, 2011
Photograph



Ten Silhouettes, 2005

Found objects, fluorescent light, acrylic, polycarbonate, cable and plugs

Dimensions variable

Commissioned work, Gloucester Road Underground Station, London, UK

Publications

Batchelor, David. *Chromophobia*. London: Reaktion Books, 2000.

Batchelor, David (ed.). *Colour*. London/Boston: Whitechapel/MIT Press, 2008.

Batchelor, David. *Concretos*. London: Anomie Publishing, 2022.

Batchelor, David. *Found Monochromes*. London: Ridinghouse, 2010.

Batchelor, David. *The Luminous and the Grey*. London: Reaktion Books, 2014.

Batchelor, David. *Minimalism*. London: Tate Publications, 1997.

Batchelor, David. *Richard Of York Gave Battle In Vain*. London: Contemporary Art Society, 2018.

Chromatology. Exhibition catalogue. Tehran: Ab-Anbar Gallery, 2017.

David Batchelor / Alfredo Volpi. Exhibition booklet. London: Cecilia Brunson Projects, 2022.

Flatlands. Exhibition catalogue. Edinburgh: Fruitmarket Gallery, 2013.

Shiny Dirt. Exhibition catalogue. Birmingham: Ikon Gallery, 2004.

Unplugged. Exhibition catalogue. Edinburgh: Talbot Rice Gallery, 2007.

Selected Press



Featured in Issue 230

David Batchelor's Dizzying Chromatics

At Compton Verney, the artist's first large-scale survey celebrates a career spent experimenting with colour



BY CATHY WADE IN EXHIBITION REVIEWS, UK REVIEWS | 11 JUL 22



All too routinely in survey shows, moments of uncertainty are brushed aside in favour of a coherent trajectory. 'Colour Is', David Batchelor's first large-scale survey, foregrounds direct engagement with his practice by reversing chronology, layering works densely and utilizing the interpretation panels to establish candid, first-person conversations with the viewer. The wall texts become additional works in the rooms, underpinning how the exhibition draws from the model of the studio and the artist's primary sources of inspiration. With this intent, objects overlap in proximity, collating the diverse ways of making and writing that have taken place in Batchelor's practice, articulating the intersections present in a body of work produced over 40 years.



David Batchelor, 'Colour Is', 2022, installation view. Courtesy: © Compton Verney; photography: Jamie Woodley

The exhibition offers two routes: '2010–2022, mostly' and '2010–1980, mostly'. The route with the more recent works begins with 'Covid Variations' (2020) – a series of paintings made during the pandemic, in which greys, pinks, cadmiums and cobalts zigzag and bleed into each other on connected panels. Alongside, presented in a line on a shelf, are the sculptural bouquets of concrete and acid-hued Perspex of 'Inter-Concreto' (2019–ongoing). *Extra-Concreto 02* (2020) is placed freestanding in the middle of the room, the

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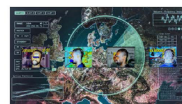
Johny Pitts's Portraits of Black British Lives



Carolee Schneemann's Traces of Collision



Five Shows to See in the UK and Ireland This Summer



Keith Piper's Jet Black Future



Keith Piper's Jet Black Future

spray-painted crossing lines of its forged materials echoes the paintings. Nearby, a monitor pulsates with assertions; *Colour Is* (2017) is an animation that collates sentences on colour, how it fades, deceives, imitates, acts superficially and holds its own meaning.



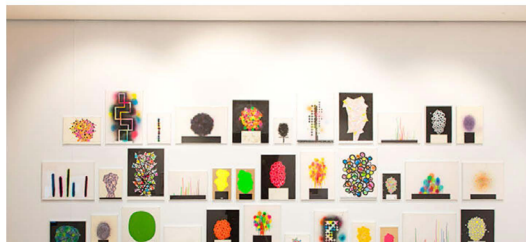
David Batchelor, *Magic Hour*, 2004-2007, found steel and aluminium light boxes, found steel support. Courtesy: © the artist and Compton Verney

The glossy acrylic sheets embedded on the found and scavenged dollies of *I Love King's Cross and King's Cross Loves Me* (2001) transform them into vehicles for colour. They are presented alongside a collection of neon-hued *Atomic Drawings* (1997-2016), proposals for yet-unmade sculptures. *Found Monochromes* (1997-ongoing) is a series documenting voids in public space, presented here as 500 digitized 35mm photographs screened on two monitors: one portrait, the other landscape. The works hold a consistent rule: the capture of abstraction in lived space, where its edges are resistant to the language of the city. The stills on the monitors cycle through in rapid succession: offers of cash withdrawals, 24/7 convenience, grating, bricks, wires, painted boards and unadorned hoardings.



David Batchelor, *Colour Chart 58 (red)*, 2012, gloss and matt paint on Dibond. Courtesy: © the artist and Compton Verney

In an adjacent room, *Magic Hour* (2004-07) has turned its back on visitors. An irregular grid of illuminated lightboxes placed close to the gallery's white wall creates a halo of multiple hues. Here, colour leaks out, a push-pull that plays with the desire to be enveloped in total chromatic saturation. On the reverse, the work's guts – the supports that hold it together, the massed cables – spill out onto the floor. You look through its gaps seeking that maximum colour fix, blocked by the structure.



All Under Heaven: Hayward Gallery Returns With Andreas Gursky Retrospective



James Coleman



Almost Blue



David Batchelor, 'Colour Is', 2022, installation view. Courtesy: © Compton Verney; photography: Jamie Woodley

The exhibition concludes with Batchelor's early works from 1980 to 1997: collages, notes, folds and his first colour experiments. The room is unphased by the number of attempts it takes for a body of work to connect to its true intent. When it happens, you feel it. Placed in the middle of works is *Frame-Like 16* (1993), a small, framed panel completely covered in tape. It's a total pushing away of stasis. Aluminium, duct and electrical tape are layered in a frenzy of marks that annihilate the object beneath. It's a work that holds the room by itself, communicating the moment in which idea and material form a reality. This potential for innocuous and uncelebrated materials to form new conclusions is a continuum through the exhibition's fluctuations, shifts and returns, giving clarity to the depths held in Batchelor's dizzying chromatics.

David Batchelor's 'Colour Is' is at Compton Verney, Warwickshire, until 2 October

Main image: David Batchelor, Covid Variation, 2020, tape on Dibond. Courtesy: © the artist and Compton Verney



CATHY WADE

Cathy Wade is an artist and writer based in Birmingham, UK.

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Published 01/08/2022

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David Batchelor: Colour Is

A long overdue survey covering 40 years of work from an artist long interested in the complexities of colour and its place in the urban environment



David Batchelor, *Concreto 5.0/01, 2012*. Courtesy © the artist and Compton Verney.

