

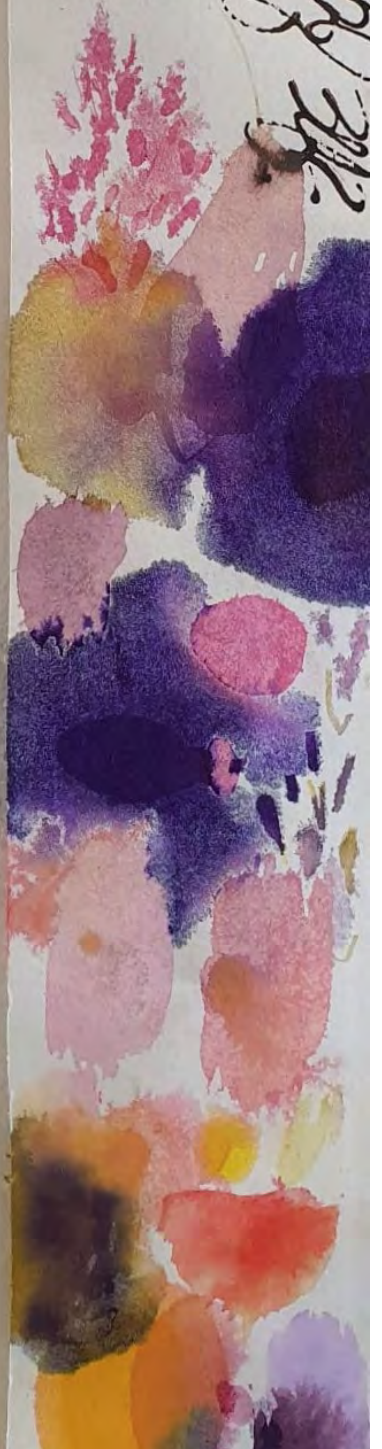


BIRTH OF COLOUR

PROJECT PRESENTATION

Elisa Muller
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Visual Art School Basel

The Birth of Christ ...



Summary

Project Description

"People experience a great delight in colour, generally. The eye requires it as much as it requires light. We have only to remember the refreshing sensation we experience, if on a cloudy day the sun illumines a single portion of the scene before us and displays its colours."

Extract -759- from The Theory of Colour, Goethe

I can only agree with this affirmation and my relation to colour when it comes to painting is somehow natural, I am always excited to nuance every tone, to look for thousands different ways to create new shades, this happened sometimes by accident and I am more than happy or sometimes it is a conscious search for a specific colour. But how do I make this excitement for colour interesting when colour is the main content? For a little while I was looking for a story to rely on, a content that was not only about the birth of colour, but I came to the reflection that I had to accept that this was the chance to focus on a specific concept and that I should stop to fiddle around a story that could fit. So there we go, I went for the observation and experimentation of the birth of colour from two opposite points, from the light and from the darkness.

I started to explore these two extremes by going deeper and deeper in the darkness thanks to the base tone spectrum and in parallel by researching the transparency in the light thanks to the different structure of the material.

After the different variations of these explorations, I slowly let the colour rise from these two poles, leaving behind the pure darkness and the pure light, but at the same time allowing the colour to feed off its respective parent. Now it was as if the colours emerged and could indulge in their own intensity. It was no longer a burnished red, but a bright red, it was no longer a slightly faded pastel yellow but a frank yellow.

Then came the time to allow the meeting between the base tone and light tone palette.

This was both fun and confusing, now that they met what would be the next step? What is the purpose of this research? How could this be even more interesting? Was it now too balanced since I combined these two poles? Could I consider that as The birth of colour? The new impulse for this project was then to explore the line language on white and black background, another approach to welcome the colour from the darkness and light. These pieces are like gathering the whole process, from the darkness emerge a light line creating a space for the colour to come.

For the weaving I went through the same development. I imagined an installation like a mobile that would show this journey from darkness to light and from light towards darkness. This installation is made out of five narrow pieces hanging loose one behind the other. One is only about darkness, the second is a base tone palette research, the third one is about the meeting between dark and light, the fourth is about colours that are lightened to their extreme, and the last one is only about light, shades of white and transparency.

This is how I explored the birth of colour, like a journey between darkness and light.

From the Input Time

Colour Theory, Goethe versus Newton

To talk about the birth of colour we need to talk about the parents, dark and light, but this is where Newton and Goethe differ. For Newton all colours are contained in the light as for Goethe colours need both light and dark. They both tried to understand the colour phenomenon, but their approach was quite different. Newton wanted to know how the light works as Goethe wanted to know how the colour works.

Goethe was very interested in painting and even if he was not really good at it, he still wanted to learn about it. He met many painters who could explain a lot about composition, the form language... but nothing about the colours, and thought he should do some intensive research about this essential element in art and life.

Newton's theory was mainly based and explained through mathematics, whereas Goethe looked at the colours themselves, how we see them how we feel them.

We replayed Newton's experience about the prism phenomenon and confronted it with Goethe's experience. In a dark room Newton left a fine aperture of the light, the light through a prism reflected the colours, but some were missing thought Goethe. Therefore Goethe set the opposite experience, in a light space he places a dark point and then the prism through which new colours appeared, cyan, magenta and yellow. This experience is the proof that colours need dark and light that they are not only contained in the light.



Now we look at the atmospheric colour phenomenon. We first tried to have an understanding about it by doing some experience with an aquarium full of clouded water. On one side we had a light illuminating the aquarium and on the other side an alternating dark and light background. We observed when the background was dark that the blue appeared and when the background was light it was the yellow and even red (if the water was even murkier) that appeared. So we can say that when the darkness is lightened the blue appears, and when the light is darkened it is the yellow and red that appears. We could observe this essential phenomenon every day by looking at the sunset and at midday. The following extract from Goethe's colour theory, formulated this phenomenon.

154 - "The sun seen through a certain degree of vapour appears with a yellow disk; the centre is often dazzlingly yellow when the edges are already red. [...]"

The red hues of morning and evening are owing to the same cause. The sun is announced by a red light, in shining through a greater mass of vapours. The higher he rises, the yellower and brighter the light becomes.

155 - If the darkness of infinite space is seen through atmospheric vapours illuminated by the day-light, the blue colour appears. On high mountains the sky appears by day intensely blue, owing to the few thin vapours that float before the endless dark space: as

soon as we descend in the valleys, the blue becomes lighter; till at last, in certain regions, and in consequence of increasing vapours, it altogether changes to a very pale blue." So we understand now that the more atmosphere, resistance, particles is in between the more yellow and red we see, the less resistance between us and the darkness the more blue we see.

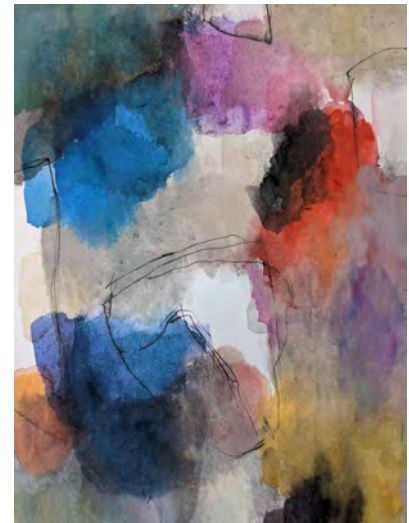
Even if this phenomenon became understandable, I could not quite put the finger on why the colour I see on this wall is blue, what is the difference between the blue I see in the sky and the blue paint I see on this wall? This was asking about the nature of colours, from where it really comes, what is the essence of the colour? Goethe distinguishes the colours depending on whether it is physiological, physical, or chemical.

One approach for us to touch this birth of colour, the substance of the colour was to look at the earthy tones. As in the earth we find coloured substance, pigments, and if looking at art history, the earthy tones were what they used at that time.

The Colour Circle

The colour circle is an exercise developed by Assenza that takes up the phenomenon of the atmospheric colour in a painterly way. On a format we formed the light with a light grey coming from the periphery. On the bottom right, with a darker passive grey we formed a darkness behind the light. On the top left, we placed an active darkness which appeared this time to be in front of the light. Considering that this darkness is in front of the light, like all the particles that are between us and the light when the sun rises, we painted from this active darkness some red to orange and yellow. In the opposite direction as the darkness is behind the light, like the situation at midday, the infinite darkness, the sun and us, we painted from this passive darkness some blue. When these two poles meet comes the green on the bottom left and violet to carmine on the top right.

When we first placed the two qualities of darkness, we observed a different quality of the light. The light next to the passive darkness seemed lighter and the darkness deeper. As for the active darkness the light was pushed back and the darkness was coming towards us. We then asked ourselves which of the darkness or the light seemed deeper. We came to the sensation that the darkness was something more related to a depth experience and the light to a distance feeling.



A4 Exercises in sketchbook

From this theoretical exercise we freely adapted in a more painterly way, but given us still some structure. Instead of having a grey coming from the periphery we placed four active light grey, which were afterwards turnabout in a passive composition forming the light. With a darker grey in some places the situation was again turnabout. This situation prepared the birth of colour.

