

The Chromophiliacs

Curated by Zoë Chan

“Chromophobia”— the fear of colour— “manifests itself in the many and varied attempts to purge colour from culture, to devalue colour, to diminish its significance.” So explains David Batchelor in his book *Chromophobia* (2000). Historically marginalized and suppressed within Europe and North America, colour continues to be linked to notions of impurity, primitivism, and decadence.

This fear of colour within Euroamerican culture, art, and society reaches far beyond a simple preference of palette. In some manifestations of chromophobia, colour is belittled as merely decorative—existing in the realm of the exotic and the primitive, the frivolous and the feminine. In more extreme cases, colour is reviled as foreign and outright dangerous. As Batchelor argues: “As with all prejudices, its manifest form, its loathing, masks a fear: a fear of contamination and corruption by something that is unknown or appears unknowable.” His thesis continues to resonate today with the amplification of so-

called “neutral” hues in fashion, architecture, and interior design on social media, and the rise of white supremacist movements rooted in xenophobic sentiment, where whiteness is equated with racial purity, to be protected at any cost.

At the opposite end of the spectrum are the artists showcased in *The Chromophiliacs*. Profoundly inspired by colour, their multifaceted practices are deeply rooted in a myriad of craft practices, global aesthetics, and cultural traditions, from Persian miniatures, Coast Salish ovoid forms, and Mesoamerican mythology, to hyperbolic crochet, tropical *plein air* painting, and African American memory jugs. Repudiating the seemingly eternal imperative of the “white cube,” artists Diyan Achjadi, Moozhan Ahmadzadegan, Maru Aponte, Sandeep Johal, Yaimel López Zaldívar, Laura Meza Orozco, Osvaldo Ramirez Castillo, Malina Sintnicolaas, Charlene Vickers, and Jan Wade transform the Gallery with their complex use of colour.



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《嗜彩者》

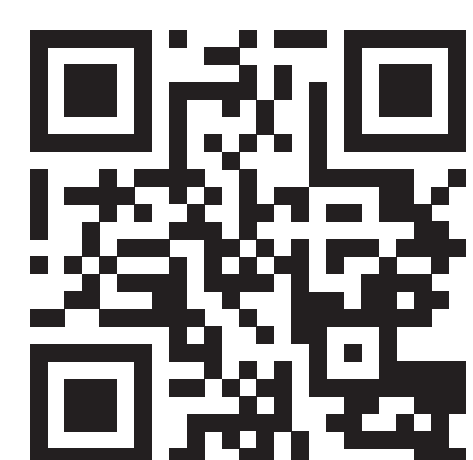
策展人：Zoë Chan

「恐色症」，即對色彩的恐懼，如David Batchelor在《恐色症》（2000年）中所言，「表現為人們試圖將色彩從文化中剔除、貶低色彩、削弱其意義的種種行為」。在歐洲與北美的歷史中，色彩的運用長期被抑制和邊緣化，至今仍常與不純潔、原始主義和墮落等觀念聯繫在一起。

這種對色彩的恐懼在歐美的文化、藝術和社會領域中早已超越了單純的色調偏好。在某些形式的「恐色症」中，色彩被矮化為僅具有裝飾屬性，被歸為異域、原始、輕浮或女性化的範疇；而在更極端的情況下，色彩甚至被詆毀為入侵或危險之物。正如Batchelor所指出的：「和所有偏見一樣，表面上的厭惡掩蓋的是恐懼：一種被未知或看似不可知之物污染和腐蝕的恐懼」。時至今日，Batchelor的觀點依然貼切地映照出現實：無論是社交媒體上隨處可見的時尚、建築設計和室內設計行業對所謂「中性色」的追捧，還是基於排外情緒的白人至上主義的抬頭，及其不惜一切對象徵種族純潔的「白色」的捍衛。

與此截然相反的是《嗜彩者》中的藝術家們，他們多元的藝術實踐深受色彩的啟發，根植於豐富的手工藝傳統、全球美學和多樣的文化源流之中：從波斯細密畫、海岸薩利希族的卵形紋樣、中美洲神話，到誇張的鉤針編織、熱帶寫生繪畫和非裔美國人的記憶罐，皆為其靈感來源。參展藝術家Diyan Achjadi、Moozhan Ahmadzadegan、Maru Aponte、Sandeep Johal、Yaimel López Zaldívar、Laura Meza Orozco、Osvaldo Ramirez Castillo、Malina Sintnicolaas、Charlene Vickers和Jan Wade不約而同地摒棄了「白盒子」（即美術館中以白牆為標誌的展覽空間）所代表的那看似永恆的法則，以他們濃郁而豐富的色彩語彙賦予整個展廳新的生命。

—— 翻譯：王晨鈺



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Collection Close-up

Juan Carrillo De La Cruz (b. 1935)

Mosaic #62, 1983

beads and beeswax

Richmond Art Gallery Permanent Collection

Donated to Richmond Art Gallery by Arthur Richardson in 1994, this work by Jalisco artist Juan Carrillo de la Cruz exemplifies the rich artistic tradition of the Huichol or Wixárika community in Northwestern Mexico. For the Huichols, the realm of spirituality is intricately woven into the fabric of daily life, and their art is a vivid expression of this very present relationship with the cosmos. The imagery and colour palette in Huichol art brim with symbolism.

Mosaic #62 is square and compact, with an abstract depiction of the peyote cactus at its centre, rendered in intense hues of red, yellow, green and orange. An integral part of the Huichol people's daily life, the peyote is considered sacred—"a bridge between worldly and supernatural knowledge," wrote curator Amir Ali Alibhai who presented works by Huichol artists in the exhibition *Art and Spirit I: Visions* (1994). Surrounding the peyote are multicoloured stars, celestial objects that symbolize the spiritual universe to the Huichols. The deer also holds a revered role in the Huichol's pantheon of gods, alongside the sacred cactus.