Compton Verney, Warwickshire
25 June – 2 October 2022

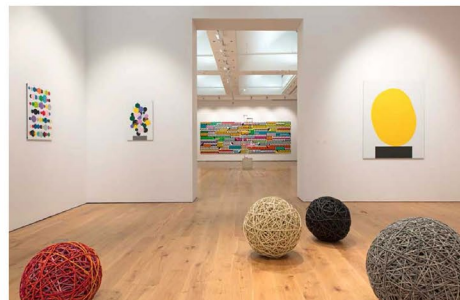
by DAVID TRIGG

Writing in his famous Confessions, Saint Augustine claimed that he understood time – until, that is, he was asked to define it. The same could be said of colour, which, like time, is also a headache to explain. As the Scottish artist David Batchelor has said: “Colour is universal, but at the same time no one really knows what it is; it’s very familiar yet also entirely strange.” Batchelor (b1955) has been concerned with the slippery nature of colour since the early 1990s, exploring its richness and complexity through sculpture, painting, video, drawing and the handful of books he has written on the subject. This long overdue survey at Compton Verney covers 40-plus years of work, charting his sustained interest in the way that colour is experienced in the urban realm while revealing preoccupations ranging from pattern and geometric abstraction to time and analogue materiality.



David Batchelor, *Colour Is, 2022*. Installation view. Courtesy © Compton Verney. Photo: Jamie Woodley.

At the exhibition’s entrance is *Chromodisc* (2019), a glowing halo that resembles an electronic bug zapper but is, in fact, a chromatic clock. Over the course of an hour, it cycles through the entire visible spectrum, tracking the minutes via tiny gradations of colour. Reflecting Batchelor’s interest in the relationship between colour and time, it reminds us that colour is always a temporary phenomenon, occurring under particular conditions and perceived only with the presence of reflected light, the varying wavelength of which determines its hue. *Chromodisc*’s practicality as a clock, however, is limited: whether it is a quarter past blue or half past yellow, there is no way of knowing what the actual time is.



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Studio International archive 1965-74

David Batchelor, *Colour Is*, 2022. Installation view. Courtesy © Compton Verney. Photo: Jamie Woodley.

Attracted to the unnatural intensity of artificial hues, Batchelor responds to colour as it is experienced in the city. His best-known series, *I Love King's Cross* and *King's Cross Loves Me* (1997–2009), sees acrylic panels painted with bright enamel fixed to small dollies of the sort commonly used in warehouses and factories. These monochromes on wheels, which can be arranged in endless configurations, gently prod at the formal reductionism of late modernism while referencing the industrial production of modern pigments. There is also the suggestion of motion, which is subtly echoed elsewhere by the large balls of scrap computer cable in *Dog Days* (2006–12), a series of coloured spheres that evoke lightning speed data transfer and the millions of digitally generated colours that fill our screens in an increasingly interconnected world.



David Batchelor, *Colour Is*, 2022. Installation view. Courtesy © Compton Verney. Photo: Jamie Woodley.

Synthetic household paint is the main ingredient of *Colour Chart* paintings. Each one is made by pouring the sticky substance on to a white panel to form an imperfect ovoid: then, while the painting is still wet, it is gently tilted to encourage the formation of wrinkled patterns. To these intense hits of colour, Batchelor adds rectangular plinth-like bases, giving them an appearance more like proposals for improbable sculptures than hard-edged abstractions. In this, they are echoed by the artist's *Concretos* sculptures, in which small blocks of concrete become supports for a motley collection of vividly coloured found objects. The earliest *Concretos* feature shards of coloured glass, an alluring yet slightly menacing material that has since given way to studio leftovers, Perspex offcuts, assorted stationery and sundry bric-a-brac.



David Batchelor, *Colour Is*, 2022. Installation view. Courtesy © Compton Verney. Photo: Jamie Woodley.

If Batchelor's *Concretos* have a celebratory air, this is even more evident in the larger *Inter-Concretos* (2019 – ongoing), in which shards of acid-hued Perspex explode from raw concrete blocks. Batchelor likens their jagged, patterned forms to artificial floral bouquets, but they rather evoke fizzing roman candles or birthday cake sparklers. Similarly cheery are the *Covid Variation* paintings, though on closer inspection these felt-tip-hued compositions of zigzagging lines speak to the context of their making. Painted with thin, watery paint and looking like tentative Frank Stellas, their unfinished, even fragile, quality reflects the uncertainty and anxiety of the pandemic. Conversely, the enormous *Corona Shuffle 10* (2022) displays more confidence; its repeating patterns of black and coloured isosceles triangles bringing to mind the hard-edge abstractions of Karl Benjamin as well as the monotony of lockdown.



David Batchelor, *Corona Shuffle 10*, 2022. Courtesy © the artist and Compton Verney.

Batchelor's Chromodisc is one of several works the artist has made with illuminated colour. Another is *Magic Hour* (2004/7), which suffuses a darkened room with a vivid cloud of rainbow light. Inspired by London's streets after dark, the sculpture comprises an irregular grid of salvaged commercial lightboxes, each one overlaid with a differently coloured acrylic sheet and turned to face the wall. Standing as a metaphor for the contradictory character of city life – at once glitzy and seamy – the work evokes the colourful signage of city shops, takeaways and bars, contrasting seductive reflected light with the dull mass of wires and electronics that usually remain hidden from view, but here become an important formal element.



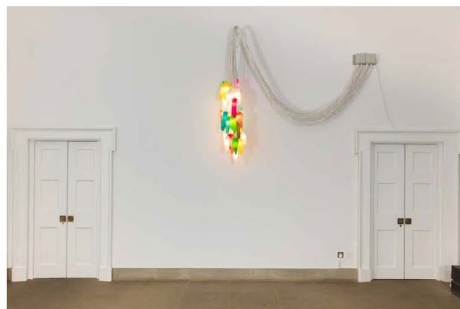
David Batchelor, *Magic Hour*, 2004-07. Found steel and aluminium light boxes, found steel support. Courtesy © the artist and Compton Verney.

Sometimes, it is the absence of colour that excites Batchelor's eye, such as in his ongoing series of *Found Monochromes* (1997 – present), which track the enduring presence of empty billboards, sun-bleached posters, blank signs and other white voids in the city. Though stemming from a concern with abstract art's relationship to modernity, the growing collection of photographs (presented here as a two-channel video) reveals an interest in the built environment's manifold colours, textures and structures. Each monochrome is framed by its immediate context, foregrounding its relationship to the urban setting, and drawing attention to the physical qualities of gratings, windows, fences, brick walls and the like.



David Batchelor, *Colour Is*, 2022. Installation view. Courtesy © Compton Verney. Photo: Jamie Woodley.