I observed that if I stuck to the main and plain colour of the colour circle I could not quite relate to the composition I had to make mine the colour palette.

Black and White Photographs

We had the task of taking black and white photographs in nature. The day I took them was a very cloudy, greyish and sad afternoon. Although it felt that the black and white pictures were not really different from the reality it somehow made the surrounding more colourful, as if the black and white vision through the camera was allowing the birth of colour around me. I remember this magical moment as I was taking a photograph concentrated on the black and white contrast, when a kingfisher just flew by, and I thought this was the birth of colour!



Digital photography



Exercises in sketchbook

From the printed out photographs we trained our eye and hand to grasp very quickly the main black and white. Thanks to this exercise that helped us to be more aware of this basic contrast, we gained a new attention for the new photographs we were going to take in the Walzwerk area. With these pictures we experienced the "dialogue" technique, a technique that is halfway between digital and analogue technique. With the analogue technique the range of dark and light is wider.

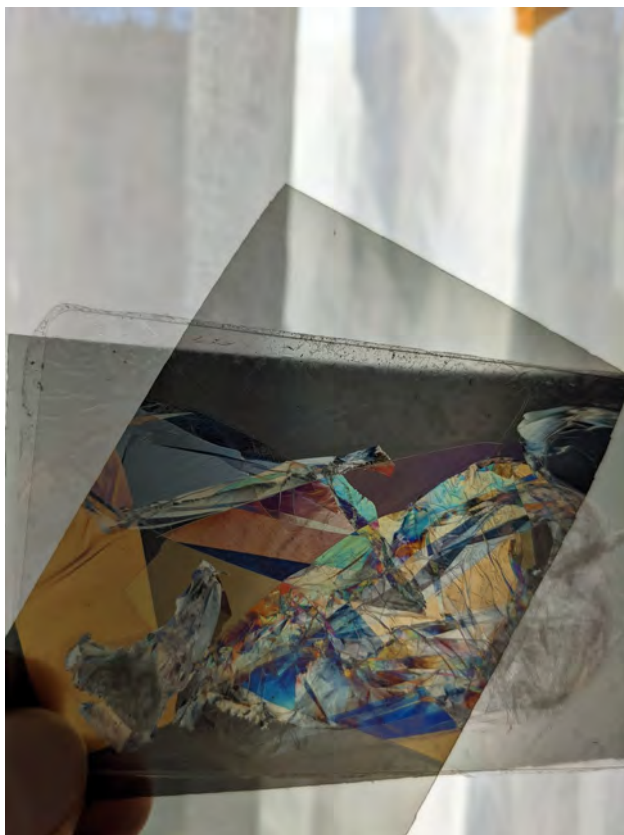


"Dialogue" photographs and test pieces



The Polarising filter

The polarisation phenomenon is a little joy when you first discover it. There was something magical for me, the sensation of a birth of colour made perfect sense. So this experience consisted by overlaying two polarising filter faced in the light. When the structure of the two filters paralleled it the light was only slightly obscured but when one them was turned into a quarter the light was more and more obscured. By placing some different folded plastic between the two filters came the colours! Depending of the folds of the plastic and the structural direction of the filters we could observe different colours.





Silk Painting

Another way to explore the birth of colour was to paint on silk. The silk allows the colour to fuse, expand and shine. The direction for this exercise was based on the development of the blue palette (passive) for one piece and the red palette (active) for the other piece, both emerging from a dark impulse. The darkness and light have not the same effect depending if they are combined with an active or passive palette, Goethe formulates it in the following extract:

831 - "The colours of the active side placed next to black gain in energy, those of the passive side lose. The active conjoined with white and brightness lose in strength, the passive gain in cheerfulness. Red and green with black appear dark and grave; with white they appear gay."

Painting on silk is like playing another kind of music, the relationship between my intention with my brush and the result on the fabric was different from when I paint on paper, it was a completely different approach and feeling. Although I enjoyed the intensity of the colours the result remained too tacky/crafty for my taste.





Art History

The three artists I am going to talk about now have provided me with a lot of inspiration throughout the project. Andrea Eriksson's work has often inspired me while painting, Simone Prouvé's weaving has made me discover the incredible potential of this technique and how far I still have to go, and Eva Hesse's approach to installation, space and material has also been inspiring.

Andrea Eriksson

Andrea Eriksson was born in 1975 in Björsäter, Medelplana, Sweden. He studied art between 1993 and 1998 at The Royal Institute of Art Stockholm. He does painting, photography, sculpture, tapestry and installation. He is known for his poetic depiction of the natural world.

He lives in the middle of a forest by a lake, thus nature is his primary source of inspiration. He lives in the countryside primarily to protect himself from the electromagnetic waves that have made him ill since he was 25 years old.

He describes himself as a landscape artist, for him nature is "visually fantastic", it is a visual experience to be in the middle of nature where he spends a lot of time. He is interested in the structures of nature, how it evolves over the months, for him the least interesting season is summer as everything remains green. He may find the world of the city inspiring but this is limited to the reflections he can see in large windows, or the surface of a clean car.

His work often exposes a duality such as inside and outside, lightness and heaviness, illusion and reality, abstract and figurative, all in a context that seems both familiar and mysterious. Some describe his work as a patchwork topography made out of organic forms (tree, earth, rock).

The main characteristics of his paintings are the use of subtle earth tones that emerge and collide, translucent washes of soft grey, horizontal and vertical forms.

Within these surfaces we can see the brushstrokes that shade the surface and provide a form of texture and structure. He uses a very distinct combination of colours. Simon DeBrée, a former assistant, describes the structure of Eriksson's paintings as having simplified, dense, opaque forms, but that on closer inspection one sees the multitude of details that inhabit the interior of the surfaces. He would also say of his recent work that it is more like digital paintings in the sense that the painting is less painterly, less material, that there is less brushstrokes.



With time Andrea Eriksson accepts the landscape more and more, since his painting is indeed about the landscape, with the difference that his paintings do not directly reflect the landscape (the earth below and the sky above), and it is actually difficult to establish a North and a South for his paintings, they can even be turned in the direction one wants. Eriksson has a particular interest in Renaissance paintings, but what attracts him most are the landscapes in the background of the paintings. For him there is something dry about them, the paint does not just cover the canvas but comes from somewhere else. When art critics describe Eriksson's landscapes they say: "His landscape are like longitudinal and archaeological section in shapeless and heterogeneous soil, consisting of accumulated dry and wet strata."

For Eriksson the conversation with a painting starts with the choice of his materials, what kind of paint (oil, acrylic, egg tempera), what kind of canvas (weave structure), he even says that "my motifs are my material". When he paints it is not a question of pigmenting on a weave but of pigmenting it. It was this interest in the material itself that led him to weaving, the conversation between the structure of the canvas and the paint already existing, it did not seem such a big step to start weaving. He began by experimenting with a loom at home, but soon became aware of the difficulty of the technique and the time it required. Having neither the patience nor the necessary knowledge, he asked a neighbour to experiment for him from his sketches. These experiments were more like reproductions of his paintings than a work of art in itself, and he realised that for the weaving to become interesting for him, he had to give it a particular concept.

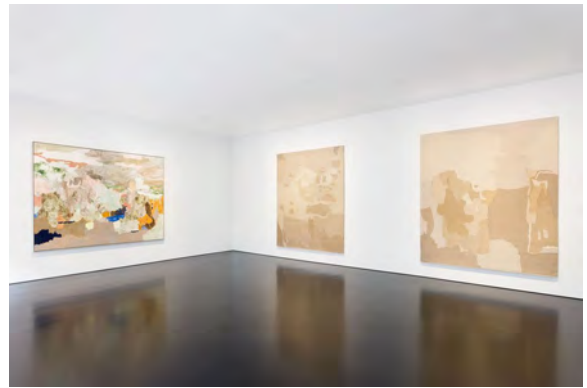
During a visit to Märta Måås' workshop in Båstard, he discovered a large collection of linen dating from the 19th century. He learns that the colour of the linen varies depending on where it is grown, and thus became aware that this linen collection is like a historical memory of the Swedish soil. The studio wanted to collaborate with Eriksson and his condition was that he would only work with this range of linen. The studio refused this condition and Eriksson started his own collection. Over the years he accumulated several kilos of linen dating from the 18th century to the present day.

