



Red Yellow Blue

DCA Dundee Contemporary Art
4 July – 30 August 2009

An exhibition by Susanne Nørregård Nielsen

The exhibition Red Yellow Blue was curated by Graham Domke, Curator at Dundee Contemporary Art. Artwork selected for the exhibition is a body of critical appropriation work. Nielsen quotes aspects of iconic artwork as a point of departure. The work sets out to challenge dominant interpretations of key art and artists, in particular the two twentieth century pioneers of geometric monochromatic abstractions, Piet Mondrian and Kasimir Malevich.

OUTPUT



'Greenhouse', 2002, wood toughened glass, plants, tissue paper,
299.5 x 262.5 x 431 cm

Title

Red Yellow Blue

Submission No.

2159

Authors/Creators

Susanne Nørregård Nielsen

The exhibition was centred around a large greenhouse commissioned from Nielsen by DCA. The greenhouse contained plants that the artist Mondrian drew between 1899 and 1910, and again in the first half of the 1920s.

It also featured

Screenprint 'Modern Lovers' commissioned by DCA.

Six photographs, self-portraits with kites using Malevich Suprematist motifs.

The kites themselves are hung high on the walls of the space.

A stile added a second sculptural element.

Finally, two Suprematist dresses based on two Malevich sketches.



Exhibition view: 'Greenhouse' and Kite photographs

CONTEXT

Artwork selected for the exhibition Red Yellow Blue is a body of critical appropriation work. Nielsen quotes aspects of iconic artwork as a point of departure.

The work sets out to challenge dominant interpretations of key art and artists, in particular the two twentieth century pioneers of geometric monochromatic abstractions, Dutch artist Piet Mondrian and Russian artist Kasimir Malevich.

The citation and appropriation of Malevich and Mondrian's work is not to criticise the artwork itself but to create a dialog on how this art work is written into Art history.

Other contemporary artists using appropriation strategies which recall the 1980 appropriationists like Sherrie Levine are Cornelia Sollfrank and Simon Starling.

The photograph series 'Kites' deals particular in engagement with two concerns of Malevich's work; the tension between weight and weightlessness and the relationship between the body and spirituality.

This series 'Kites' and the two 'Suprematist Dresses after Malevich' brings together the figure and body into dialog with suprematism, the abstract movement Malevich developed. The work brings together aspects of Malevich's work which are often separated. Similarly relegated are his links to Russian embroidery and fabric design.



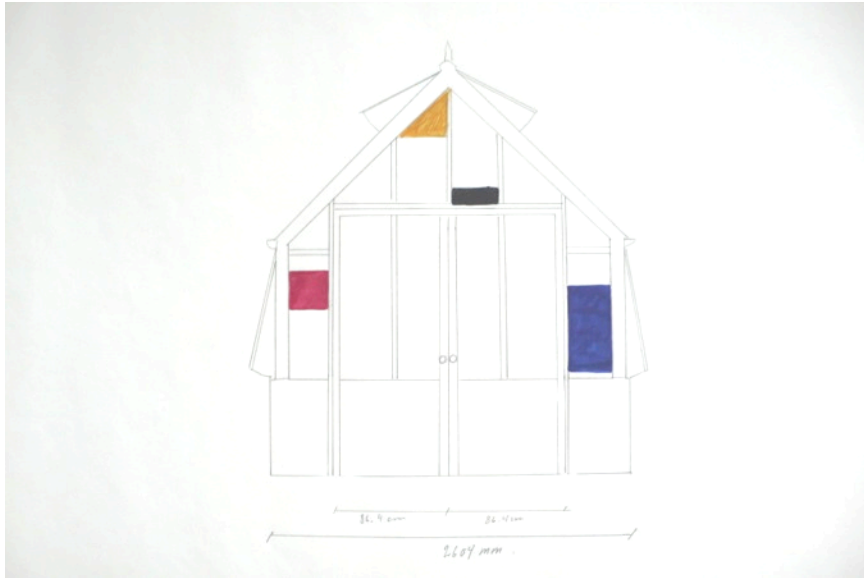
Exhibition view: 'Greenhouse'

Nielsen initial ideas for the commission 'Greenhouse' came from a series of work based on Mondrian. During a fellowship at the Pier Art Centre in Orkney in 2000, Nielsen became interested in the myth about Mondrian's relationship with the colour green. Art history's standard readings of his flower drawings are just as money spinning crowd pleasers. The flowers simply don't fit in a coherent, progressive and logical story of modern art.

In 2004 she made the work 'Mondrian's Flowerbed' in St. Andrew Botanic Garden, Scotland, part of the exhibition 'What in the world is more beautiful'. Nielsen identified, sourced and cultivated and planted the species of flowers depicted by Mondrian. This work culminated in a collection of photographs exhibited at Glasgow School of Art in 2007.

At this point the Mondrian Trust in America started to interfere with Nielsens work and threatened her with a lawsuit. The work thus joins debate around appropriation art by testing legal- political limitations on the modernist canon. As Dr Sarah Smith points out 'The prevailing culture of appropriation is married to a culture of permission'.

