

David Sequeira

Fugue

6 December - 15 December 2018
Gertrude Glasshouse
44 Glasshouse Road, Collingwood
Open Thursday–Saturday, 12–5pm

WHAT DID GOETHE SAY TO NEWTON ABOUT COLOUR... AFTER READING A PERSIAN DIVAN '?

Nothing I suspect, because they weren't talking to each other. But if we imagine the differing understandings of colour that this question conjures up, it enables us to reflect upon the complexity of how colour is experienced and understood in the world. And it helps us to consider David Sequeira's *Fugue*.

Colour is experienced internally as sensation that becomes both felt and encoded (Goethe), and as external phenomenon that can be analysed objectively / scientifically (Newton).

And what about the divan from the East? The divan... a poetic form that so inspired Goethe, where colour is alluded to and operates within culturally specific symbolic orders. A poetic form where colour evokes the spiritual - that engenders a sense of wonder beyond ego, that is intended to enable us to become aware being amid a bigger picture... (apologies to Hockney). David Sequeira's work *Fugue* enables us to consider these things and much more. It consists of 100 or so coloured, open topped, glass vessels arranged on a continuous six-metre-long shelf. As a work, it exists as something that reconciles materials, site, optics and poetry.

A first impression is of found objects (vases) on a shelf arranged to reflect the spectrum. Wrong! We need to say farewell to the Duchampian idea of found objects here. We find instead upon closer scrutiny, specifically fabricated objects grouped in particular ways to generate deliberate movements of colour and form, themes are repeated, colour repetitions and variations resonate, echo, call and respond. There are variations on themes... movements of components... of colour chords. As the title *Fugue* implies, musical analogies of harmony, counterpoint, theme and variation, are useful in understanding the work. *Fugue* takes us on a journey from material to the immaterial. This work transports us from the concrete to the felt, and in doing so enables us to contemplate the nature of form, object, colour and beauty.

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What are these coloured vessels that we see? They exist as very specific objects, in a very different manner from Donald Judd's realizations of the term. They are what they are but suggest something beyond their materiality. In *Fugue* not only do we see coloured glass vessels support reflections but we also become aware of site, air, atmosphere, the full and empty container and the choices made... or as Sequeira would put it - everything and nothing.

In response to Frank Stella's one liner, 'What we see is what we see', the Swiss abstract painter Helmut Ferdele suggested, 'What we see is who we are'. Sequeira's work helps us to consider our levels of experiencing sensation and knowledge. We are offered the chance to see our own operations of perceiving, of making sense, of imagining.

Colour codes are culturally specific, local and contextual and thus they are tricky, unstable and difficult to read in a global world. *Fugue* reveals Sequeira's understanding of this. His colour does not operate as fixed symbol but more as associational sensation. Colour experience as sensation is universal. What Sequeira's work amplifies is our experiencing of colour value. It reveals that our response is not only intellectual but also biological. We respond to the intensity and opticality of these particular sets of colours and forms... and in doing so, colour is felt. It becomes energy not symbol.

In *Fugue*, colour is manifest in glass vessels. Via their transparency and refraction, colour becomes light - light with all its readings. These vessels are open and appear empty. Yet they contain air and light. They refract light to project colour on the surroundings creating subtle soft atmospheres. Glass is a hard material. In this case as a surface it reflects colour and image. In the reflected surfaces we witness a micro-macro interplay. If we get close enough we see ourselves looking, we see the distortions of the surrounding space. As a metaphor for our place in the world, this is powerful. We see ourselves placed amid a symphony of colour, amid a cacophony of times and spaces. We can see a micro world reflected on the transparent surface of a single vessel, now multiply this by 100 and you begin to enter the endlessness and beauty of David Sequeira's world.

The shelf upon which these vessels sit exists not only as a support but also as a timeline that we move along. As we move, our perceptions shift. We engage with the passage of times, the movement of colours and the moments of colours. Transparencies, opacities, intervals, densities are revealed. The singular form overlaps with others to become multiple, creating new unexpected relationships of colour and form as we pass along. These dynamics are created by our own passage, by our movement. This results in a slow durational unfolding awareness of what I can only term beauty.

Through his sensibility to and knowledge of colour David Sequeira in this work creates a contemplative universe, not western, not eastern but informed by both. We need work like this today. Work that reveals curiosity and throws cynicism and décor away to reveal and claim a quiet beauty as part of reality. David Sequeira's *Fugue* is a poetic gift of colour. This poetic gift generates energy, a gentle energy containing the associated strength and fragility of glass and the illusionary fleeting quality of colour... reflecting...transporting.

David Thomas
Melbourne, November, 2018.

¹The Divan is a form of Persian contemplative poetry. Goethe's *West-Eastern Divan* was written between 1814 and 1819, and expanded in 1827. It was inspired by translations of the poetry of the 14th Century Persian poet Hafez.

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