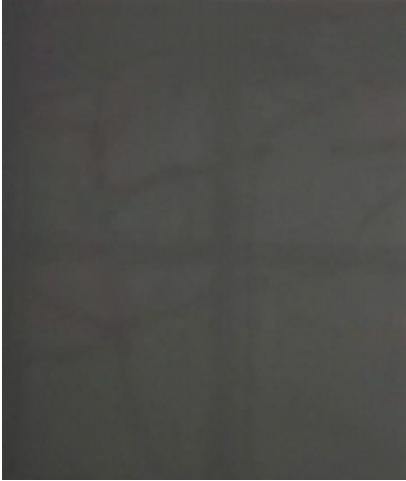


Andrea Eriksson creates the tapestries in collaboration with several weavers, all trained at Stockholm's Historic Handarbets Vänner Textile School. This school was founded in 1874 by Sophie Adlersparre to preserve Swedish textile knowledge. All these weavers lived in different places and Eriksson founded a workshop in Berlin where the whole team was gathered. The tapestries are designed from sketches of his paintings by redefining the surfaces with the line. Eriksson is involved throughout the process of creating the tapestry, they define together which type of thread, which density and which technique will be used. He points out the huge contrast between the speed of a sketch made in 2 minutes and the slowness of a tapestry which can take up to 2 years at a rate of a few centimetres per day, that is to say approximately 8000 hours of work. He recognises how spoiled a painter is, since he can return to his paintings at any time.

Eriksson describes his tapestries as "existential landscapes", and a journalist and art critic, Hettie Judah, adds: "we might also see them as a conceptual extension of painting in which the pictures migrate to the canvas itself".

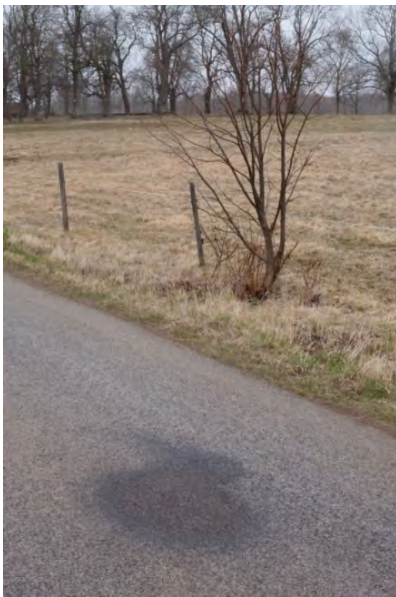
While the tapestries are inspired by the paintings, the paintings are in turn inspired by the tapestries. Eriksson even uses the preparatory sketches as a basis for new paintings, sometimes one sketch gives rise to 10 paintings. Since he sometimes finds it difficult to start every morning with a blank canvas the sketch is a help to start a new painting.





Another aspect of his work is the concept of shadow, the shadow in tapestries as well as in painting. This interest in shadow is based on various experiences. One of them is the observation of coffee stains going through several layers of paint on a freshly painted wall. Another was the experience of car lights at night creating shadows inside his house. These shadows stealthily emerged as if from within the material.

From these experiments came a series of paintings done with a paint gun on a dibond panel (sandwich panel with three layers, two layers of aluminium and a central layer of polyethylene, this material resists well to bad weather). The result is perfectly smooth, almost like a photograph, and represents the stealthy shadows created by car headlights. "I started collecting shadows because I had no electric light, no television, and when you are lying on a couch at night, what you see is what is going on outside, the lights moving around the room; and I started collecting them." This collection is almost a shadow theatre that speaks of waiting (cars only passing episodically in the countryside), of boredom, of the emergence of light and its image in the dark. Each shadow is named very precisely as: the shadow of the window frame is seen on December 15, 2010 at 16h47.



Andrea Eriksson also works with photography which has a contemplative dimension. These photographs are taken in the countryside, they are fragments of nature (tree trunks, clods of earth, remnants of melting snow...). The photo is then a source of inspiration for his paintings but also for sculptures.



An example of a sculpture is *Content is a Glimpse* which represents a bird. While he has been contemplating his canvas for some time believing in the act of painting, a bird crashes against the window. He realises that the bird believed in the reflection of nature in the window and comes to the conclusion that one must look at art in this way, believing in what it depicts, in this illusion in order to access the landscape that art is.



Eva Hesse

Eva Hesse was born in 1936 in Hamburg to a Jewish family. In 1938 they fled Germany to escape the Nazis. They were sheltered in Amsterdam and then London and arrived in New York in 1939 where they built a new life. Eva Hesse was a teenager when her father separated from her mother, who was depressed and committed suicide after the divorce in 1946. These tragic events were to influence her work in part.

She studied art at the Pratt Institute in 1952, then at the Cooper Union and finally at Yale University, where she attended Joseph Albers' colour classes.

She married the sculptor Tom Doyle but found it difficult to reconcile life as a married woman with all the expectations that go with it and working as an artist as a woman in a man's world.

She discovered the pleasure of drawing when she met her husband on a trip to Germany in 1964, drawing gave her freedom and pleasure, a feeling she could not achieve when painting. Art critics will say that: "her drawings become virtual ink tracings, in which organic structures, "headless" shapes, often ovoid, are allowed to unfold in space. They are "neat, clear, but as crazy as machines, with larger and bolder shapes, precisely described which become completely absurd." Since she was dissatisfied with painting, she began to work in 3D by stretching the lines of her drawings with strings. This experience was a relief, a discovery, a satisfaction.

She has been described as a post-minimalist artist, minimalist because of the repetition of forms and their addition, but her work has something of the physiological, of individual expression. She introduces a notion of memory and sexuality. She bases her work on her strong feeling about the absurd and cultivates ambiguity and paradox. For her "the chaos could be as structured as the non-chaos. Her sculptures do not have the usual structure, they are neither solid nor durable, nor rigid with any precise contours, but flexible, soft and almost perishable. She is also very critical of European sculpture, which does not allow the sculpture to organise itself, the intention always comes from the outside, and the material does not speak. This is why she refuses the cast production and prefers to value the material, to show it for what it is.

Hang Up, 1966, acrylic on cloth, wood and steel, 183x213x198cm

"It is the most ridiculous structure I have never done and that's why it is really good. It has a kind of depth or soul or absurdity, or life, or sense, or feeling, or intelligence that I want to possess... I know that there is nothing in this world without connection, but if art can exist on its own, these things were really unique and there was no one doing anything like that at that time."



Contigent, 1968, mixed media, this installation consists of 8 sheets of fabric dipped in latex that are suspended from the ceiling. The parts that are not dipped in latex remain transparent, the light passes through both the opaque and transparent areas. It is both a physical and visual experience that makes us aware of the similarities and differences between each piece. Some describe it as if "we became slightly mesmerised by the shifting qualities of light within and through the surfaces." It is delicate as well as rigid, light and heavy. It is possible to move between the pieces but the installation both seduces and intimidates. The work can suggest different impressions, such as a row of mystical fabrics hanging on a thread, beautiful fabric waiting for final tailoring, flayed skins, trophies for a ritual, hanging carcass of an unknown animal, sheets of honey comb, so it is both beautiful and horrifying.



Right After, 1969, is a work made in collaboration with Doug John after a brain operation to cure her brain tumour. The installation is made of fibreglass cord dipped into latex and hung from hooks and then from the ceiling while it was still wet. Eva Hesse uses only materials from everyday life and her works are entirely handmade, which is already very different from her minimalist peers. The installation is moved from gallery to gallery, which she disapproves of, since for her the installation made sense in her studio with a particular light casting interesting shadows, whereas the galleries use overly dramatic light.



Expanded Expansion, 1969, is a sculpture made of fibreglass, polyester resin, latex and cheesecloth. These are materials that will decompose over time, the sculpture will perish like us. The width of the sculpture varies according to the exhibition, like an accordion that is stretched more or less. It echoes the fabric dressing room divider, it is perhaps representing the divides between men and women.



Eva Hesse said of this work: "if something is absurd, it is much more exaggerated, more absurd if it is repeated."



Simone Prouvé

Simone Prouvé was born in 1931 in Nancy. School was a horror as she was dyslexic but did not know it at the time. She was gifted in mathematics and drawing but school was not for her, so she spent her time "sewing under the table". It was a way for her to escape from school and her shyness. Her mother taught her all the needlework and had the intuition that weaving would be a suitable craft for her. Simone Prouvé learnt weaving from Micheline Pingusson, who told her "learn the technique, and forget it! At the age of 18 she went to Sweden and Finland to learn more about weaving from Alice Lund and Dora Jung. She learned new techniques, lost her shyness and discovered photography.

On her return to France she worked a lot with her designer, architect and ironworker father. It is this familiarity with the smell of metal that will guide her towards the exploration of metal fibre, non-fire wires/threads. She works a lot with stainless steel, which has the property of not moving, not deteriorating, can be recycled, resists fire, acid, has a high filtration of the sun beam but with a great transmission of light. She succeeds in changing the idea that stainless steel is rigid and resistant, she brings poetry to it and takes it out of the industrial world. She spends a lot of time with industrialists to adapt the torsion, the thickness of the metal wire so that it is flexible and adapted to the weaving.

"I owe it to my father to have met artists and architects at a very early age, to have been immersed in the atmosphere of the factory, behind the scene of production and the smell of metal..."

She spins her wool and adds material and colours in an irregular way so that the woven threads bring a form of abstraction and irregularity.