The decision to conclude the exhibition with a largely achromatic selection of early work is curious for an artist obsessed with colour. Taking us back in time, the final room covers the period from 1980 to 1997 and features pen and ink drawings based on old master paintings, pared-down abstractions on asymmetrical canvases, and a series of abnormally shaped picture frames. Eclipsing almost everything else in the room with a shock of pink is *Shelf-Like 06* (1997), a simple collection of fluorescent panels resting on a long, thin shelf. The juxtaposition allows connections to be made between Batchelor's different modes of working, both here and across the exhibition. Colour might be the headline at Compton Verney, but beneath this lies a fascination with the overlooked, the under-appreciated and the possibilities of abstract art as it pertains to quotidian experience.



David Batchelor, *Colour Is*, 2022. Installation view. Courtesy © Compton Verney. Photo: Jamie Woodley.

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★★★★★

The Observer

Review

Luke Jerram: Crossings; David Batchelor: Colour Is - review

Compton Verney, Warwickshire

The estate's lake hosts an audio boating experience that is at once tranquil and shattering. Indoors, a retrospective of the Scottish artist is a riot of repurposed colour



Kate Kellaway

Sun 14 Aug 2022 13:00 BST

The great 18th-century English landscape gardener Lancelot “Capability” Brown acquired his can-do nickname because he used frequently to speak of what he called the “capabilities” of the land of his aristocratic employers and could tell them of the transformations promised. Walking through his parkland at Compton Verney, a Robert Adam house in Warwickshire - now an art gallery - the lake is indolently still as if it knew better than to stir in the summer heat, and it’s tempting to imagine how gratified its creator would be by **Crossings** and the beautiful way in which multidisciplinary artist Luke Jerram, in collaboration with Radio 4 producer Julian May, has identified new capability within the landscape.

Nine rowing boats, freshly painted, wait by the water’s edge. There is a list of 10 stories - a multifarious anthology, mostly about journeying by boat on water - on a board on the bank. Each story is given a couple of sentences - you have to choose just one. You then take out a boat with your story (the boats are equipped with speakers and can accommodate four people at most). Each story lasts 20 minutes and the outing takes half an hour. Row, row, row your boat gently across the ... I listen to the testimony of gallant Iranian Mana Azarish, who, aged 13, when her father’s courage failed him, guided a boat of refugees across the Channel. She was as lost as she was brave: “How do I know the boat is going the right direction?” she asked. She was told to follow a star - a biblical instruction.

/// **Crossings revives the miracle of being**

I love the sound of her voice, its light and warmth. She sounds untraumatised. But what are you to feel about her terrifying ordeal as you idly pull on the oars? I am accompanied by a cluster of

**alive at all – of
staying afloat**

dragonflies and try carefully to avoid a swan preening itself with standoffish – swim-offish – grace. Across the lawn is the becalmed house with its magnificently restored Adam facade and stone the colour of milky tea. There are oaks and cedars and hopeful new plantings. On a bridge spanning the lake, four sphinxes keep watch. The tranquillity is profound. How does this English idyll connect with remembered hell? What does it make you feel? A lazy schadenfreude? An I'm-all-right-Jack complacency? Or, more wholesomely, an enhanced gratitude for an English summer's day? I step out of the boat undecided yet delighted by the rarity of reverie, the way the peace of the lake allows for the driftwood of thought. Half an hour feels tantalisingly short.

I'm curious about the other stories on offer, and it turns out to be possible to listen to an edited selection at an audio post (good tip for landlubbers). But it's only once I've sampled the stories in full (this can be done at Compton Verney's welcome centre) that I understand the meticulous variety and scope of the project. It makes you think that each of our stories is a vessel of sorts. I am especially moved by Currach, a lyrical account by three women of building a boat on the west coast of Ireland, in memory of a sister and friend – an act of faith and continuing life. Fishing With Cormorants is fascinating, too – at once admirable and sinister – an account of how these wild birds are used to fish in Japan; the ancient tradition of *ukai*. I relished the obsessive quality of Richard King's cormorant knowledge and the accompanying recitation, by Togo Igawa, of austere haikus about cormorant fishing – Japanese nocturnes.



📍 Luke Jerram at Compton Verney. Photograph: Paul Quezada-Neiman/Alamy

But standing out from the crowd for sheer charm is Mr Fan (I am now a fan), a retired barber from Greenwich who once cut the hair of Julian May and his sons. One of the Vietnamese boat people, he set off in 1975 with his family in a boat none of them knew how to sail. Their journey to Hong Kong should have taken a week but lasted three months. As they sighted the skyscrapers of Hong Kong, a typhoon blew them back, as in a nightmare, to Vietnam. Mr Fan punctuates his desperate story with bursts of cheery laughter. He expresses gratitude towards England. Against the odds, his favourite word would seem to be “lucky”.

Crossings makes you register keenly the difference between stepping into a boat on a whim and out of direst need. There is another important difference, too, between a necessary journey and a self-sought endurance test. Seb Coulthard, out of heroism or insane folly (you decide), underwent a freezing, 800-mile journey, in competition with the elements, to sample what Ernest Shackleton endured sailing from Antarctica to South Georgia to rescue stranded colleagues.

There is, I confess, a satisfaction to listening to these shattering, drenching, epic voyages within dry, safe, self-contained 20-minute slots. But what also intrigues, once Coulthard's punishing report of his experience is done, is his account of returning home. He is staggered by the choices in the supermarket – the bewildering excess. Why so many versions of cornflakes? And if there is a shared message in these narratives, it is to have a rethink about what one needs. *Crossings* revives the miracle of being alive at all – of staying afloat.



📍 'Strange fruit on vines of cable': David Batchelor's *Candela* (2002) at Compton Verney.
Photograph by Jamie Woodley © Compton Verney

There is an obvious connection between Luke Jerram's vision and that of **Colour Is**, a show by the Scottish artist [David Batchelor](#), inside the house at Compton Verney. Jo Royle is the link: she [skipped the Plastiki](#), a boat constructed from 12,500 recycled two-litre plastic bottles, from San Francisco to Sydney to draw attention to plastic in the oceans. Hanging within Compton Verney's grand entrance hall, instead of the expected chandelier, is *Candela* (2002) - a bunch of lights inside plastic bleach bottles like strange fruit on vines of cable: bright green, blue and chilli-pepper red. This is a show of colourful repurposing and the first large-scale survey of Batchelor's work: 40 years of painting, drawing, sculpture, photography, animation and tapestry. It is a unified adventure in which anything might turn out to be ornamental and playfully recycled - especially objects that never asked to be seen.

The most appealing - because beautiful - exhibit is *Concreto* (one of several related pieces): three shelves - like tiered mantelpieces. These display miscellaneous festive objects: paint lids, a bottle-brush, Mexican beads - a party to meet and greet the eye. The piece was inspired by walls topped with shards of turquoise glass seen in Sicily. The concrete works as a base for colours of Matisse-like gaiety. Batchelor's quest to make something out of (almost) nothing is a delight. It is highly skilled yet happy-go-lucky - as Mr Fan would surely agree.

