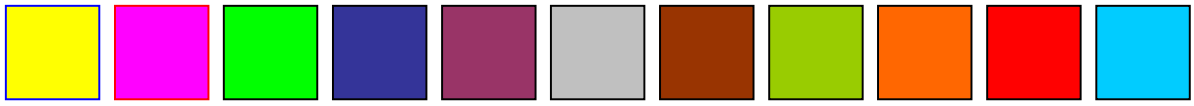
Tate Liverpool
Colour Chart
Reinventing Colour, 1950 to Today

Educators' Pack

Colour Chart: Reinventing Colour, 1950 to Today is the first major exhibition devoted to the significant moment in Twentieth-Century art, when a group of artists began to perceive colour as 'readymade' rather than as scientific or expressive. Taking the commercial colour chart as its point of departure, the exhibition emphasises a radical transformation in post-war Western art that is characterised by the departure from such notions as originality, uniqueness and authenticity. Long-held convictions regarding the spiritual truth or scientific validity of particular colours gave way to an excitement about colour as a mass-produced and standardised commercial product. The Romantic quest for personal expression instead became Andy Warhol's *"I want to be a machine"*; the artistry of mixing pigments was eclipsed by Frank Stella's *"straight out of the can; it can't get better than that."*
The works in this exhibition explore two themes: ready-mixed colour purchased from a store and colour found in everyday life, such as light bulbs, car paints, printed materials and computer palettes.

This pack is designed to support educators in the planning, execution and following up to a visit to Tate Liverpool. It is intended as an introduction to the Colour Chart exhibition with a collection of ideas, workshops and points for discussion. The activities are suitable for all ages and can be adapted to your needs.

Contents



Colour Charts – a brief history

The commercial colour chart is a practical device designed to assist decorators and interior designers choose from a range of factory-made paints. It was originally intended for artisans, not artists, devised at a time when household paint was not considered a material for fine art.
Colour charts first appeared in the 1880s when mass-produced, ready-mixed paints were first manufactured for commercial use.
The earliest examples consisted of actual paint samples applied to card or thick paper, which were cut out and then glued to the chart, which perhaps explains the simple grid format that remains in use today.
With the advancement of mechanical reproduction techniques in the 20th century, these swatches of colour were printed rather than handmade.
The colours are always perfectly flat with no brushstrokes, in order to demonstrate the smooth finish that can be attained by the paint.
There is no logical, artistic or scientific system of arrangement for the colours on the charts (unlike a spectrum or an artist's colour wheel, for example). It is a simple table of colours available for purchase from the manufacturer.

Artists and paint

Colour in art was traditionally created by the artist or with the help of assistants. It was handmade by grinding, distilling and combining pigments obtained from natural sources. Certain colours became more valued than others due to the rarity of the pigment. For example, the colour ultramarine was originally made from the semi-precious stone, lapis lazuli and so was used sparingly by artists for subjects of great importance, such as the Virgin's robes in religious painting.

Mixing paint was essentially a scientific process. Leonardo da Vinci would infuriate patrons by the length of time he devoted to experimenting with paint, but even during the Renaissance, many artists paid chemists to distil and combine pigments for them.

By the 17th century, it became common practice for artists to buy their materials, including ready-mixed paints, from "colourmen," who also supplied brushes and prepared canvases. The emergence of their trade was stimulated by the increasing number of amateur artists. Many professional artists still preferred to supervise their own paint-mixing, however, in order to ensure that their pigments were of the highest quality and not adulterated with cheap additives by some of the less scrupulous suppliers.

From the 19th century, paint became synthetically manufactured and commercially packaged for both artists and decorators to purchase. Firms specialising in paint manufacture included Middletons, Rowney, Reeves, Ackermann and Windsor and Newton. The material was manufactured in bulk for industrial purposes such as house decoration or theatrical scene painting and also packaged in smaller quantities to be sold to artists. Indian yellow was no

longer made from the urine of cows fed on mango leaves, rose madder was not obtained by crushing plant roots any more, but the new synthetically made versions of these colours along with many others have kept their traditional names.

The availability of a wide range of new, vibrant colours benefited artists of the modern age, particularly the Impressionists and Post-Impressionists. Colour played an important role in the art of Monet, Gauguin, Seurat, Matisse, Van Gogh and many others. It was employed scientifically and experimentally as artists combined different colours to create startling visual effects and to capture the effects of changing light. It was also used expressively in order to evoke emotion and create moods.