Her photographs are about details of walls, shades of rocks or earth, rust, fences, peeling and faded paint, tangled electrical wires. "Photography? A useful hobby for spotting materials, compositions, shapes." Simone Prouvé weaves the light by playing with transparency, her works complement their environment.

Project Development

The experience of darkness

I have never been really attracted to dark composition in art, I associated darkness into something evil, tragic and depressing. My experience of painting darkness was a very different feeling from my previous relationship with the dark and sad side I associated with it. It was rather a nice feeling to dive in, more and more, almost if I was absorbed by the research of depth, something was pulling me to go darker and darker but not in a tragic way, more like something cosy, comfortable and warm.

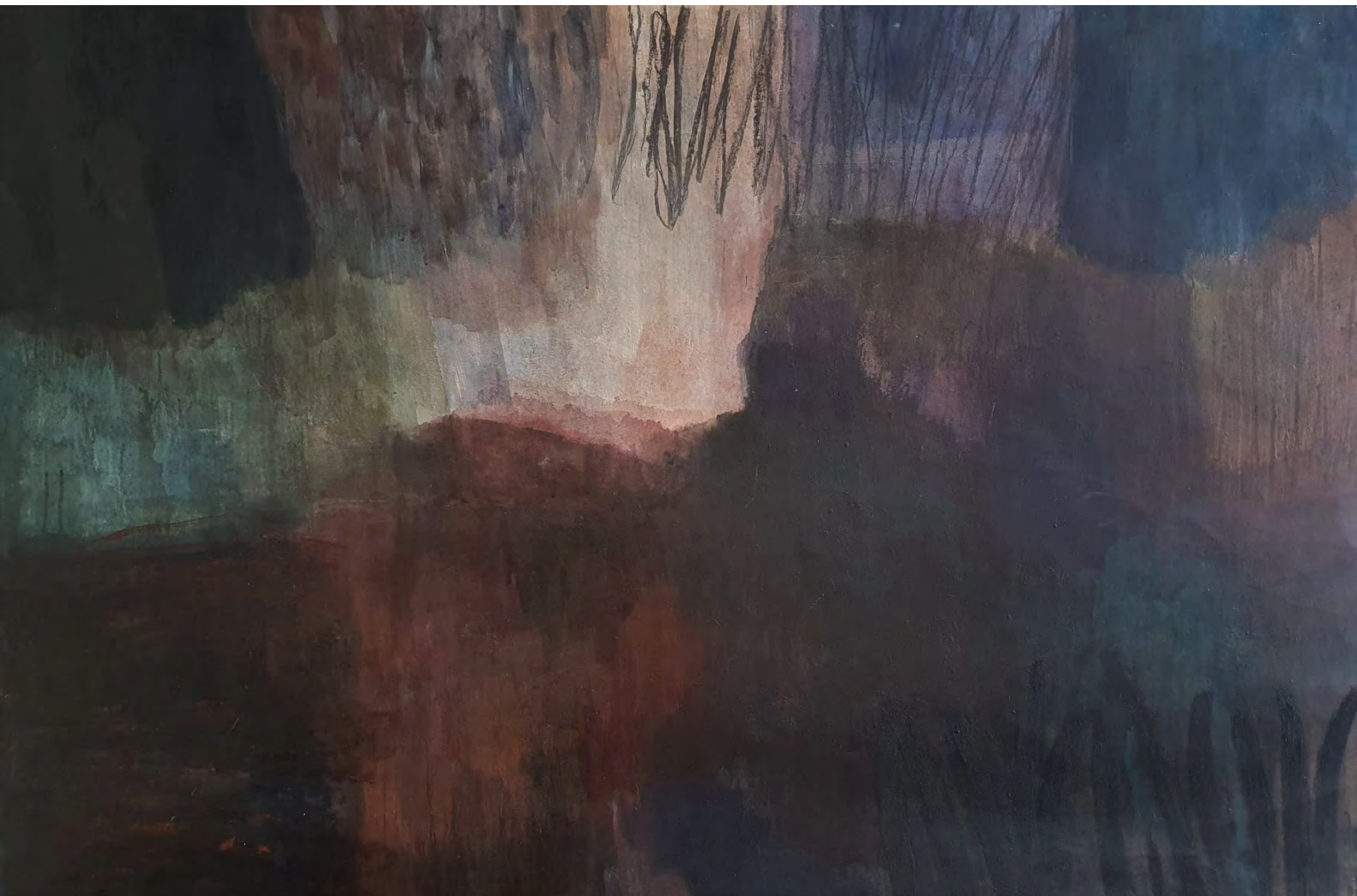
I had paintings of Caravaggio and Rembrandt in mind, artists who mastered the dark and light effect. They were figurative artists but this helped me to understand that dark and light could be the key to create an interesting abstract composition, that it could give this depth. With the series of dark painting I did, I did not go for the pitch black, I could not entirely leave the world of colours. An interesting observation was to realise that indistinctly in a dark situation we are looking for the light, and the opposite is true too. We only have to think of a situation where we are in a dark room and our eye is looking for light. Whereas if we are dazzled by the sun, we will seek to rest our eyes in a dark corner. Goethe formulates this antagonism situation:

33 - "The eye after sleep exhibits its vital elasticity more especially by its tendency to alternate its impressions, which in the simplest form change from dark to light, and from light to dark. The eye cannot for a moment remain in a particular state determined by the object it looks upon. On the contrary, it is forced to a sort of opposition, which, in contrasting extreme with extreme, intermediate degree with intermediate degree, at the same time combines these opposite impressions, and thus ever tends to a whole, whether the impressions are successive or simultaneous and confined to one image."

With the group of student we analysed one painting of everyone, when it came to one of mine, *In the cosy duvet of darkness*, I was surprised to see how different people's impressions were from the ones I felt when I painted it. For people the darkness is trying to cover the light, it frightens the light, it is oppressive, it depicts a dramatic scene, a suffocating situation. I cannot disagree with these feelings, although mine were quite at the opposite, I felt warmth and softness, the darkness was wrapped like a nice duvet, a reassuring and welcoming womb.

With the group we observed the ambivalence of the darkness as it is both active and passive. A brown mass is emerging behind the darkness and over the light, it is an individualized moment, a friendly detachment, a materialized darkness. We observed the relationships between colours, the browns that have similarities, the one down to the brown-ochre on the right, then the blue and down left, the brow reddish to the green. We have also noticed the diagonal from down left to top right that divided cool (top part) and warm tones (lower part).

This progression towards darkness was always based on the palette of base tones, these tones of colour darkened by black were my ingredients to advance step by step into more and more darkness. I felt at home among these base tones. The use of oil pastels and sand mixed with colour allowed me to give body to the darkness, a certain materiality. Depending on the angle of view, the relationship to the painting will not be the same, to be able to appreciate the different tones you will have to get close to the painting. The problem with dark paintings is the lighting which will give a very different perception depending on the exposure to light.



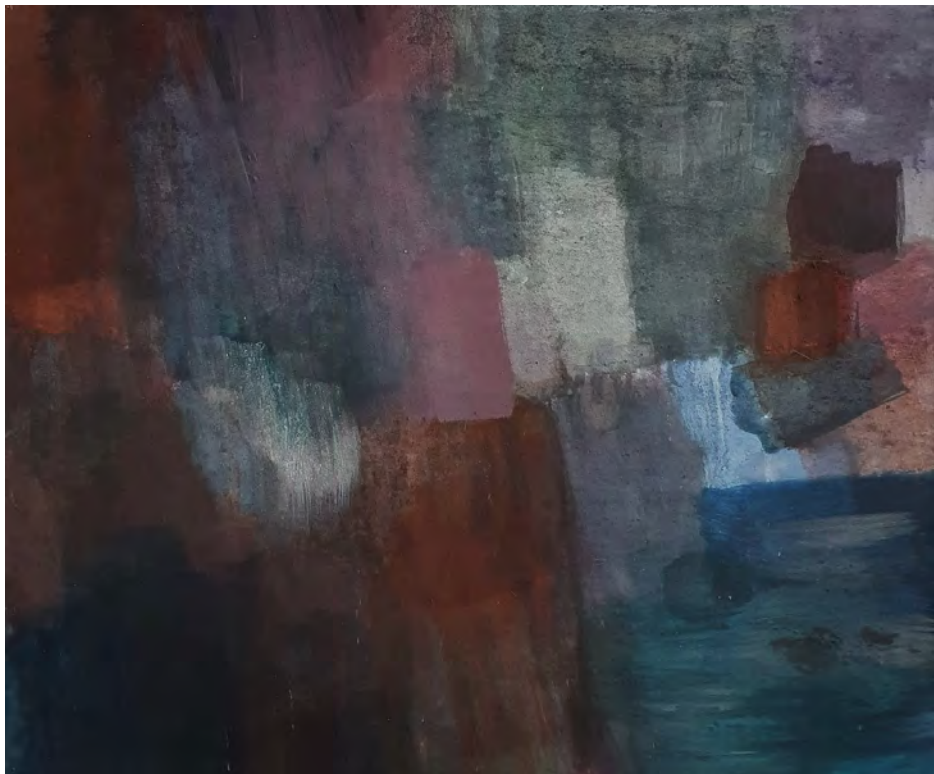
In the cosy duvet of darkness, pigments, oil bar, sand, 158x105cm



Details from In the cosy duvet of darkness



Towards the darkness, pigment, pencil, 89x75cm



Light in the darkness, pigment, 89x75cm



Dance in the darkness, pigments, oil bar, oil pastel, 135x105cm

In parallel, the experience of light

145-"Space, if we assume it to be empty, would have the quality of absolute transparency to our vision. If this space is filled so that the eye cannot perceive that it is so, there exists a more or less material transparent medium, which may be of the nature of air and gas, may be fluid or even solid.