Star ratings (out of five)

Luke Jerram: Crossings ★★★★★

David Batchelor: Colour Is ★★★★★

[Luke Jerram: Crossings](#) and [David Batchelor: Colour Is](#) are at Compton Verney, Warwickshire, until 4 September and 2 October respectively

theguardian

Bright lights and a bidet chandelier: Iran gets a blast of shocking colour

Haleh Anvari

How will British 'colour activist' David Batchelor go down in a country where vibrant hues are all but banned? Will his Javanese light land him in trouble?

Wednesday 15 February 2017 16.07 GMT

In the early 1990s, visitors to Iran would have been struck by the country's lack of vibrant colour. Eight years of war, on top of a revolutionary ideology that regarded individual expression as frivolous, had obliterated it from the streets. The palette of the public space was dominated by dark shades of brown, grey and navy blue, interspersed with the prominent black chadors of the women.

In most religions, white is the colour of purity, cleanliness and virtue. But in Iran, it was black that symbolised righteousness. This was especially ironic given that, before the revolution, devout Iranian women would wear light, flowery chadors to step out of their homes. Where did the colour go in Iran? And where did black come from?

These questions motivated my own staged photographs of unusually colourful chadors in 2005, as I sought to investigate the demise of the flowery ones worn by my aunt and grandmother as I was growing up in pre-revolution Iran.

I found some answers in David Batchelor's book Chromophobia, in which the British artist traces the trajectory of highbrow hostility to colour in western thought. Colour, he writes, is regarded either as the "property of some foreign body, usually the feminine, the oriental, the primitive, the infantile, the vulgar, the queer or the pathological ... or relegated to the superficial, the supplementary, the inessential or the cosmetic".

Take out the oriental and the primitive and this could easily be a manifesto for revolutionary Islamic Iran in its early years, where the only colour in the country was found in the murals memorialising revolutionary heroes and martyrs of the war with neighbouring Iraq.

So I was thrilled to hear about Batchelor's solo show in Tehran's Ab-Anbar Gallery, a stone's throw from Revolution Avenue. Spanning the past 20 years, 120 works offer Tehranis a taste of his fascination with colour. First, there were what he calls his doodles: an installation of 90 drawings, creating a wild collage of colours.

In a room opposite, Batchelor's "poured" paintings show how the doodles develop into larger pieces. Between these and his glowsticks - digitally tuned colour LEDs held in geometric steel frames - he plays around with rigid ideas of two and three dimensions. His paintings all include a black rectangle at the bottom channelling a plinth, while his light installations are hung flat to be looked at as canvasses.

The poured paintings can take six months to dry, resulting in a wonder of random texturing as the surface of the thick paint contracts. The resulting patterns are a vibrant testament to the existence of underlying order in chaos.

Curator Leyla Fakhr had two things in mind when she decided to bring Batchelor's work here: "Tehran is devoid of colour during the day, with pollution and dust everywhere, but at night it is brought to life with an increasing amount of synthetic colours." She is pointing to the recent craze for neon lights decorating the streets and buildings of Tehran. "I also felt an exhibition that was purely concerned with colour and abstraction would be interesting in a place accustomed to imbuing meaning to everything."



Between the four rooms of art, a chandelier hangs in the stairwell. It was made in situ using a local found object, the *aftabeh*, a plastic pitcher used for personal hygiene in Iranian toilets. A number of them have been strung upside-down together, their spouts and handles lit up from within, providing a cascade of translucent pinks and blues.

In the cafe upstairs, a prominent Iranian artist and an art critic are debating this chandelier. Was it exhibiting orientalist, or at least touristic, tendencies? Given the cultural connotations of this object for the Iranian viewer, can it exist purely as form without any meaning being attached? Found object yes, but why a foul object? Or does such a reaction merely highlight the sensitivities of Iranians, pained at being seen as backward? One could almost hear the subliminal question: which is more modern - a washed arse or a wiped arse?



"I always look for the least valued object" ... Batchelor at the Tehran gallery. Photograph: Courtesy: Ab-Anbar Gallery





Tipping point ... the bidet chandelier. Photograph: Courtesy: Ab-Anbar Gallery

In fact Batchelor, who calls himself a “colour activist”, didn’t know what an *aftabeh* was for when he spotted one in the *Isfahan* bazaar on his research trip last year. But once he found out, he took pleasure in using it so humorously. “I always look for the least valued elements,” he says. “I think one of the purposes of art throughout the 20th century was to draw attention to that which is overlooked.” His choice of colours were limited to what was available. “I wanted yellows and greens but the supplier said pinks and blues were this year’s colours.”

The truth is that little is ever stripped of wider meaning in Iran. Iranians are programmed to read between the lines, to find coded meaning in the nooks and crannies of life. This is, after all, the land of Hafez and Rumi, the mystic poets revered as seers because of their mastery of multi-layered conceits. The feverish fondness for [conceptual art in recent decades](#) in Iran reflects the need to pose oblique questions, in many instances by drawing attention to what is disregarded. In this, Iranians feel their art to be as modern as

any on offer.

Batchelor, on the other hand, is clear where his preoccupation with colour comes from: it’s a reaction to its absence in the aftermath of conceptual art in the west, which he thinks favours form above all else. The 51-year-old Dundonian believes there’s a longstanding aversion towards colour that is manifested in the reverence for, and the supremacy of, white in western modernist writings.

“There is a kind of white that repels everything that is inferior to it,” he says, “and that is almost everything. There is a kind of white that is not created by bleach but that itself is bleach.” As an Iranian, I find it hard not to see this as a metaphor for what is happening in western politics today. And its parallel here at home, in the venerated superiority of black.



Shattered ... a 'concreto' sculpture. Photograph: Courtesy: Ab-Anbar Gallery

Could this suspicion of colour have permeated Iranian lives through our exposure to the west? Beneath the hijab, the Iranian woman is an [ardent follower of the diktats of western fashion](#) forecasters. Wearing colour is left to the women of the diminishing nomadic tribes unless it is sashayed on a catwalk in Paris. The urbane and the modern would rather not be associated with their rich heritage of colour, neither in attire nor in their décor choices.

The western aversion to colour can be attributed to a post-Enlightenment need for reason and secular agency in societies that eventually came to champion the freedom apparently signified by white. In Iran, black became the colour for dissolving impulses of individuality in the group. If lack of colour is an affectation of western modernity, how did it become emblematic of rejecting western values here in Iran?

Batchelor is aware of the complex relationship western religions have with colour, from Catholicism’s love of it to puritanical rejection. But he consciously avoids commenting on social issues, which he feels are articulated more elegantly elsewhere. How will Iranian audiences react to his work? I hear a young visitor looking at the bidet chandelier in glee and saying: “I never realised the *aftabeh* could be so classy.”