In the early Twentieth Century, however, some artists began to view paint as a physical material rather than a means of spiritual or emotional expression. Picasso and Braque used household paint as they began to incorporate materials from everyday life into their paintings and collages and to reject "traditional" art materials. In *Violin, Glass, Pipe and Anchor, Souvenir of Le Havre*, 1912, Picasso used Ripolin - an enamel paint used for painting wood and metal. He claimed that "*the limits of oil paint from tubes had been reached*".
Picasso's enthusiasm for colour from a can was shared by a number of his contemporaries, including Marcel Duchamp. In the last painting that he produced, *T' Um*, 1918, Duchamp celebrates this convenient, ready-made material (see Work in Focus)

The American Abstract Expressionists favoured household paint for both political and practical reasons. Firstly, the use of "non-art" materials was considered utilitarian and in character with their anti-establishment image. Secondly, it was a cheap alternative to traditional oil paint, particularly for large scale works. House paint also allowed a smooth, flat finish concealing evidence of the artist's hand. Jackson Pollock famously dispelled with the brush-mark all together as he built up veils of colour by dripping the material onto the canvas.

In the 1960s, artists experimented with an infinite range of materials and processes in order to find out what art could be. Artists such as Warhol and Lichtenstein took their inspiration from printed material as they imitated the visual language and techniques of commercial artists, advertisements and comics. Yves Klein used the human body in order to apply paint to a surface (*Anthropometries)* and invented his own colour, (*International Klein Blue*), whilst Ed Ruscha experimented with household substances in place of paint (*Stains,* 1969)).

Exploring the properties of paint became an end in itself for many artists. Paint was poured onto the surface without using a brush (eg Ian Davenport); soaked into the canvas (eg Albers, Rothko); manipulated with a variety of tools and implements (eg Bacon, Richter); built up sculpturally and scraped back with

scalpels (eg Auerbach, Kossoff); and even removed with white spirits (eg Callum Innes).

In recent decades, the ideological significance of using tradesman's paint has been lost as artists take it for granted that anything can be used to make art. Ready made palettes are available to today's artists in an ever expanding range of resources which includes digital cameras and ink-jet printers. Paint Shop Pro and Photoshop have become the 21st century's Windsor and Newton.

Activities

1 **Find out** about the names of paints and where they have originated eg Cardinal Red, Burnt Siena, Prussian Blue, Lead White. Some of the names are descriptive, some scientific, some historic
2 **Write** a colour poem inspired by the names on a colour chart
3 **Compile** your own colour chart – mix the shades yourself and make up your own names for colours
4 **Look for** examples of colour charts in everyday life – eg on your computer, car manufactures, hair dyes, fashion supplements and clothes catalogues, upholstery, mobile phones, laptops etc
5 **Cut up** colour charts and make a mosaic or collage using the squares of colour
6 **Make** an abstract collage in mono-chrome using as many samples of one colour as you can from colour charts or cut from magazines eg different variations of red, blue, violet, beige etc
7 **Research** the history of Windsor and Newton, Robert Ackermann or the Reeves brothers. What did they contribute to the history of painting?

In Colour

The commercial colour chart is concerned with demonstrating the range of colours available from a manufacturer. It is simple to understand in format and practical to use. It is not concerned with science, the aesthetic qualities, psychological or emotional responses to colour. However, it is important to note that colour theory has played a large part in art history and that many artists have chosen certain colours specifically for emotional or psychological impact or to evoke a certain mood (Van Gogh, the Fauves, German Expressionists etc). It is debatable that even though the artists in this exhibition have been selected for their "colour chart sensibilities" and indifference to colour theory, the colour in their works can still evoke a response in the viewer.

The introduction of colour to many products that had previously been black and white had a big impact on post-WWII life as magazines, billboards and comics appeared in colour, a wider range of dyes was available for fabrics, bright new materials such as plastic appeared on the market and of course there was the advent of colour television which became widespread in Britain in the late 1960s.

With a greater interest in DIY and interior design in recent decades, consumers have demanded an expansive choice of colours to transform their homes. It is interesting that in recent years the colour chart has become aestheticised by modern hardware stores and paint manufacturers as they promote paint as a means of creating moods in the home. Names such as "*Lunar Landscape*", "*Atlantic Surf*" and "*Sicilian Summer*" attempt to persuade the customer, perhaps, that they are being offered more that just paint in a can, but an ambiance or a lifestyle.

