

About the ready-made color

1. When you first started to use raw materials in your work did you do it in view of historical continuity (collage, constructivism, pop art, nouveau réalisme, arte povera...) or did you on the contrary think in terms of rupture ?

My decision to work with non-conventional material is a continuity as well as a break from tradition. It is a continuity since painting can always be linked to a historical perspective. One could for instance, find antecedents as far back as the early cubist experiments with collages... But it is also a break as my work is the direct result of a need to move away from the close universe of modernist painting. It reflects a desire to explore new painting possibilities and contribute to a broad questioning of the complex pictorial and cultural object that is called « painting ».

2. The use of colored materials is contrary to the traditional act of painting which consist in covering a surface with paint. How would you call this passage from cover-all to non-cover ? How can painting still call itself painting when it moves away from surface covering, replacing it with colored materials ?

Cover / undercover... I don't have a definition to qualify this paradox.

I work the dynamic relationship between *ready-made color* and « applied color » as a vehicle to make paintings. I feel that when one integrates raw colored material in a painting, it becomes painting. By switching material (say from canvas to fabric), one gives the painting a different optical and conceptual ground which paradoxically infuses the work with a Duchampian twist...

3. When choosing materials, do you favor the materials themselves (their formal qualities, surface, texture, etc...) over the color or vice versa ? Does the choice of a ready made colored material imply that surface and space coexist with the materials itself and with its color ?

The eligibility of the material is defined by its intrinsic color/texture relationship and also by the potential visual event that it will produce in juxtaposition with the painted image. I use synthetic fabric stretched on frames like canvases. These fabrics in their raw state are colored surfaces. They lose their physicality once stretched, and become colored space. They then become a diaphanous support as they receive the painted image which floats on them.

4. When you associate colored materials and painted surface in the same work, what do you wish to obtain ? Is your aim to underline painting's objecthood ? Or would it possibly be the invention of a pictural ready-made, or of a new subject for painting ?

The pictorial event generated by the tension between *ready-made color* and « applied color » produces at first look , a homogenous space. But it is through a careful examination that the eye can separate the image from its support, revealing the perceptual complexity of the painting as an object and a spatial fictional device.

5. Using colored materials produces specific effects. Could you define them. In what way are these materials different from art-supplies ?

The integration of colored material in a painting shifts the traditional function of the canvas from an invisible surface (behind the paint) to a visible surface (next to the paint). The raw material dissolves the neutrality of the surface to cover and contributes to an irruption of the real into the closed universe of the modernist abstraction. The interesting aspect of industrial colors lies in their register and value outside those of traditional fine art paints. They are artificial and their use in the painting alters its meaning...

6. When appropriating mass-produced materials, are you connecting to a specific moment in history, specific trend or taste ? Does that allow for a collective vision in a very idiosyncratic work ? When using ready made colors, how would you call their passage from social product to esthetic product ? Transgression or paradox ?

I link the use of ready made colored material to the desire of painters, to their curiosity and their looking out the world around them, outside the studio. I would also mention the artistic license due to the collapse of domineering ideologies, as everything seem to be possible again... I think that there is also a sense of urgency for painters to venture and take risks to redefine the painting territory to enrich it and keep forging ahead, at a time when painting is considered obsolete by many, and is becoming a sort of subculture...

As far as I am concerned, I am also interested in the perverse use of material through the selection of material with an intrinsic quality not amenable to paint. I am working, for instance, with sheer silks which surrender to paint not without a technical struggle...

7. Does the name of these colors (for example when using house painting), their social role, their commercial function, reflect on color's irrationality ?

The denomination of color whether it is from industrial origin or not is arbitrary. As far as the unconscious is concerned, a baby blue or a Giotto blue is probably the same: it produces pleasure... Industrial color denominations are interesting as they conjure up metaphors of popular culture, such as candy pink, duckling yellow, toothpaste green. The use of these colors brings up the issue of titles in my work : I have worked for instance on a group of paintings whose titles are lifted from the name of the fabric used in these pieces. The banality or sometimes pedestrian aspect of these titles counterbalances the headiness of the paintings with the introduction of lightness or humor...

8. In 1975, Catherine Millet wrote the following about the use of colored materials in Donald Judd's work : « He was confusing color and materials » in order « to avoid an irrational investment in color by way of a phenomenology of color and materials, where color is considered in relation to materials, forms, space, but no in relation to the individual subject, or its own symbolic function in that particular subject's thinking. » What would you think of this analysis if applied to your own work. Does the use of colored materials imply the repression of color's irrational ?

I think that Catherine Millet's analysis is dated and must be read in its historical context. It reflects upon a time when the Freudian discourse in France was the dominant critical tool to read painting and was also used

to promote a certain style of abstraction... It became at worst, a yardstick to separate the wheat from the chaff...

Catherine Millet's analysis is, in my opinion, reductionist and mechanistic: it implies that the unconscious can experience the pleasure of color only through the act of painting itself (mixing and spreading paint). I would suggest that the unconscious drive is more complex and I feel that it can experience the pleasure of color also through looking, selecting and organizing color, whether it is artist handmade or whether it is the result of a colored material that the painter responded to. The unconscious is always at work, even outside the studio...

9. Can one talk of a realism of color in regard to colored materials ?

I would speak of « color realism » about ready-made color as an irruption of the real into the virtual space of the picture plane.

10. Does assemblage create a new pictorial space, or a new illusionism as Frank Stella would have it. Is the color of the material part of this illusionism, as it refers to two simultaneously opposite meanings : the regular use of the colored material in everyday life and its presence as painting ?

The issue for me is not the definition of a « new illusionism » because painting (abstract or not) participates willy-nilly in a certain form of illusionism, essentially due to its paradoxical characteristics, (such as its objecthood, optical plane, its hanging on a wall in a state of weightlessness...), that it cannot escape.

I feel that the integration of ready-made material into painting adds another layer to this original illusionism. Its singularity resides in its ephemeral appearance: it exists only at first glance. The illusion collapses under the weight of a careful gaze which it cannot resist. As it recedes, the illusion exposes the complexity of painting as a multidimensional device (physical, optical, virtual, symbolic...). It is at this moment that painting reveals its originality, its power and beauty...

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