

Just Light

“With colour one obtains an energy that seems to stem from witchcraft.” Henri Matisse*

In my photographic series, *Nothing to see here* (2019), I began experimenting with light by projecting film onto a curtain, using the drapery as both background and foreground, subject and object in the photographs. This series was as much about the curtain and its role in art and cinema as it was about light and colour.

In this new series *Just Light* I have focused on the elemental qualities of photography – light, colour and shadow. Luminosity in images suggests the infinite and for Byzantine and Classical spectators, the foremost aspect of colour to be appreciated was its value as light. Colour and light are suggestive and sensual, they stir emotions and associations, making the perception of both subjective and irrational, something whose effect cannot be grasped intellectually. The abstract painting of classical modernism viewed colour as a specific means of expressing the sublime. Colourfield Painting liberated the canvas from all external influences employed to determine content and formal characteristics.

Photography on the other hand, while founded in light and utilising colour printing since 1866, has for the most part remained coupled to the reproduction of the real– a depiction of a person, object, event. In the series *Just Light* I have used analogue photographic processes, such as negative reversal, dodging / burning and layering colour materials of different density to elevate light and colour to content in their own right. These techniques also introduce the element of chance, as you cannot predict exactly how they will impact the work. The photographs do not attempt to capture reality or personal experience, but instead evoke a response in the viewer: a mood, an emotion.

To sense the soul, without explanation, without words, and to depict this sensation- this, I believe, is what led me to monochrome painting. Yves Klein*

Colour automatically presses forward towards form. To create an organizing structure within which I could experiment and which would give coherence across the work I employed geometric shapes – circles, squares, and rectangles to contain and mask the light. The simplicity of these geometric shapes combined with the brilliance of light and colour creates luminous photographs. The presence of black in the photographs disrupts their two-dimensional quality and creates an illusion of perspective and depth, not just an absence of colour, but negative space that is woven into the material existence of the photograph itself.

Robyn Stacey
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**Kelvin colour today*, eds. Robert Klanten, Boris Brumnjak, Sven Ehmann, Die Gestalten Verlag, Berlin, 2007.

**Unimaginable. The State of Colour in Art*, Farben Catalogue, Kerber Verlag, Leipzig, 2007