Discuss – can an artist's choice of colour be arbitrary? Do certain colours have specific associations and if so, are these responses universal or personal?
Research – colour theory, eg Isaac Newton, Goethe, synaesthesia, colour therapy etc
Experiment – by making several copies of a drawing and using a different colour for each one. What effect does each colour have on your drawing?

Work in Focus

Marcel Duchamp: *Tu m'*, 1918

"Since the tubes of paint used by an artist are manufactured and readymade products we must conclude that all paintings in the world are readymades..." *- Marcel Duchamp*

T' Um, 1918 was the last painting that Duchamp produced, though technically, perhaps, it should be called an assemblage for it includes several real objects, fastened to the two dimensional surface. In some ways, it can be interpreted as a summary of Duchamp's artistic output. On either side of the canvas are painted images of his "readymades" which were sculptures made from everyday objects – a bicycle wheel on the left and a hat-stand on the right. Between them is a cascade of colour swatches making the first reference in art history to the colour chart. Manufactured paint, of course, is a form of "readymade" material available to the modern artist. The final swatch is not painted on the canvas, but a separate panel of colour bolted to the painting marking the boundary between illusionary space and the real space of the viewer.
These receding units could also be making reference to the artist's most famous painting *Nude Descending a Staircase*, 1912 in which movement is implied by similarly overlapping planes.
Duchamp claimed that these lozenges of colour were painted by a commercial artist, A Klang thus undermining the importance of "the artist's hand". Did Klang also paint the pointing hand in order to emphasise this subversion of the artist's role? In fact, A. Klang was as fictitious as the R. Mutt who signed his famous urinal readymade, *Fountain,* 1917. However, Duchamp did not paint the swatches. They were actually painted by his artist girlfriend, Yvonne Chastel.
By this stage, Duchamp openly declared his discontent with traditional forms of art. The Title *Tu M'* is a French phrase in which the verb has been missed out (literally "you…me"), leaving the viewer to fill in the blank. One suggestion is "tu

m'ennuies" – "you bore me". By leaving the title unfinished, Duchamp suggests that he is so fed up that he cannot be bothered to complete the sentence.
For Duchamp, perhaps this work was not only about the end of painting for him, but the end of the road for a medium which he felt was exhausted. Besides visually quoting his own works, Duchamp also makes subtle allusions to other artists. In the middle of the canvas, a tromp l'oeil rip is repaired with real safety pins, citing perhaps the cubist collages of Braque and Picasso which combined real and painted objects. These works prefigured Duchamp's "readymades" in breaching the boundaries between art and life.
The unusual shape of the canvas was dictated by the dimensions of the space it was commissioned for above a bookshelf by his friend Katherine Dreier.

Discuss whether this work is a painting or a sculpture... or could you call it a collage, an assemblage or a relief? Find other examples of art which defies traditional categorisation.
Make an assemblage using colour planes and everyday objects
Visit the DLA Piper This is Sculpture display at Tate Liverpool and see Duchamp's most famous readymade – *Fountain, 1917/1964*

Work in Focus

Ellsworth Kelly, Colors for a Large Wall, 1951

"My collages are only ideas for things much larger- things to cover walls" *- Ellsworth Kelly*

Kelly considered this work to be his masterpiece from a period spent in France as a young American G.I. The painting has its origin in a set of eight collages *Spectrum Colors Arranged by Chance,* 1951. For these works he bought huge supplies of coloured adhesive paper from an art store in Paris which he distributed at random over the surface of predetermined grids drawn on supporting sheets of paper. The structure of the collage was worked out according to mathematical systems devised for each individual work, but the placement of the colours was decided entirely by chance.
When he had finished these eight collages, Kelly had some coloured squares left over and decided to make a smaller one that measured eight squares across and eight squares down. As he did not have enough coloured papers to cover the grid, many of the spaces were left white. Eventually, he used this "unfinished" collage as the basis for a painting, translating the randomly assigned squares of colour into paint on a canvas, the result being *Colours for a Large Wall.*

Draw a grid using as many squares as you like eg 8x8, 10x10 etc. Give each square a number and then ask a friend to pick a number as you pick a colour at random for that square. You could turn this into a game (like "Battleships") or you could pick numbers and colours from a hat
Shuffle a pile of different coloured squares of paper and then let them fall onto a supporting sheet of paper. Stick the squares where they fall for a collage created

by chance
Compose a "Large Wall Painting" by drawing a grid onto the classroom wall and assigning each student a square to fill at random with a different colour