● [Chromatology is at Ab-Anbar Gallery, Tehran, until 3 March](#)

HANVARI, Hale. “Bright lights and a bidet chandelier: Iran gets a blast of shocking colour.” *The Guardian*. 15/02/2017. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/artand-design/2017/feb/15/david-batchelor-iran-colour-exhibition-chromatology>

Chromophobia

Robert Barry | Reviews | 03 August 2015



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Logging onto a wireless network near Davide Balula's wall-mounted sculpture *Coloring the Wi-Fi (with Dark Green)* (2015), you find yourself automatically redirected to a mysterious new address. The whole page is a monochrome dark cadmium-green. In the top left corner, words in small type identify your new location: 'Davide Balula, *Coloring a Wi-fi Network (with Dark Green)*, 2014'. In the context of this exhibition, the webpage offers the visitor practically the only glimpse of pigment in what would otherwise be an almost entirely black-and-white world. Significantly, even this colour exists only virtually, hovering in a locative netspace, at once inside and outside the gallery walls.

Taking its title from David Batchelor's 2000 book of the same name, *Chromophobia* decks the white walls of Gagosian's Geneva space with yet more white, along with the occasional shade of grey. 'Since Antiquity,' writes Batchelor, 'colour has been systematically marginalized, reviled, diminished and degraded.' This antipathy the Scottish artist and writer names 'chromophobia'. Surveying the history of art and literature, he sees colour 'routinely excluded from the higher concerns of the Mind'. When art looks to the very essence of things, it invariably does so in black-and-white.

So here Sterling Ruby's *Stove 3* (2013) abstracts its subject to a series of simple shapes in all-matte black as if to grasp at the Platonic ideal of a stove, only reachable once purged of hue. Canvases by Dadamaino (*Volume*, 1959) and Wyatt Kahn (*Eh-Em*, 2012), each in their different ways, exhibit less their own painted surface (or in the latter case, unpainted surface) than the holes they delimit and encircle, gesturing towards some metaphysical void at the centre of the subject. And after all, what better defines that 'pure... generalized white' (for Batchelor, 'essentially a Western problem') than the cold, hard semiotic vacuum of gallery walls?

But in Robert Ryman's *Untitled, Bruxelles* (1974), in which acrylic paint is applied to a black vinyl panel, a different kind of whiteness is broached. As Batchelor notes in the book, Ryman's whites are 'specific': not pure, not abstract. They do not 'involve or imply the suppression of colour'. Likewise, in Piero Manzoni's *Achrome* (1958) we see less the whiteness of the canvas, more the folds across its centre, creating zones of shadow and impurity. Another work of Balula's, *Artificially Aged Painting (Wet, Dry, Wet, Dry, Wet Dry)* (2014), with its cracked and yellowing surface, introduces corruption into the very white surface that has historically stood as a bulwark against the debasements of colour.

Against what he regards as the chromophobic colourlessness of much contemporary conceptual art, Batchelor trumpets an 'impurism' that draws on the 'commercial and contingent' tones of Pop and Minimalism, pushing them to a point of excess. Few contemporary artists represent this impurism better than Blair Thurman. The latticed neon of his *Cool White Frame II* (2015) takes a shape at once singular and loaded with personal meanings; its referent feels familiar but unplaceable, like something glimpsed in a dream. Like the remnants of a dream upon waking, the fluorescent tubes spill light onto the surrounding surfaces, adulterating the sheen of the gallery walls. In such ways, writes Batchelor, 'the isolation of local colours is countered and put into reverse. Colour begins to regain its excessiveness.'

This article was first published in the April 2015 issue.

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IN THE STUDIO

DAVID BATCHELOR UNPLUGGED

*He's celebrated for his vast electric light works, but Batchelor's core concern is colour. Whilst adding the final touches to his latest show, *Unplugged*, he told Art World why he's "gone acoustic" – and cut his link with the mains*

INTERVIEW: Martin Holman
STUDIO PHOTOS: Dave Cowlard



"When I'm described as a 'colourist' I shiver, because the term is associated with painters of nature, which is nothing to do with me. Our experience of colour has been transformed in the past 100 years"



1 *Candela 7* (2006), detail, 450 plastic bottles, low energy lamps, cable, dimensions variable

2 *Barrier* (2002), found lightboxes, acrylic sheet, vinyl, fluorescent light, plugboards, cable, 285 x 267 x 25cm

3 *I Love King's Cross and King's Cross Loves Me, 1* (1997), found objects, acrylic sheet, enamel paint, dimensions variable

Opposite: Batchelor's studio desk

Since the mid-1990s David Batchelor's work has been concerned with colour: the intense, shiny, coarse tones – damaged and dirty – redolent of the city, and just as synthetic.

"When I'm described as a 'colourist' I shiver because the term is associated with painters of nature, which is nothing to do with me," Batchelor says. "Our experience of colour has been transformed in the past 100 years primarily through electrification and petrochemicals. That transformation interests me."

This interest resulted in his celebrated 3D works of brightly painted façades, contrasting with their reverse support structures, and in shelf-like arrangements of flat perspex panels featuring a single colour. Trays of colour fixed to low trolleys resembled horizontal monochrome paintings on wheels, and when he scavenged some discarded light boxes and cleaned them up, panels were fitted and wired to spill electric colour into a room like illuminated high street signage at night.

The work rose from the floor, barricaded doorways, leant against walls and hung overhead to fulfil the artist's objective – the repatriation of colour to the heart of life experience. But Batchelor recently became aware that he was being perceived as a maker of "light work" so, commissioned by Edinburgh University to make a new, site-specific work for their Talbot Rice Gallery, he decided to pull the plug. The cabling in this exhibition had no link with the mains: it was coiled into a sphere and presented as a sculptural object. This show was strictly Unplugged. "This is my acoustic set," he said. "No electrics."

The allusion to music is not accidental. Batchelor listens to music in his studio, a lot. And not as background noise but as a serious presence, because Batchelor collects, and from what he collects, he builds, tossing back small fry once he has sieved its possible value through his interrogative mind. (Asked if he keeps up to date with current music trends, the 52-year-old replies that his studio assistants, all in their 20s and 30s, bring him new sounds to listen to. In return he plays them "old stuff" from the CDs neatly shelved above his desk – early Bob Dylan, Neil Young, The Band, Velvet Underground, Leonard Cohen.)

This urge to collect goes for the ephemera of daily life as well as music. What he likes is imported, stored, retrieved and recycled, and in that way remains current. An artist who relies on the ready-made, the discarded and the pre-used appraises nothing as automatically a throwaway. "What you throw away can be more interesting than what you keep," he argues.

The plastic stuff that Batchelor began accumulating 18 months ago for his Edinburgh show – brushes (for hair,

for dishes, for the sink), grips (for hair, for shelving), combs (for hair), as well as mirrors, knives, spoons, forks – was sourced from high street pound shops. His favourites were the ones around Bethnal Green (not far from his east London studio), Holloway (near where he used to get his car fixed, before it was stolen), as well as Glasgow and Edinburgh where he was working. He often bought in bulk, much to the puzzlement of the shop assistants. "I was hesitant about saying I was an artist, so I explained that I worked for an artist who used these things," he says, thereby leaving his suppliers only a little wiser but often £60 richer. These transactions could bring out a trader's entire family to wave this customer farewell (or, they hoped, au revoir).