146-The pure and light-transmitting semi-transparent medium is only an accumulated form of the transparent medium. It may therefore be presented to us in three modes.

147-The extreme degree of this accumulation is white; the simplest, brightest, first, opaque occupation of space.

148-Transparency itself, empirically considered, is already the first degree of the opposite state. The intermediate degree from this point to opaque white are infinite."

In order to explore this infinity of degrees between transparency and white opacity of which Goethe speaks, I sought to render these states in painting by using different materials, textures and shades of white. To do this I applied the different materials with a spatula, giving body and volume to the surfaces. I used a mixture of plaster and white, thick white, white mixed with sand, white with coffee grounds, lightly coloured white, varnish for an effect of transparency and brilliance, silk paper.

My first explorations of painting towards light left me unsatisfied, *Sweet I and II*, I had not yet made use of the different ways of treating white and I had mainly used white tinted with different pigments, which resulted in a range of pastel colours. I could not really relate to this palette which seemed too much like a baby's world, something too sweet for my taste. The work on the structured line as well as the addition of white surfaces allowed me to turn the situation of the baby world into an atmosphere of light and transparency. As much as with the dark paintings I was attracted by the dark and could always deepen my tones, with this series I was always on the hold for fear of taking a step too far and leaving the world of light, the credit of white is very quickly used since the starting point is pure light (the white paper).

This difficulty in gauging the amount of colour is also due to the fact that a white composition is less forgiving, it is a matter of having a greater awareness of where to place the coloured surface.

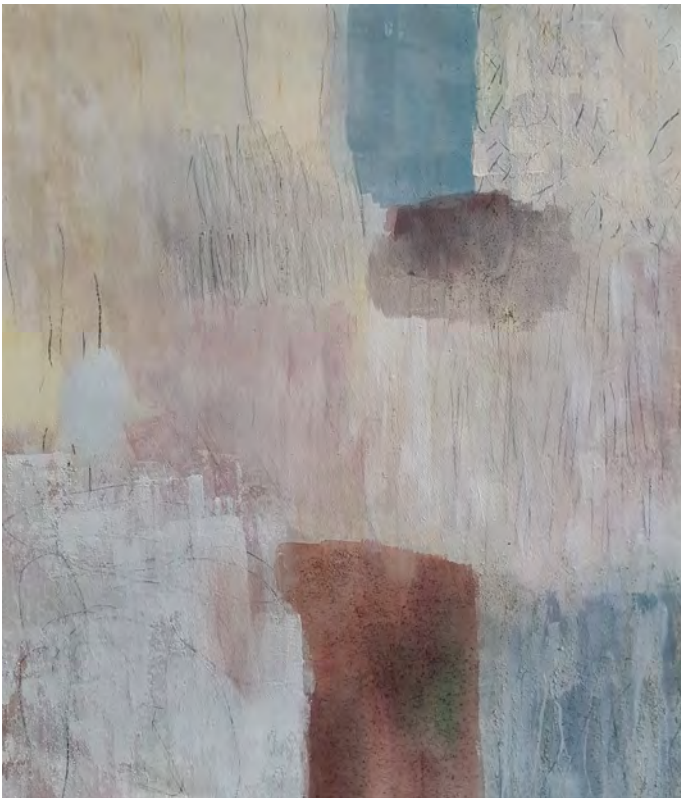
The line work for the painting, *Light atmosphere*, was not satisfying and so I approached the line in a different way for the painting, *Structured light*. I started with the line, but a structured line, like a weaving of line. I feel more connected to this way of working with the line, I still lack the courage, the conviction, the intuition of the line travelling through the composition. The structured line was in this case a way of forming the light, not by encircling it but rather by giving it matter and substance.



Details of the previous stage of sweet I



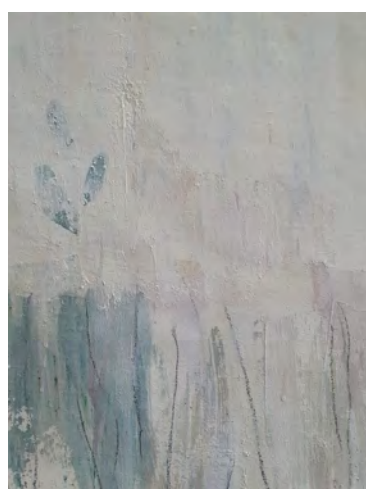
Sweet I, pigment, 75x87cm



Sweet II, pigments, 75x87cm



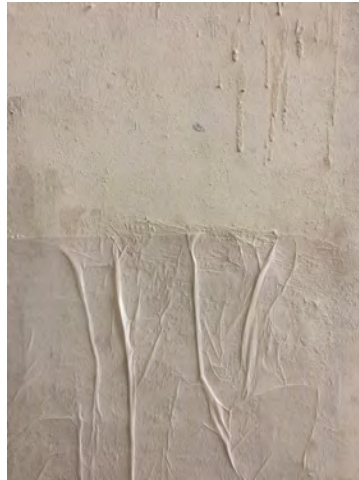
Structured light, pigment, 135x105cm



Details of Structured light



Light atmosphere, pigment, 158x105cm



Details of Light atmosphere

The colour emerging from darkness and light

The next step in this journey between light and darkness was to let the colour emerge more clearly. It was no longer a question of erasing it, of letting it die in the darkness or the light, but of giving it birth. I approached the question again by separating on the one hand the colour that has darkness as its parent and on the other hand the colour influenced by light. This is how I started my project, which I had not yet clearly formulated. My starting point at the time was to differentiate between dark and light colours, and inspired by the work of Andrea Eriksson. When I got to this stage again my inspiration was once more Eriksson's paintings. I had in mind his treatment of colour and his way of arranging the surfaces between them. It was a way of treating my composition with a new impulse, an impulse that was both inspiring and dangerous. Andrea Eriksson has this agility to place a coloured surface that stands out completely from the rest of the painting and yet integrates it perfectly. When it came time for me to try this "shock wave" I found it difficult to really embrace it, it was not so easy to integrate and accept it. For this new vibrating surface to be relevant there had to be a convincing response. The second danger was not to fall into a composition like a puzzle, that the different surfaces would not fit together too perfectly. Painting with darkness as its parent has evolved enormously. Faced with this painting, *Darkness's child II*, the question of the conscious decision of the composition arose for me. Should I have an idea of the composition before I started, or should I let myself be carried away by what was to come? Until now I had no clear idea of what the painting would look like, apart from the choice of colours, I did not decide anything before the emergence of several coloured surfaces. I was therefore guided by the suggestion that these surfaces offered. However, with this painting, the composition that was proposed to me was not satisfactory, only I found it difficult to give up certain qualities of colours that suited me if I observed the shades for themselves and not their outlines. I had to accept to lose some qualities for the sake of the composition. A composition that still leaves me unsatisfied, just like the colours finally which seem to have lost some of their freshness and which have fallen back into darkness.



Evolution of the Darkness's child II

Before I came to the moment of making these paintings responding to the question of the emergence of colour for its oneself, I was very much looking forward to the vividness of colour after having explored extreme darkness and extreme light. I was hoping to achieve a kind of explosion of colour but it seems to me that these two paintings, *Light's child II* and *Darkness's child II*, remained in a state of bloom. With hindsight it seems to me that I could have explored this stage further. In the end, the first two paintings show more of this.



