

Curator's Statement

In/formed Color at BRIK gallery

By Jeanette Fintz

Matisse's inspiring essays in, Matisse on Art, compiled by Jack D. Flamm, was once, and hopefully still is, required reading for passionate young artists. Writing about color, he said, "there is an impelling proportion of tones that lead me to change the shape of a figure or to transform my composition". He declared that, respecting his *seduction* by a particular color sensation, he will work to keep to that sensation "until all the parts have found their definite relationships".

I liked that Matisse used the word "seduction" and then went on to describe a rigorous process of intelligent refinement that would lead him back to his love of something indescribable in words.

I most often begin a painting around an idea for a palette of colors: or is it a feeling about those colors? It's second nature to me. Working with color is both cerebral and sensual. I begin instinctively, until the process becomes more about refining and calibrating the movements and changes. It 's challenging to find new pathways from "here" to "there".

I chose the artists for *In/formed* Color because I recognized and responded to the resonance of Matisse's ethos in their work. In their written statements many of the artists referred to that particular friction between colors, when they felt them snapping into place, exuding a "satisfying" rightness" that isn't found by following theory to the letter, but by allowing the needs of the work of art to take the lead. This awareness carries a double charge of almost physical delight and a simultaneous intellectual stimulation. One knows a color junkie when one sees one.

The interdependence or "oneness" of structure and color varies in degree and kind among the artists, all of whom work non-objectively. Some of them (and I would place myself in this category) create color environments that evoke a transcendent state of nature. Among these is Laura Battle, whose monumentally scaled paintings of mathematically derived networks strive to construct an harmonious color -world. Color repetition builds to a universal "hum", with often- occurring small " flickers" instead of large "pops".

Jung Hyang Kim is the most reverential to her natural sources, juxtaposing pure abstract form against the flora and temperatures of the natural world in her moody and evocative diptychs. Kim declares nature to be her underlying inspiration, and also acknowledges its contribution to the decorative arts that too inform her richly variegated work.

For others like Nancy Olivier, color is a structural tool equivalent to line or shape, apparently devoid of references to narrative or evocative phenomena. Her reductive yet playful grids and stripes contained by frequently off-kilter -edged supports, speak about the fragmented quality of our perceptions. Olivier's hyper awareness of the formal interplay between color, surface and mark compels us to experience intimate moments of cognition.

In a similar conceptual camp is Kathryn Butler who states that for her, "Color or pigment has a chemical reality and is viewed as such, rather than dealing with the concepts of color in relation to light and waves. Color is simply understood as the presence of a collection of elements from the Periodic Table that are ordered in a specific way". Butler uses color as a component in a coded language, a place -holder to signify a logical inner necessity within a larger spatial framework, She says: "Color becomes synonymous with numbers or denotes series of repetitious acts."

Butler's process, as she describes it, is akin to musical composition, (in this instance, minimalist music), to which color composition is often compared. I like to compare it to jazz composition, where all of the possible ways of getting from "here" to "there" are set up and played -out within given parameters, taking one through unexpected by- ways, rather than the tonal route, and allowing for surprising resolutions.

Julie Gross 's compact loops and gurgles orchestrated in opaquely painted colors that stretch out the possible definitions of harmony, are a perfect case in point. Gross uses the compass to create what she calls "vessels" to contain color, which she analogizes to overlapping waves or successions of breath. In her statement there is an implicit awareness of color as a continuum that is the source of her often acerbic and humorous color digressions.

The color planes that under-gird Gross's opaquely painted organic abstractions have a formal kinship to the architecturally referenced painted wood constructions by sculptor Jim Osman's. Osman states, " Just as I consider the type of joint to use when connecting materials, I think about the weight of a color, its opacity, how it "holds up," in other words how it functions with form. Osman's color is iconic, each color choice exuding references to interior or exterior elements of our everyday physical environments. Psychological implications cling

to Osman's colored constructs, though we are asked to receive them as pure form, as well as evocative exponents of contemporary spaces.

The meditative process of matching and mixing paint from light studies and paint samples becomes a journey in itself for Jean Feinberg. She applies exquisitely calibrated colors to pieces of found wood to create assemblages that bridge that divide, as do Osman's, pieces, between painting and sculpture. Feinberg's "color interventions" as she names them, reveal her involvement with the spirit and character of "place". They proclaim their presence in real space by casually leaning or stacking against real walls or shelves and seem to exist only to slow our attention enough to notice subtle beauty.

On the opposite end of the spectrum, so to speak, are the pulsating rhythmic paintings of Vincent Pomilio. Pomilio positions colors to punctuate a syncopated, repetitive, planar facture, thereby accentuating movement in and out of the painting space. Each color pops equally in relation to contrasting colors and all react to the dark/ light value structure set-up by black and white. Pomilio's work has a passing similarity to Butler's repetitive, codified use of color and value, but her mood is deliberate and cerebral, where as Pomilio's is a "more is more", visceral fiesta of color and mark.

Sculptor Susan Spencer – Crowe's over- the- top, unapologetically "girly" confections of transparent fabric, and welded steel, on the surface seem to partake of this party atmosphere. But the title of her piece "Underneath the Ruffles " indicates the strength of the intricate armature that has built the elaborately contrived webs, which allow the structure to cohere. She characterizes her work as giving shape to an "explosive etherealness". This state of feeling is successfully evinced by Spencer -Crowe's basing these works on the spatial concept of color and surface transparency, inspired by 19th century Venetian glass. Spencer-Crowe's tone is playful and her neon bright hues threading through the frothy atmospheres, though used descriptively, are also spatially functional, Even as their coloration celebrates artifice and the showy distractions of popular culture, they do it with the irony that comes from self awareness.

As a painter and the organizer of this exhibition it is clear I have chosen artists to participate because I have an affinity and an understanding for their processes and their employment of color. Color is a way to move through space for me. What I learned about

color and light from painting plein air landscapes early in my career has been a precious resource. I immersed myself in the light environment, and took the temperature of the highs and the lows, and extrapolated color relationships into heightened and subjectively revised palettes. I still create color environments that contain their own inner logic My paintings now are a combination of planned repetitive shapes and spontaneous “accidental “elements, that allow for unexpected juxtapositions of color and edges, like those observed when looking at the world outside. Particular hues and combinations dominate and recur at different times in my body of work, so that reading through color one may get a glimpse of a nonlinear autobiography, parallel notations of an inner world,

In/ *formed* Color is presented by BRIK Gallery, located at 473 Main St Catskill NY12414. The opening reception is Sat. July1 from 6-9PM. The exhibition will run through July30. Gallery hours are St. & Sun from 12-5:00PM and by appointment. Call Frank Cuthbert at 518- 943- 0145.