As his unusual preoccupation became known, students at the Royal College of Art – where he is senior tutor in Critical Theory – augmented his stock with their own finds, including plastic cutlery from the Sharjah Biennial, which some had recently visited.

Other offerings from exotic locations reinforced what Batchelor had already realised: that, in whatever city they were purchased, the pegs or combs had a common place of origin – China – and were sold pre-eminently by entrepreneurial Asians. The use of these objects in Batchelor's work points to today's global economic exchange, and how one society's demands are supplied by another which is itself aspiring to the lifestyles of its products' consumers.

Batchelor began to play with these improbable materials in his studio, "an interesting place where you are able to follow up the consequences of your mistakes". Several small tabletop constructions, like the toy cranes, were one early result. Questions followed, as happens in experiments, the most important being how to enlarge these structures. The solution arrived when Batchelor fastened his plastic treasures to columns of Dexion, the lightweight slotted metal construction system for racking and industrial shelving that is, in Batchelor's words, "such beautiful stuff", and often featured in his earlier walls and towers of light boxes.

What finally emerged were the 23 pillars that formed the heart of the Unplugged exhibition: pylons bristling with plastic that were severely monochrome alongside others that were brazenly kaleidoscopic: yellow and blue, orange and black, white and grey, magenta and several shades of green and turquoise.

A thread running through Batchelor's work is connectivity: linkages branch into networks like pegs on a steel armature. Batchelor unfolds possibilities around

"I am aware of collage and montage as part of what I do, and that my work is indebted to painting more than sculpture ... but since Picasso, artists have been drawn to both"



his core concern with colour: from shape to colour to line; between front and back, frame and border, society and artistic practice, and between art and life. His objects are wired into a realisation that our visual experiences can be compellingly continuous and entwined.

With that contention lies further allusion. It may help to picture his pillars as the communications masts that now cluster on city roofs more commonly than birds, frayed-edged electronics that invisibly listen, receive and relay. Like them, Batchelor's work sustains conversations; what artists and writers like to describe as "dialogues" with real and theoretical events and ideas.



He is averse to concealing the how and why in the appearance of the objects he makes. Cabling, bolts and armatures remain visible, and the strange wonder of the pillars is nourished by the sheer simplicity of clipping, bolting and fixing.

Nor does he hide references to other art – Warhol's brilliant off-register colours, perhaps, or the painting-reliefs and radical constructivism of revolution-era Russian artist Vladimir Tatlin.

Batchelor keeps the historical avant-garde in his sights (as many artists do), both respectfully and cheekily, but never overbearingly. The resonance of these references is enhanced less by his modest description of himself as "someone who once made paintings" than by his continuing role as a writer and graduate of Birmingham's interdisciplinary Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies. The combination is forceful: the CCCS, for instance, nurtured a methodology that evaluated the effects and interpretations of diverse elements such as Marxism, structuralism and sociology. But when references to Joseph Beuys, Dan Flavin, Donald Judd and André Cadere infiltrate Batchelor's objects, they appear in a natural, unselfconscious way.

Informed by history and philosophy as much as by experiment, his work quotes confidently from early modernist practice. Batchelor has matured into an artist with his own voice, one who forges his own solutions to the problems each work poses. The liberation in finding, combining and making is his paramount activity.

Colour emerges as his agent for transcending the banal functions of his frugal materials. Batchelor's confidence with his subject allows him to leave the pegs, combs and mirrors alone as vehicles for colour. The effort reflects his desire to avoid working with the materials we expect from an artist, an especially hard condition in an era of intense heterogeneity. His drawings, for example, are made on card or on lined, squared or graph paper bought in stationers' shops and newsagents.

Hitherto a studio resource shown only to fellow artists and friends, the 50 drawings shown in Edinburgh, dating from 1999 to the present, are the first he has exhibited in public.

Batchelor has always been absorbed by drawing – an activity which allows him to swap the practicality of construction for the wilder shores of inventing fantasy sculpture – and writing notes about work he may never make. Drawings, classified and stored in a plan chest, also foster the continual review of ideas he has not followed through. "There are always loose ends; drawing is a way of remembering those loose ends," he says.

Also a deviation from artistic practice is Batchelor's role as orchestrator rather than composer. The musical terminology is apposite since Batchelor insists that the notion of "composition" did not apply to the pillars; his part was to frame his agglomerations and to add to, shape and edit them. That the pillars still resonate to the language of painting, arguably the strongest discourse in his work, highlights Batchelor's perspective on his own and many contemporaries' practice.

Just as his plugged-in light boxes parley with thoughts of the dissonant rhythmic hues of Times Square and Barnett Newman's painted expanses that inspired him as a young man visiting New York, so the individual modules in Unplugged build up to imply a colour mosaic of marks. "I am aware of collage and montage as part of what I do, and that my work is indebted to painting more than sculpture," he comments. "It's 3D now and so resembles sculpture, but since Picasso artists have been drawn to both and avoided both simultaneously. I do not consider myself medium-bound."

Four years ago Batchelor made a tree, and planted it on London's South Bank near City Hall. Sitting on a slender stalk was its bloated green canopy, standing between buildings, it shone happily. Only, of course, it wasn't a tree: overtly fabricated in steel and plastic, it was just as credibly a lollipop. But observing this work by an artist of the urban condition reminded me of a passage, arguably rose-tinted, that Richard Hoggart – coincidentally the founder of Birmingham's CCCS – wrote in his 1957 book *The Uses of Literacy*, about working-class community life. "Most absorbing of all to a boy are the games of the street, with the lamp-post taking the place of the tree on the village green." Simultaneously frivolous and essential, that is how we live in the city.