The light's child I, pigment, 75x98cm



The Darkness's child I, pigment, 75x96cm



Light's child II, pigment, 105x105cm



Darkness's child II, pigment, 105x105cm



The meeting of darkness and light

Now it was time to make the two extremes meet. My aim was to play with my two palettes, the dark side and the light side. The first attempt, *A happily meeting*, was a joyful and smooth one. The dark and the light both ended up in a rosy mood. The second attempt, *Confrontation*, was much more conflictual. The assertion of two surfaces (the red-brown and the blue-grey) from the very beginning of the first brushstrokes placed the composition in a state of confrontation, of competition, who was going to take over? One came from the bottom and the other very imposing from the top, which necessarily generated a feeling of crushing, of suffocation. Throughout the progression of the painting I tried to solve this problem, how to transform this feeling of suffocation into a feeling that could remain conflicting but still allow breathing? I added a green surface between the two, I extended this green, I differentiated the qualities of colours, I widened and narrowed these two surfaces, so that one had more of a vertical dynamic and the other horizontal, but there was always something that blocked the breathing of the painting. Thanks to the students' suggestion I turned the painting from horizontal to vertical. This was the key to a new breath. The fact that I changed the orientation of the painting allowed me to see the language of the surfaces differently and thus improve their relationship. I would say that thanks to these changes I can appreciate the painting in both directions. As for the colour relationship in this painting I can see that I used my palette of basic tones for the surfaces with a strong language and my palette of lighter tones for the moments of breathing.

I have directed my third encounter of darkness and light, *Silver birch*, by a choice of colours that stand out more clearly from their respective parent, if we can still distinguish who belongs to whom their differences become more attenuated. Through this painting I wanted to find vivid and present colours. As far as the composition is concerned, Andrea Eriksson's influence is again not far away.

The next two paintings, *Densification of light and densification of darkness*, take a different path, it is another point of view on the question of the birth of colour, the meeting of darkness and light. Following an input I decided to explore this other path. The first step was to place black surfaces, sepia black, then to come up with a colour and its variants declined in the base tones. The colour then made it possible to create a bridge between darkness and light. For the exercise we took yellow as the "bridge colour", yellow being the first degree of densification of light. Goethe expresses it in the following way:

502- "[...] White that becomes darkened or dimmed inclines to yellow; black, as it becomes lighter, inclines to blue.

765- This is the colour nearest the light. It appears on the slightest mitigation of light, whether by semi-transparent mediums or faint reflection from white surfaces. [...]"

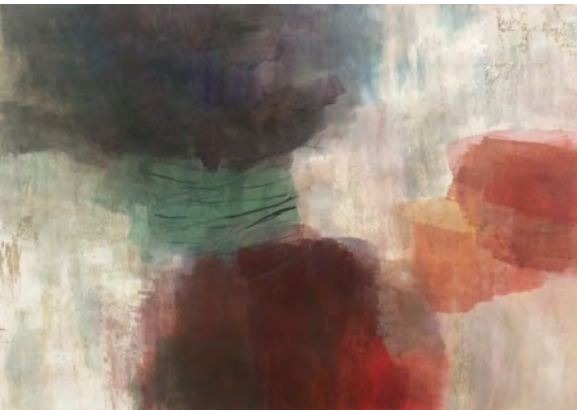
While painting this picture I wondered about the relationship between these yellow surfaces and the black, how they could cohabit together? How to make the yellow surfaces active and breathable? I was made aware of the fact that I had to stop at the right moment, to step back and feel what was the essential thing that could be missing and simply make the whole composition harmonious.

With these two paintings the doubt started to take more and more place in my mind, the feeling of being lost was growing, I was losing the thread of my project, I was questioning again the pure concepts that guided my work until now, had I still not understood anything? Everything was becoming a bit confused, the concepts were colliding, I had to reorganise it. If yellow was the fact that white became darker and blue was the fact that black became lighter, what about the red that was positioned next to the active black in the colour circle? (see chapter of the colour circle) I had to understand that it was like two points of view coming together. In summary we can consider that when the light is slightly covered by the darkness appears yellow, when the darkness lets the light through then it is red and if the darkness is lightened then it is blue that we see.



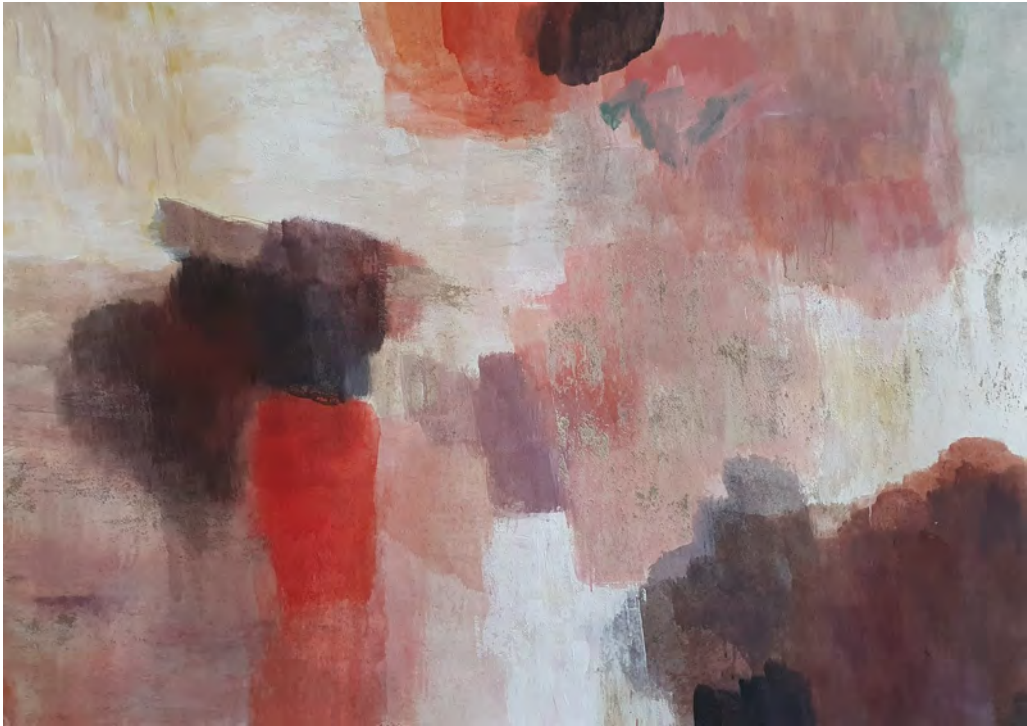


Evolution of Confrontation

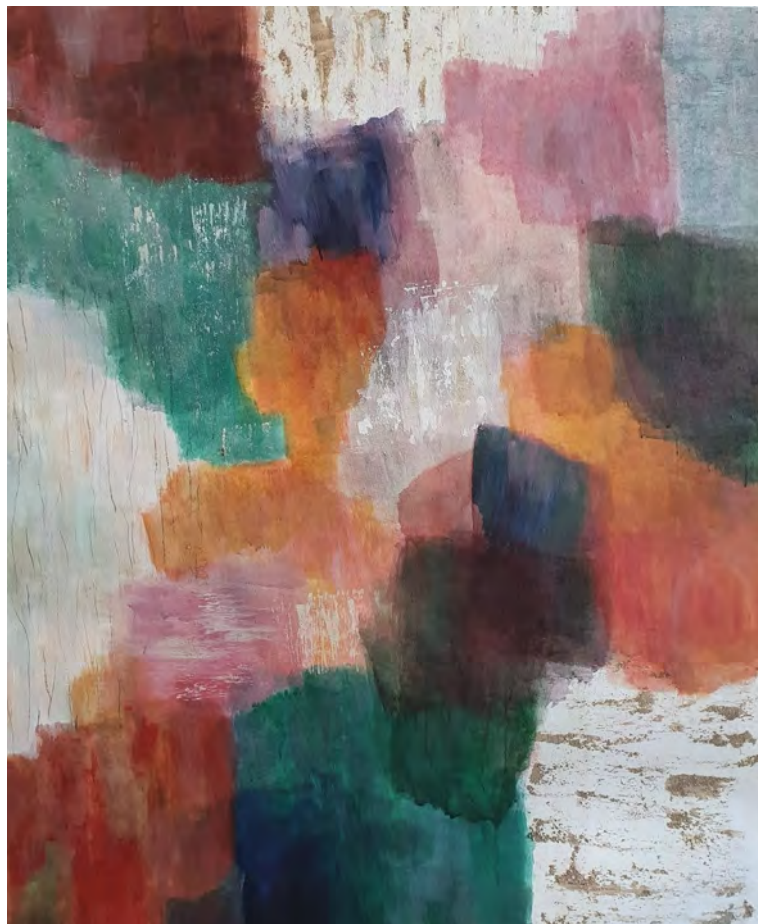


Confrontation, pigment, 105x149cm

For the second painting I had originally intended to experiment with the same exercise but choosing a different colour, I had chosen red out of personal attraction. However, after having put the concepts back in order, it seemed more relevant to me to go and see what was happening directly opposite the yellow, therefore the blue which would be the densification of the darkness. I had already placed my active black surfaces with red in mind and as I painted blue, blue-violet, blue-brown, I realised that these black surfaces sounded false, they were not in harmony with the dynamics of blue, more passive and enveloping than red. I therefore modified these surfaces and tried to give space to the blue. When Goethe talks about blue he says: 779- "This colour has a peculiar and almost indescribable effect on the eye. As a hue it is powerful, but it is on the negative side, and in its highest purity is, as it were, a stimulating negation. Its appearance, then, is a kind of contradiction between excitement and repose."