Please see Dr. Sarah Smith essay; "Mondrian Did Not Grow Flowers; The Criticality of Appropriation in the culture of Permission' 2008.



Sketch for Greenhouse

METHODOLOGY

This body of appropriation work is rooted in painting, but explores other methods and materials to make the work.

Research into forms and construction of early 20th century greenhouses were greatly assisted by Philip Norman and Anne Jennings of the Museum of Garden History, London.

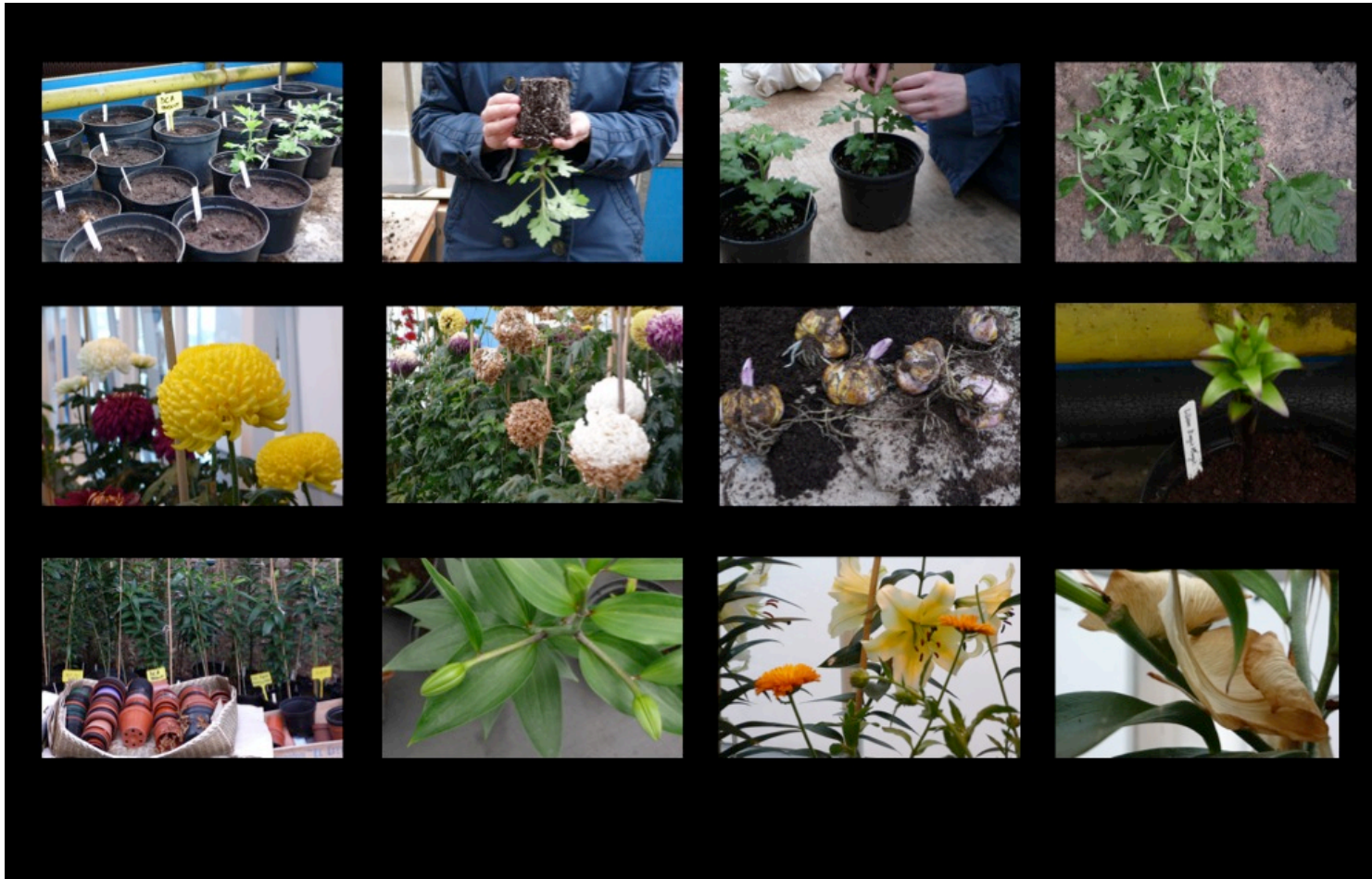
Interdisciplinary dialogue and research was crucial for the development of the project. Horticulturalists involved were both professional and amateur, ranging from dedicated chrysanthemum enthusiasts to Henry Noltie, senior research scientist at the Royal Botanic Garden, Edinburgh.



Images supplied from
Museum of Garden History



Mondrian's Greenhouse, photograph, 2002



The Botanic Gardens in Dundee offered greenhouse space and staff support for the growing the plants for six months.

The Scottish Chrysanthemum Society provided cuttings and keen support from their senior prizewinning expert Jim Cathcart.



'Modern Lovers' in production at DCA Printstudio.