David Batchelor's new work will be showing at Wilkinson Gallery, London, from October; www.wilkinsongallery.com

1 Pillar drawing, 06 (2007), ink and highlighter pen on lined paper, 200 x 126 mm

2, 3 Unplugged (2007), installation views, Tallbot Rice Gallery, Edinburgh

Opposite: Details from David Batchelor's studio, July 2007, as he prepared for the Unplugged show

Curriculum Vitae

David Batchelor

Born in Dundee, Scotland in 1955

Education

- 1975 Foundation Course, Watford College of Art
1978 BA (Hons) Fine Art, Trent Polytechnic, Nottingham
1980 MA Cultural Studies, Centre of Contemporary Cultural Studies, University of Birmingham

Selected Solo Exhibitions

- 2024 *New Skin for the Old Ceremony*, Cecilia Brunson Projects, London, UK
2024 *Transparent Things*, Galeria Leme, Sao Paulo
2023 *I-Cons and Ex-Cons*, Kestle Barton, Cornwall, UK
2022 *Disco Mecanique*, Salisbury Cathedral, Salisbury, UK
2022 *Colour Is*, Compton Verney, Warwickshire, UK
2022 *David Batchelor | Alfredo Volpi*, Cecilia Brunson Projects, London, UK
2021 *Found Monochromes*, HOP Projects, Folkestone, UK
2019 *My Own Private Bauhaus*, Ingleby, Edinburgh, UK
2018 *Psychogeometry 2*, Site Eight, Melbourne, Australia
2018 *Colour Is*, Margaret Lawrence Gallery, University of Melbourne, Melbourne, Australia
2017 *Psychogeometry*, Matt's Gallery London, UK
2017 *Chromatology*, Ab-Anbar, Tehran, Iran
2016 *Reef*, Handel Street Projects, London, UK
2016 *Glowsticks*, Galeria Leme, São Paulo, Brazil
2015 *Flatlands Remix*, Virginia Commonwealth University in Qatar, Doha, Qatar, in association with the British Council
2014 *Concretos*, Roche Court, New Art Centre, Salisbury, UK
2014 *Monochrome Archive 1997-2015*, Whitechapel Gallery, London, UK
2013 *Parede por Parede (Wall to Wall)*, Centro Universitário Maria Antonia, São Paulo, Brazil
2013 *Flatlands*, Fruitmarket Gallery, Edinburgh, UK, touring to Spike Island, Bristol, UK
2012 *Magic Hour*, Gemeentemuseum, The Hague, Netherlands
2012 *Brighton-Palermo ReMix*, Brighton Festival, Brighton, UK
2012 *HOUSE 2012*, The Regency Town House, Hove, UK
2012 *Slugfest*, Leme Gallery, São Paulo, Brazil
2012 *Magic Pavement*, Pavement Gallery, Manchester, UK
2011 *2D3D: David Batchelor*, Karsten Schubert, London, UK
2010 *Big Rock Candy Fountain*, Archway tube station, London, UK
2010 *Chromophilia*, Paco Imperial, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil
2008 *Backlights*, Galeria Leme, Sao Paulo, Brazil
2007 *Unplugged*, Talbot Rice Gallery, University of Edinburgh, UK
2007 *Unplugged (Remix)* Wilkinson Gallery, London, UK
2006 *Candela V & VI*, Ingleby Gallery (off-site) Old Royal High School, Edinburgh, UK
2006 *Candela 7/450 (For the Death Star)*, Victorian Palmhouse, Royal Botanic Garden, Edinburgh, UK
2006 Wilkinson Gallery, London, UK
2004 *Shiny Dirty*, Ikon Gallery, Birmingham, UK

- 2003 *Spectrum of Hackney Road*, Wilkinson Gallery, London, UK
- 2002 *Barrier, 38 Langham Street*, London, UK
- 2001 *Shiny Dirty*, Habitat, London, UK
- 2000 *Electric Colour Tower*, Sadlers Wells Theatre, London, UK
- 2000 *Apocalypstick*, Anthony Wilkinson Gallery, London, UK
- 1998 *Monochromobiles*, The Economist Plaza, London, UK
- 1997 *Shelf-Like, Frame-Like, Note-Like*, Byam Shaw School of Art, London, UK
- 1997 *Polymonochromes*, Henry Moore Institute, Leeds, UK
- 1996 *Polymonochrome Drawings*, Soho House, London, UK
- 1995 *Serial Colour*, Curtain Road Arts, London, UK

Selected Group Exhibitions

- 2023 *DIE WAT SPAART, DIE WAT HEEFT*, Galerie Robert Drees, Hannover, Germany
- 2023 *Colours in the Air* (with Richard Deacon), Handel Street Projects, London, UK
- 2023 *Modern and Contemporary*, Waddington Custot, London, UK
- 2022 *Hello MONO-HA!* White Conduit Projects, London, UK
- 2022 *Chromophilia*, Hauser and Wirth, Zurich, Switzerland
- 2022 *Art is the Antidote*, Museum Voorlinden, Wassenaar, Netherlands
- 2021 *Light: Works from Tate's Collection*, Musuem of Art Pudong, Shanghai, China
- 2021 *House Share*, Firstsite, Colchester, UK
- 2021 *Colour Space*, Galleria Mucciaccia, Rome, Italy
- 2020 *Reduct: Abstraction and Geometry in Contemporary Scottish Art*, Royal Scottish Academy, Edinburgh, UK
- 2020 *Shadows and Light*, Southampton City Art Gallery, Southampton, UK
- 2020 *Summer Exhibition*, Curated by Jane and Louise Wilson, Royal Academy, London, UK
- 2019 *Objects of Wonder: British Sculptures from 1950s - present*, Palais Populaire, Berlin, Germany
- 2018 *The Monochrome: New Beginnings*, JPNF Museum, Dubai, UAE
- 2018 *Criminal Ornamentation*, Curated by Yinka Shonibare, Attenborough Arts Centre, University of Leicester, UK
- 2018 *A Certain Darkness*, CaixaForum, Barcelona, Spain
- 2018 *Summer Exhibition*, Curated by Grayson Perry, Royal Academy, London, UK
- 2018 *The Everyday and Extraordinary*, Birmingham Museums and Art Gallery, Birmingham, UK
- 2018 *Monochrome: Empty and Full*, Margaret Lawrence Gallery, University of Melbourne, Australia
- 2018 *Sette Opere per la Misericordia*, Chiesa del Pio Monte della Misericordia, Naples, Italy
- 2017 *Ingleby Gallery Presents*, Fitzrovia Chapel, London, UK
- 2017 *Totem: Spirit Beings & Sacred Objects*, Saatchi Gallery, London, UK
- 2017 *Purity is a Myth*, Curated by Michael Asbury, Roesler Hotel, São Paulo, Brazil
- 2017 *Between Poles and Tides*, Talbot Rice Gallery, Edinburgh, UK
- 2016 *Night in the Museum*, The Gas Hall, Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery, Birmingham, UK
- 2016 *Three Triptychs*, Intra Gallery, Naples, Italy
- 2016 *Night in the Museum*, Longside Gallery, Yorkshire Sculpture Park, UK
- 2016 *Seeing Round Corners*, Turner Contemporary, Margate, UK
- 2016 *Light Show*, CorpArtes, Santiago, Chile
- 2016 *FOUND*, The Foundling Museum, London, UK
- 2015 *Light Show*, Sharjah Art Foundation, UAE
- 2015 *Sprayed*, Gagosian Gallery, London, UK
- 2015 *Light Show*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney, Australia
- 2015 *Adventures of the Black Square: Abstract Art and Society 1915–2015*, Whitechapel Gallery, London, UK

2014 *Light Show*, Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki, Auckland, New Zealand