Work in Focus

Andy Warhol, *Untitled (from Marilyn, 10 prints),* 1967

"In August 1962 I started doing silkscreens. I wanted something stronger that gave more of an assembly line effect" - Andy Warhol

Warhol began his career as a commercial artist designing advertisements for shoes. In 1960 he began to make paintings based on images from newspapers and magazines. From 1962 he produced his first screenprints taken from mass-produced images of soup cans, cola bottles and portraits of famous people. These prints were mechanically reproduced by Warhol or by assistants from his studio which he appropriately called the Factory. In reduplicating these images, he denied them the uniqueness usually associated with an artist's work.
In Marilyn Monroe, Warhol found a subject which combined two of his favourite themes: death and the cult of celebrity. Following her death in 1962, Warhol produced numerous silkscreen images of her all based on the same publicity photograph taken by Gene Kornman for the 1953 film, *Niagara*. This set of ten screen-prints was made in 1967, set number 224 in an edition of 250. The repeated image of Marilyn serves as a base for variations of startling colour applied in flat blocks or zones. Colour dominates each image, highlighting the predominance of artificial colour in modern urban life. It is not just the paint that is manufactured, or Warhol's "factory" produced print, but the whole screen persona of Marilyn Monroe – name, hair dye, make-up and image.

Create your own celebrity images by tracing photographs from magazines and then making multi-copies of the resulting line drawings to be coloured in with paints, pencils and pens.
Make a Warhol-style self-portrait following the same steps as above but using a photograph of YOU as a starting point.
Listen to Warhol talking about colour on
http://www.webexhibits.org/colorart/marilyns.html

Work in Focus

Ed Ruscha, *Stains*,1969

"I didn't want it to look like art. I wanted it to look like a stain"
– Ed Ruscha

In an attempt to "escape painting", Ruscha reduced his art to colour splashes using everyday substances in place of traditional artists' materials. Carefully documented, his *Stains* take on a pseudo-scientific character though his selection of liquids was entirely random, making use of anything at hand around his home. This included tap water, egg yolk, Vaseline, nail varnish, bacon grease

and apple juice. In order to avoid any artistic imput, he employed helpers to actually create the splats using an eyedropper, thus distancing himself from the work. Chance rather than gesture, thought or emotion would dictate the form and appearance. He declared, "How do you alter the colour of caviar or axle grease?"
This approach, in some ways mocked that of artists such as Mark Rothko and Morris Louis whose processes involved soaking or staining canvas with layers or veils of paint
The portfolio of 75 sheets is contained in a black clamshell case, the interior of which contains an additional stain, almost as a signature, the blood of the artist.

Experiment with stains. See how many different substances you can find to make marks on paper. Which ones could you use in place of paint?
Document your experiment - keep notebooks, records, tables, colour charts
Make a painting from your favourite colour stains and challenge your friends to guess the materials.

Work in Focus

Dan Flavin, *Untitled (to Don Judd, colorist), 1-5*, 1987

"It is what it is, and it ain't nothing else…everything is clearly, openly, plainly delivered" *- Dan Flavin*

Fluorescent lighting systems became popular in America after the Second world war as an energy efficient alternative to incandescent lamps. In 1963, Dan Flavin mounted a standard light tube directly onto the wall of his studio with metal brackets. His subsequent artistic output would subsequently be defined by this simple but significant gesture. Associated with Minimalism, Flavin shared the interests of artists such as Carl Andre and Donald Judd in using pre-fabricated components to create art. By using these functioning fluorescent tubes, he realised that he could use coloured light as a non-physical material for art. Using only commercially available units from hardware stores and regular fittings, he integrated these constructions directly with the gallery architecture, allowing light to flood walls and animate corners. Paradoxically, while the shape of a wall or corner may be emphasised by the linear strips, its materiality also appears to be dissolved by light and shadow.
Most of Flavin's works were untitled, followed by a dedication to a friend or relative. This work is a tribute to fellow artist, Donald Judd.

Research Minimalism! You can find out more about Flavin, Andre and Judd by visiting the *DLA Piper Series: This is Sculpture* at Tate Liverpool
Make your own minimalist work using units of pre-fabricated materials
Experiment with light! How can you change its colour? Make your own light installation art using boxes, corners of your classroom and torches or electric light bulbs with filters

Work in Focus

Damien Hirst, *John John*, 1988

"As soon as I sold one, I used the money to pay people to make them. They were better at it than me. I get bored. I get very impatient". – Damien Hirst

Hirst openly admits that his art is "a brand produced in a factory". He executed the first few paintings in his "*Spots*" series, but for the past twenty years has left this repetitive work to a team of assistants. This is not unusual - even the old masters used other artists to work on their paintings. Such is the global demand for Hirst's art, however, that he currently runs three factory workshops and employs over 120 people to create, market and manage his output.