A happily meeting, pigment, 149x105cm



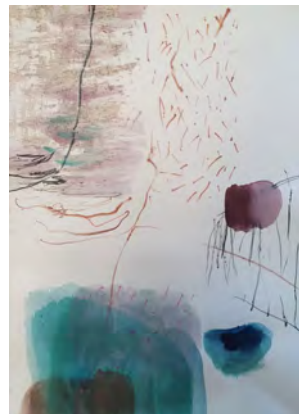
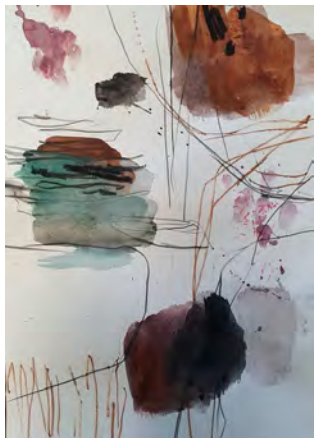
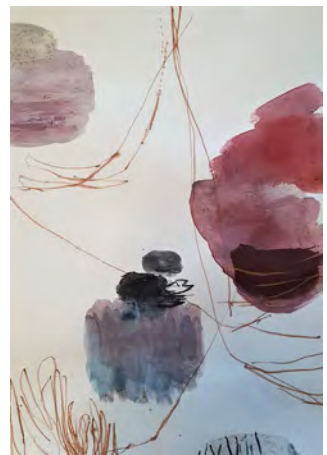
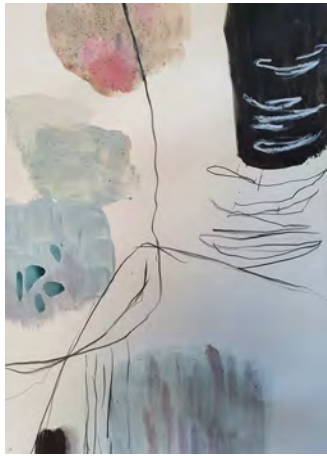
Silver birch, pigment, 105x130cm



Densification of light, pigment, 105x130cm



Densification of darkness, pigment, 105x132cm



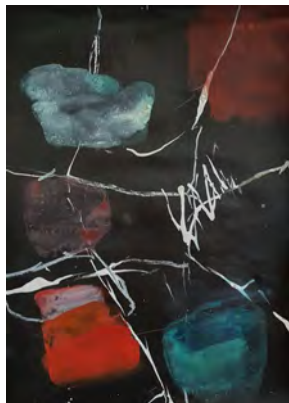
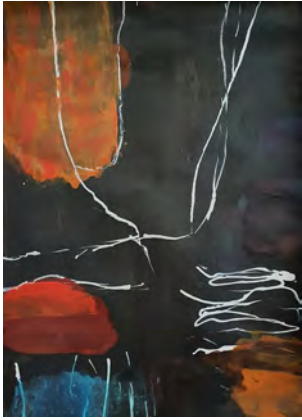
A3 Sketches

New approach to the birth of colour

Although I had put my mind in order, I was still lost and did not really know what the next step was, should I take a few steps backwards and pursue certain directions further? Should I deviate from my path? What if I took a leap forward? But how? I felt like I was facing a big void, as if there was no way out and that I had gone around the problem and that there was only to start again, maybe I would discover other qualities?

It was thanks to a suggestion from my teacher that I was able to give my project a new and refreshing twist. This suggestion consisted in tackling one of my difficulties, the approach of the line. The line as a contrast to the background creating a context of light and dark that could then welcome the colour. In order to make this contrast relevant I did this research of the line on one side; dark line on a white background, and on the other; light line on a black background. I first practised on small formats, before venturing onto larger ones. I was surprised how much I enjoyed exploring the line, it did not scare me as much, I felt like I could play with it. It was this feeling that I found refreshing, I felt like I was taking off a bit, perhaps because it required a very particular presence, I was taking control but happily and without authority. The visually simple situation of a line on a monochrome background requires a great deal of concentration when coming up with the colour, since there are not an infinite number of possibilities, or the composition takes a completely different direction, the background that was atmosphere at the time and that carried the whole thing is transformed into isolated surfaces. It's an experience that I would describe as joyfully stressful, and very stimulating.

I noticed the difference between making a composition on a black or white background. The relationship to the composition cannot be the same, they do not demand the same thing. I would say that the white background welcomes more easily, it is more tolerant and less definitive. The black background demands certainty, the line asserts itself immediately, as if the light in the darkness is more obvious than the darkness in the light. Perhaps light always wins over darkness in the sense that it is more perceptible?

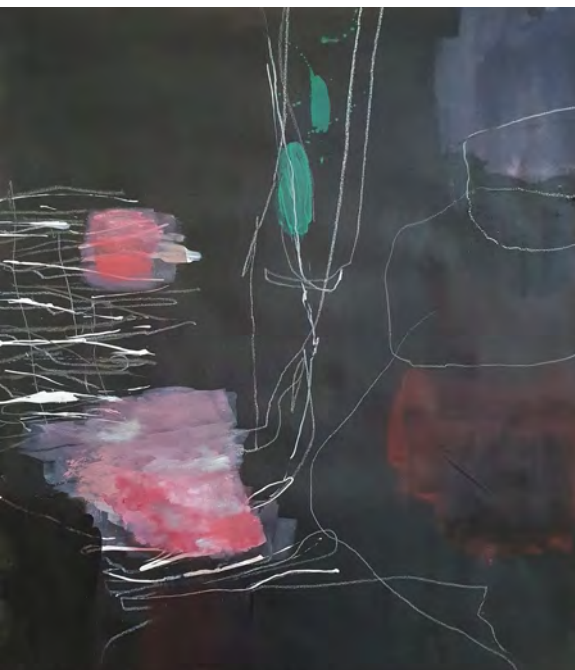


A3 Sketches

On a black background the colour does not fit in the same place, it needs space and does not overlap well with the line. The black background invites bright colours to assert themselves, without which the black absorbs the colour and attenuates it. The technical aspect certainly also had an impact since my black background did not have the same absorbent property as the white used to ground my paper.

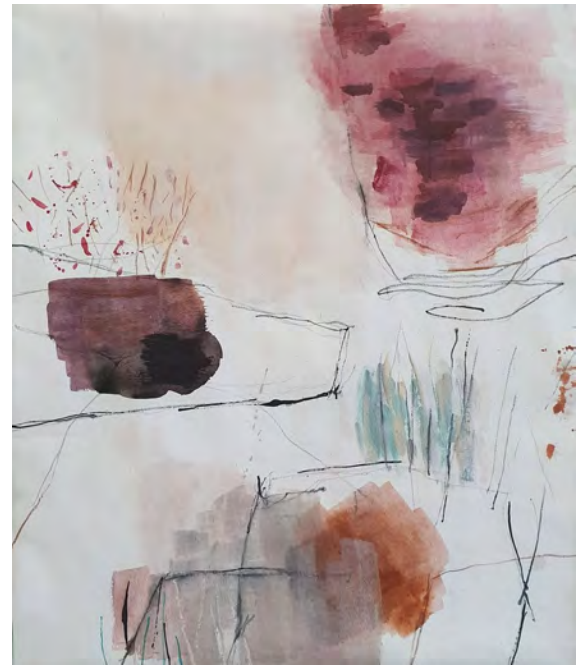
Both the black and white backgrounds required a varied, nuanced quality. It was more difficult for me to vary my colours on the black background whereas on the white backgrounds I felt the influence of all my work of the last few weeks, it was like a blossoming, my colour nuances were there, I did not have to look for them layer after layer of paint. To achieve this quality on the black backgrounds I tried to think of my weaving, their mottled, mixed colours, created by the patterns. Moreover, the inspiration for my lines was clearly fed by my weaving. It is perhaps this approach that allowed me to commit myself to the line, as if the weaving had been the necessary resource to feel what the movement of the line could be.

For this series of paintings I had to step back several times, not to rush headlong into it, and despite this effort of reflection mixed with intuition I sometimes went too far with the colour. It is by going a little too far that I learned this small trick which can "save" the composition, that consists in waking up the surface which is spread out too much by an accent darker than the background, so that I reactivate the way towards the light, and revitalized the unit.