2014 *Black and White*, Royal Academy summer Exhibition, London, UK

2014 *50 Years On: The Centre of contemporary Cultural Studies*, MAC Birmingham, UK

2014 *Somewhat Abstract*, Nottingham Contemporary, UK

2014 *Uniquo*, Galeria Carbono, São Paulo, Brazil

2014 *Abstract Drawing*, The Drawing Room, London, UK

2013 *White*, Nederlands Fotomuseum, Rotterdam, Netherlands

2013 *Fragile*, Isola di San Maggiore, Venice, Italy

2013 *Light Show*, Hayward Gallery, London, UK

2012 *Luz na Cidade*, various venues, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

2012 *Royal Academy Summer Exhibition*, Royal Academy, London, UK

2011 *Richard Of York Gave Battle In Vain*, Whitechapel Gallery, London, UK

2011 *The Shape of Things to Come*, Saatchi Gallery, London, UK

2011 *A Painting Show*, Autocenter, Berlin, Germany

2010 *Kupferstichkabinett: Between Thought and Action*, White Cube, London, UK

2010 *Open Light in Private Spaces: Biennale fur Internationale Lichtkunst*, multiple venues, Unna, Germany

2010 *The Gathering*, Longside Gallery, Yorkshire Sculpture Park, UK

2010 *Party*, New Art Gallery, Walsall, UK

2009 *Color Chart: Reinventing Color, 1950 to Today*, Tate Liverpool, UK

2009 *Kaleidoscopic Revolver*, Hanjiyun Contemporary Space, Beijing, China

2008 *Sculpture from the Scrapyard*, Henry Moore Institute, Leeds, UK

2008 *Conversations*, Kettle's Yard, Cambridge, UK

2008 *Irony & Gesture*, Kukje Gallery, Seoul, South Korea

2008 *Folkestone Triennial*, various venues, Folkestone, UK

2008 *Color Chart: Reinventing Color, 1950 to Today*, Museum of Modern Art, New York, UK

2007 *David Batchelor & Nikolai Suetin*, Ingleby Gallery, Edinburgh, UK

2006 *A noir, E blanche, I rouge, U vert, O blue: Farben*, Kunstmuseum Magdeburg, Germany

2006 *Edinburgh Art Festival*, off-site projects at the Palm House, Botanic Gardens and Old School, Edinburgh, UK

2005 *Radiance*, Off-site projects in the Merchants' Quarter, Glasgow, UK

2005 *Double Meaning*, Galeria Leme, Sao Paulo, Brazil

2005 *Contrabandistas de Imágenes*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Santiago, Chile

2004 *26th Bienal de São Paulo*, Brazil

2004 *Sodium and Asphalt*, Museo Rufino Tamayo, Mexico City, Mexico

2003 *In Good Form: Recent Sculpture from the Arts Council Collection*, Longside Gallery, Yorkshire Sculpture Park, UK

2003 *Primary Colours*, City Gallery, Leicester, UK

2003 *Days Like These: Tate Triennial of Contemporary Art*, Tate Britain, London, UK

2002 *New Religious Art*, Liverpool Biennial, UK

2001 *Another Britannia*, Tecla Sala, Barcelona; Fundacion Marcelino Botin, Santander; Museo de la Pasion, Valladolid, Spain

2000 *British Art Show 5*, SNGMA, Edinburgh; City Art Gallery, Southampton; CVA, Cardiff; Ikon Gallery, Birmingham, UK

2000 *Fact and Value*, Charlottenberg Palace, Copenhagen, Denmark

2000 *Perfidy, Monastery of La Tourette*, Eveux, France; Kettles Yard, Cambridge, UK

1999 *POSTMARK: An Abstract Effect*, SITE Santa Fe, New Mexico, USA

1998 *Then and Now*, Lisson Gallery, London, UK

1997 *East International*, The Sainsbury Centre/Norwich School of Art, Norwich, UK

1996 *Station Transformation*, Central Bus Station, Tel Aviv, Israel

1993 *July*, Victoria Miro Gallery, London, UK

Commissions

- 2023 *Cloisterama*, site specific sculpture, Mijnkathedraal, Beringen, Belgium
- 2020 *Psychogeometry 3*, temporary site specific installation, Mecklenburgh Square Garden, London
- 2019 *King's Xmas*, site specific sculpture, Kings Cross Station, London, UK
- 2018 *Richard of York Gave Battle In Vain*, site specific sculpture, Eddington, Cambridge, UK
- 2018 *Homage to Doctor Mirabilis*, site specific sculpture, Westgate Centre, Oxford
- 2017 *Sixty Minute Spectrum*, chromatic clock for Hayward Gallery, London, UK
- 2016 *Dublin Glowstick*, site specific sculpture, Fidelity Offices, Dublin, Ireland
- 2015 *Plato's Disco*, site specific sculpture, Whitworth Art Galleries, Manchester, UK.
- 2015 *19-20-21*, site specific installation, Lyric Theatre, London
- 2015 *Chromocoche*, temporary site specific sculpture MK Gallery, Milton Keynes, UK
- 2015 *Chromorama*, site specific installation, Broadgate, London, UK
- 2014 *Chromolocomotion*, site specific installation, St. Pancras International Station, London, UK
- 2010 *Spectrum on the Hill*, site specific installation, Hannam the Hill, Seoul, South Korea
- 2010 *Big Rock Candy Fountain*, site specific installation, Archway tube station, London, UK
- 2009 *Walldella*, site specific installation, McManus Galleries, Dundee, UK
- 2009 *Spectrum of 1st Street*, site specific installation, 1011 1st Street, Washington D.C., USA
- 2008 *Hong Kong Fesdalla*, site specific installation, The British Council, Hong Kong
- 2005 *Ten Silhouettes*, Gloucester Road Underground Station, London, UK
- 2005 Bloomberg Centre, London, UK
- 2005 *Against Nature*, site specific installation, University of Warwick, Coventry, UK
- 2004 *Treasury Magic Hour*, site specific installation, The Treasury, London, UK
- 2004 *West Wing Spectrum*, site specific installation, St Bart's Hospital, London, UK
- 2003 *Evergreen*, site specific outdoor work, More London Development, Tower Bridge, London, UK
- 2001 *Electric Colour Picture*, edition of 75 three-dimensional works, The Multiple Store, London, UK
- 1999 *Chromodesks*, site specific installation, Pier Trust, London, UK
- 1999 *Quick Change Room*, site specific installation, Sadler's Wells Theatre, London, UK

Selected Public Collections

- Aberdeen Art Gallery, Aberdeen, UK
- Albright Knox Art Gallery, New York, USA
- Arts Council Collection, UK
- British Council, UK
- Edinburgh University, Edinburgh, UK
- Government Art Collection, UK
- Leeds City Art Gallery, Leeds, UK
- MAC, Santiago, Chile
- The McManus, Dundee's Art Gallery and Museum, Dundee, UK
- Tate, UK
- UBS Art Collection