As part of the exhibition Nielsen was commissioned to make an Edition of 20 Screenprints in collaboration with DCA Printstudio.

In 'Modern Lovers' we see an allegorical union of Modernist icons Sonia Delaunay (well known for her experimentation with movement and colour) and Giacomo Balla (co-founder of the Futurist movement, whose works depict the dynamism and speed of the 20th Century.)

DISSEMINATION

Scottish Contemporary Editions at the London Original Print Fair 2011. Represented by Dundee Contemporary Arts.



'Modern Lovers', 2009
Screenprint on Somerset White (300 gsm) paper, 49 x 56 cm,
Edition of 20



Exhibition view: 'Greenhouse' and Screenprint 'Modern Lovers'

DISSEMINATION

The Red Yellow Blue exhibition was visited by 5134 people, with an average daily attendance of 101.

A 3min video was produced by DCA for public screening in the exhibition information area. It is also online in their exhibition archive. Please see DVD in the portfolio.

Dr Sarah Smith gave a talk at DCA on 1st August 2009, discussing Nielsen's work in the exhibition, the artist's influences and addressing key issues of appropriation and homage.

Dr Sarah Smith's essay 'Mondrian Did Not Grow Flowers: The Criticality of Appropriation in the Culture of Permission' was available for visitors to take. Please see essay in the portfolio.

Dissemination for the other component art work is described along with the following images of the work.

The element of play takes different forms in Nielsen work. With the 'Stile' it is a word play on 'De Stijl' – the art movement which the work visual references.

The 'Stile' was installed between the tall grassland and the wildflower meadow.

Its structure reflects the proportions and forms characteristic of the De Stijl aesthetics and it is painted in ways that make direct reference to work of that period, notably of Mondrian's abstract compositions.

The 'Stile' refers to the evolution of Mondrian's vision "of the totality of nature expressed by the intersection of two lines".

DISSEMINATION

The 'Stile' was commissioned by the Meadow Gallery at Burford House in Shropshire as a part of an exhibition "Picture This: Revisiting the Picturesque" 2003.



Exhibition view: 'Stile', 2002, gloss oil paint on oak, 130 x 120 x 142.5



Exhibition view: 'Greenhouse', Kites Photographs

- 'Black Circle', 2004, photograph, 60 x 60 cm
- 'Black Cross', 2004, photograph, 60 x 60 cm
- 'Black Square', 2003, photograph, 60 x 60 cm
- 'Red Square', 2004, photograph, 60 x 60 cm
- 'White on White', 2005, photograph, 60 x 60 cm

The kites play on the idea of the Constructivist art movement and its affinity with aviation. With this work I reanimated individual paintings by the Russian artist Kazimir Malevich, flying them in kite form.

The kites are the same size as Malevich's original paintings. There are two important things here, firstly that the kite is removed from being perceived as painting and secondly the notion of play in order to open up or create a new dialogue.

DISSEMINATION

This series was first published in Source, the photographic review, issue 46, spring 2006.

Also in Katalog 19.3, Journal of photography & video, Denmark, 2007.

The Photograph 'Black Square' was used for the front cover of the book: Rethinking Malevich', Proceeding of Conference in celebration of the 125th anniversary of Kazimir Malevich's birth, New York. Edited by Charlotte Douglas and Christina Lodder. The Pindar Press, London 2007

Three photograph from this exhibition 'Black Circle', Black Cross' and Black Square' feature in the book 'Auto Focus: The Self Portrait in Contemporary Photography' by Susan Bright. Thames & Hudson 2010

The Kites is also cited in the publication: Giorgio Bonomi, ii corpus solitario. L'autoscatto nella fotografia contemporanea. (The solitary body, selfportrait in Contemporary photography).



Exhibition view: 'Greenhouse', Kites and Suprematist Dresses after Malevich

For this exhibition Nielsen showed the kites themselves in the gallery. Their positioning in the gallery is also reminiscent of the irregular heights that Malevich often chose to install his paintings. In particular the first Suprematist exhibition in 1915 called '0-10'.

DISSEMINATION

The kites were flown at the 'Great Glen Artist's Airshow' at Highland Institute for Contemporary Art in 2010, curated by Arts Catalyst, London.

'White on White', 2004, polyurethane kite, 79.4 x 79.4 cm
'Black Cross' 2004, polyurethane kite, 106 x 106 cm
'Black Circle' 2004, polyurethane kite, 106 x 106 cm
'Red Square', 2004, polyurethane kite, 53 x 53 cm
'Black Square', 2003, polyurethane kite, 106 x 106 cm



Exhibition view: Kites and Suprematist Dresses after Malevich.

The Suprematist Dresses after Malevich are based on a drawing by Malevich: 'Design for a suprematist `dress' in 1923. According to Christina Lodder those two dresses have not been made before.

DISSEMINATION

The Dress to left was first shown at Arttextile in 2004, a national UK touring exhibition.

'Suprematist Dress after Malevich I, 2004, linen, size 14

'Suprematist Dress after Malevich II, 2004, linen, size 14