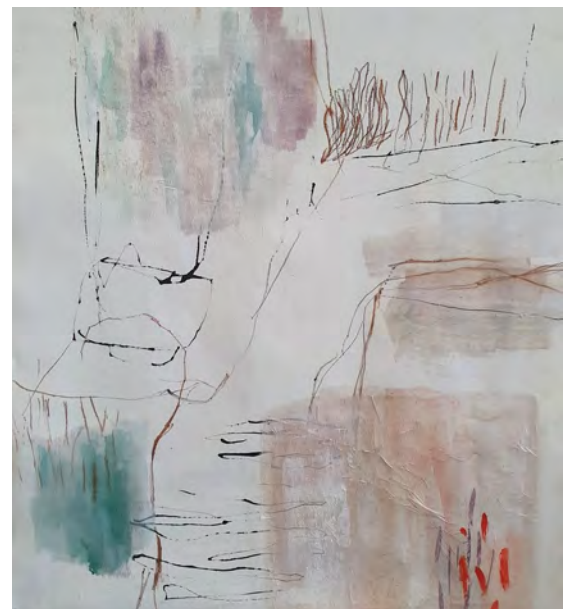


Birth of colour V, VI, VII, pigment, 75x88,5cm

Birth of colour I, pigment, 105x135cm



Birth of colour II, III, IV, pigment, 75x88,5cm



Weaving light and darkness

Light, darkness, colour surround us throughout the rhythm of the day, they are inherent, we are continually evolving in them, they are space, depth, intensity. Since we cannot dissociate ourselves from these natural conditions, it seemed appropriate to imagine an installation for the weaving project. I wanted to develop the same approach as in painting, to go through the same stages but to place it on a more physical level so that the installation invites you to travel through darkness to light by way of colour. These five stages, darkness, base tones, the meeting of the light and dark palette, the lightened tones, the light were in fact a dissociation of a phenomenon without interruption, the fact of being able to move through these stages would allow the whole to be reconstituted. The installation would be an invitation to a more physical experience.

I therefore imagined a mobile that places these five moments one behind the other, suspended from a common bar. Their warp colours and sizes vary, they are narrow rectangles that share the same warp structure.

For the first time I planned my composition in advance, imagined different possibilities and selected the one that seemed most interesting. I also thought in advance about the combination of my colours. This planning allowed me to better control the final result since, unlike painting, it is not really possible to modify a weaving afterwards. It also allowed me to channel my impatience with the slow rhythms of the tapestry technique. By doing this I also felt that I was taking a step towards the infinite possibilities that weaving offers me, I was detaching myself a little from the pure structure of weaving.

The most compelling piece was the base tones, it's amazing how I felt a stronger connection, like with painting, to the darkened colours, as if I identified more with that palette.

The composition of the weave of the lightened tones is a bit disappointing, maybe because it is a bit boring, it needs some kind of dynamism, maybe the too rectilinear side does not suit the light colours so well.

The weaving of the two palettes meeting is a foretaste of what my weaving can evolve into, but this foretaste is disappointing. It is disappointing because of its clumsy structure, and not technically mastered, as far as the colours are concerned I am not convinced that it is really a meeting between darkness and light, despite the presence of transparency the darkness dominates.

The weaving of pure darkness as well as light was imagined more simply, it was meant to be the reflection of a space without contour, without form, only the shades could vary them. They therefore have a more crafty aspect, it is less artistic, but I consider them to be nourishing bases.

My relationship to satisfaction and dissatisfaction is very strong with weaving, even radical, even if with hindsight this feeling can be modified. I perceive the progression of my weaving but it is far from being up to my expectations.



And the freedom in all this?

The theme of the birth of colour has repeatedly raised existential questions. First of all, how to orientate my project, how to feed it, how to make it rich in discovery? To be interested in colour for its own sake, yes, but often I had the impression of looking too closely at the bellybutton of painting. I can look at this bellybutton for a long time but it can bore me if its outline is not made attractive. It was a chance for me to give body to the colour, to find a space and an exciting language for it.

Giving this direction of exploration towards darkness and light allowed me to develop specific colour palettes base on a certain method, darkening or lightening each hue. Even though this method consciously evolved my basic palette, the one I naturally move towards, it remains entirely my own. Was my choice of colour made freely? Indeed nobody else but me forces me towards it, I am responsible for the enunciation of my method, however this choice remains partly unconscious, why am I unceasingly attracted more towards a range than another? What really determines this attraction, this choice? When I prepare my palette I am faced with an infinite number of possibilities, I imagine all sorts of combinations of pigments. This variety of possibilities seems to me to be a red carpet towards the world of colours, the freedom of creation of colours although defined by the manufacturing of pigments. Absolute freedom does not exist, it seems to me, since it always depends on defined elements, the pigmentation of nature, so freedom would be this capacity to make our own individual colour mixtures.

Assenza said that the preparation of his palette was his meditation, I gladly share this feeling, I am not at the stage of meditation but I would say without any doubt that it is a necessary step to establish a link with the painting that will be born. Moreover I understood very quickly as it had been explained to me that one should not hope to see a colour appear on paper if it is not contained in my palette.

As I discussed in the chapter on the emergence of colour, the question of whether or not to consciously decide on the composition of a painting challenges my relationship to my freedom to create. Am I more free when I let my brush decide what surface this colour will take? Or is it an act of greater freedom to decide in advance the outline of my surface? Generally my relationship to painting for this theme has been to let myself be guided by what the surfaces offer me. On the one hand it feels like a state of freedom not to be bound by a mental projection of what my painting should look like, but on the other hand I felt a sense of freedom when I had to make a wide awake decision for the paintings (**new impulse**). As if having to be extremely conscious of the next step to take filled me with a feeling of emancipation. I was no longer subject to the composition, I was in control of it, I was fully responsible for my decisions.

The question of the line, how to make it interesting, how to guide it through the composition has been a source of frustration until now. I can see its interest but the intuition that would make my hand travel along the surfaces is not at all obvious to me. I suppose this intuition is blocked by the fear of destroying my painting, one wrong stroke and it's a failure! Not feeling confident to play with the line I dodged the problem by making my paintings interesting enough without it, and for that I applied myself to vary the lightness and darkness in each colour to achieve a sense of depth.

When I used the line it was a so-called structural line, independent lines that together form a structure, a material, a weave. I always had to pay attention to the whole composition but these structural lines could work independently of each other.

Later I felt courageous enough to start a composition of more or less continuous lines (**new impulse**). Since I started the painting with the line I did not have to take into account the coloured surfaces, so I was freer for my "linear journey".

Whether it was the structure line or the continuous line, I realised that I always used the

same language, as if I had a repertoire from which I drew my inspiration. But if this impression of a repertoire is real, am I a prisoner of this language? I have sometimes had this feeling of running out of language and falling back into the same one again. I believe that our individuality shapes this language and I believe that freedom would be to have the courage to learn other languages.

I often had doubts about the relevance of my project, about its progress. I wondered what the point was, it seemed derisory, like being disconnected from the reality of the world, from what was happening in it. I had the feeling that I was working on a subject without content, that the content was only pictorial. There came a time when I even asked myself what was the point of painting one more painting? It seemed to me a rather self-centred way of approaching painting. I asked myself what my role was in all this. What was I trying to say through this project? What am I trying to do by choosing an artistic path?

I am far from having found answers to these questions, I imagine or I reassure myself that they will come with time. What I can see is that I am progressing in the purely pictorial field. It seems easier to start painting, to compose an atmosphere, to make a painting interesting for the eye, dynamic. I have started to gain confidence in the composition of the line, I have further sharpened my palette.

Even if I cannot point to my deepest intention that pushes me towards art, I believe that a part of me lives freedom through art, as if art was this little free zone inside me.



Reflections on the project

I would not be honest if I said that this project was a long quiet river. If I were to sum up all these weeks it would be doubt, a doubt that questions what I do, a doubt about the relevance of what I wanted to present as a path, a doubt that generated dissatisfaction. It's a dissatisfaction that I would not link so much to the result of the paintings and the weaving, but a dissatisfaction that is perhaps more existential. It is as if throughout this process I was struggling to grasp the essence of the project, I was always looking for that binder that would reconstitute this sense of fragmentation. I believe that the presentation of the project will allow me to visualise better, to have an overall vision.

With hindsight, I consider doubt as a situation that pushes me forward, even if at the time it is rather an impression of being on the spot.

Between these moments of doubt there were also moments of joyful discovery, I experienced the pleasure of going in search of colour, of refining the palette a little more, of abandoning myself in the tonality. The greatest satisfaction was the discovery of the play of the line, perhaps because it was an area where I did not really dare to venture, I felt incapable of doing so, while convincing myself that when the time came the line would make its appearance, but that time had not yet come. I do not admit to being victorious, I imagine that I will go through phases of re-interrogation again, it's far from being a given. I also dissociate the feeling of joy that animated me while making this last series of paintings from the feeling of satisfaction of the finished paintings, these are two feelings that do not have the same quality, I would say that the process can be happier than the result.

I expected this theme to gain confidence in painting an abstract composition, i.e. to identify, to feel what would make my paintings interesting, dynamic, generating a particular interest. In the previous theme there was an architectural structure, the human body, which allowed me to create depth, dynamism. For an abstract painting this becomes more complicated as there is only the nature of the painting itself to create this, the colour, the surface language, the line. I did not put too much pressure on myself with regard to the language of surfaces, I mainly emphasised the notion of darkness and light to obtain depth, and I thus let the surface emerge from itself.

If the river has not always been calm, it has at least carried me to new places.

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