The rules for creating these "*Spot*" paintings have remained the same:

- colours are chosen at random, not for harmony
- the palette is chosen by whoever carries out the painting
- no colour can be repeated in a painting
- the size of the gaps between the spots must equal the size of the spots
- paintings can end only at the edge of a spot, at its mid-point or in a gap
- ordinary gloss paint is used

When painted onto a gallery wall, assistants follow Hirst's instructions. The work is hand-painted, which gives the painting a human touch, though the artist himself may not even see the finished work. Hirst considers the conception of the artwork to be the creative act, not its execution. It was his idea and therefore he is the artist.

Discuss: How do you feel about a work of art that has been painted by someone other than the artist? Does it matter if an artist does not physically make his/her own work?

Look at other examples of art installations (eg Sol LeWitt's *Wall Drawing #1136* , 2004 which is currently installed in the ground floor gallery at Tate Liverpool). How do you think this was made? What do you think happens to these wall paintings once the exhibition has finished?

Design a painting and swap your drawing with a classmate and then paint each other's works. How do you feel about working on someone else's design? How do you feel about someone painting your work? Who is the real artist - the designer or the painter?

Watch a video of Damien Hirst's *John John* being installed by visiting: *www.moma.org/explore/multimedia/videos/10/videos-all*

Gallery Activities

- Take as large a range of coloured pencils as possible with you onto the gallery along with multi-copies of a template for a colour chart (a blank grid photocopied will suffice) and use these grids to compile individual colour charts for selected works in the exhibition. You can compare artists' palettes and talk about their use of colour. The palettes can then be used to create your own works.

- Cut out colour squares from colour charts and distribute them amongst your group. Each student must find a work containing their designated colour and then find out as much as possible about that work to report back to the rest of the class. Questions could include – how has the artist used this colour? How has the work been made? What materials have been used? What are your personal responses to the work?

- Find examples of artists using materials from everyday life. Why do you think they have chosen these materials? How many different materials can you find? Why do you think the artist has chosen these materials rather than traditional paint and canvas?

- Follow up the above exercise by visiting the DLA Piper *This is Sculpture* display and following the "Everyday Object" Sculpture Trail on the First Floor. Find out more about how artists use materials from their day-to-day environment for making art.

- Talk about colour. How does it affect our lives? Where else does it appear around the gallery besides in the artworks? What would the world be like without colour?

- Write about colour. Taking your inspiration from any artwork, make up a poem or short piece of prose about the colours used. You could use names of paints or names of artworks as a starting point. You could use the colour itself as a point of departure eg "Red is…."…

- Use the artists' quotes from the Works in Focus as a starting point to discussing the works. Groups could take a quote each (without the name of the artist) and try to find the work that is being described.
  For example -
  "I wanted…an assembly line effect" (Warhol)
  "I didn't want it to look like art. I wanted it to look like a stain" (Ruscha)

Glossary

Acrylic paint - water-soluble, quick-drying synthetic paint, produced originally for the decorative paint industry
Alkyd resins - modern alternative to oil paint made from dried resins
Gouache - a more opaque form of water-based paint
Gum arabic - water soluble gum derived from the acacia tree used for combining pigment in water colour
Hue – a cheaper or blended version of a pigment (often when the original is no longer available)
Oil paint - pigment combined with oil (usually linseed or sunflower)
Pan colour - dried cakes of paint to which water may be added to create a fluid medium
Pigment – the substance that makes up the colour of paint, derived from either organic or chemical sources
Ripolin. – brand name of an enamel gloss paint
Screenprint – stencil print made with a fabric screen (silk or synthetic) stretched over a frame through which coloured inks are forced. Often referred to as silkscreen in America.
Watercolour - paint made from pigment, water soluble gum and preservatives combined and dried out to form convenient pan or colour cakes

Further Information

http://www.moma.org/interactives/exhibitions/2008/colorchart/
http://www.winsornewton.com/resource-centre/colour-charts/
http://www.colourlovers.com/blog/2008/05/08/history-of-the-color-wheel/
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