The recurring use of brightly colored, high-contrast images against a dark background, arranged concentrically around the peyote, creates a kaleidoscopic effect that evokes cosmic experience. While these formal elements may explain aspects of the culture to outsiders, for the Huichol people, the colors reinforce their deep connection to the spiritual realm. Red, an intense and formidable hue, is often associated with the sacred peyote; black with life, the ocean, and the goddess Tatéi Aramara, mother of the sea; purple with humanity and earthly existence; and blue with water, rain, and the god Rapawiyene.

- Maria Filipina Palad

Collection Close-up is an ongoing initiative where we highlight a Permanent Collection work, which has a formal or thematic link to the Gallery's featured exhibition, in our Art Lounge. *Mosaic #62* was selected for its resonance with the themes of the exhibition *The Chromophiliacs*.

Charlene Vickers

Charlene Vickers is an artist of Anishinaabekwe descent who has been living in Vancouver since the 90s, working with painting, sculpture, installation, and textiles. Her deeply personal work then addresses the experience of urban existence, cultural dislocation, and healing.

Carefully cut, stitched, and beaded by hand, Vickers' delightful series of felt ovoids has been steadily growing since she started making them in 2017. Resulting from this ongoing daily practice, each layered ovoid is a completely unique character, composition, and configuration of colours in a playful palette.

The ovoid form is characteristic to Coast Salish artistic traditions. Vickers however emphasizes that her ovoids are not rooted in tradition, but instead are inspired by contemporary iterations of the ovoid as found in the work of her local Indigenous artist peers, like Lawrence Paul Yuxweluptun, Sonny Assu, and Corey Bulpitt. For Vickers, the ovoid works are ultimately joyful expressions of what she describes as "embodied territory," where she can "resound [her] presence as Anishinaabekwe," while living on the West Coast.

Oswaldo Ramirez Castillo

As a youth, Oswaldo Ramirez Castillo moved to Canada from El Salvador to escape the civil war that began there in the 1980s. This contact with war early in his life profoundly marked his psyche, and later his art practice. Obsessively revisiting such traumatic events as the El Mozote massacre of 1981, in which hundreds of innocent civilians were brutally massacred by the US-backed military government leaders in El Salvador, Ramirez Castillo urgently memorializes this country's history of war, with its ramifications of violence, crime, collective trauma, and forced migration.

Far from documentarian in approach despite his hyper-realistic style, Ramirez Castillo's haunting drawings and collages are a spectacular mash up of pre-Columbian and Catholic iconography, carnival aesthetics, medieval bestiaries, Latin American revolutionary posters, tattoos, botanical drawings, and Surrealism. Reoccurring objects depicted in his work explicitly allude to the cruelty and devastation of war: piles of shoes, barbed wire, guns, soldiers, amputees. At the same time, unexpected beauty surfaces among these concrete details, like the lush flora that sprouts from wounded bodies or the vivid presence of Mesoamerican mythological creatures, hints at the possibility for change, transformation, even hope.

Yaimel López Zaldívar

A graduate of Havana's Instituto Superior de Diseño, Yaimel López Zaldívar's design work is profoundly shaped by his upbringing and education in Cuba. He brings a strong graphic sensibility, bright colour palette, and love of artisanal fabrication to his printmaking, paintings, illustrations, and animations. The "golden era" of Cuban posters, Mexican artist José Luis Cuevas' drawings, Corita Kent's Pop-influenced serigraphs, and Milton Glaser's iconic graphic design are only a few of his artistic influences.

For *Ciudad*, an artist book with abstract imagery and without words, López Zaldívar eschews the classic single-spined publication format. Instead, the book's pages are folded at unexpected angles, making it impossible to browse in a linear way. The multi-faceted result is a dynamic juxtaposition of varying perspectives, geometric shapes, and hues, while evoking the immediacy and bustling energy of a city, as indicated by the title. In this way, the artist reworks the book as an experimental sculptural form to be built and rebuilt, much like a city in constant flux.

Laura Meza Orozco

The curving forms of abstracted body parts nestle within the lush tropical settings that make up Mexican artist Laura Meza Orozco's handwoven artworks. Part of a larger project titled *Queer Utopia*, these warmly glowing weavings represent much more than just the pleasurable interplay of colourful bodies and landscapes; rather, they articulate the deeply felt philosophical, political, and ecological positioning of the artist. Fittingly, Meza Orozco's rousing artist statement is really a manifesto for making art—which she considers as a kind of technology—and living life with joy, optimism, and interconnectedness:

QUEER UTOPIA seeks to reclaim a thought about the future, about its possibility that's been hijacked in our times by capitalist fictions. With the norms of a ruthless market where everything is for sale—human and non-human bodies, ecosystems, love, hope, etc. If we give in to the idea that 'There's no future,' we'll end up perishing. Ideas of the future summon us to embrace our otherness, which is why the scenarios I propose are exercises in speculative fiction, a political imagination, betting on kinship networks that extend between humans, animals, plants, mountains, forests, oceans, etc. So that when we sit around the fire again, amidst the civilizational crisis that beckons us, we can imagine technologies that pay tribute to life and think our bodies have time for rest, celebration, contemplation.

Malina Sintnicolaas

With their intricate ruffles and folds, Malina Sintnicolaas's uncanny fibre works conjure up parallels with the natural world: coral reefs, flowers in full bloom, cellular formations. Created with a technique known as hyperbolic crochet, the entangled organic shapes of her soft sculptures twist and turn, creating a roiling energy that can somehow feel both seductive and sinister at the same time.

Sintnicolaas delights in hyperbolic crochet for the tactility of the process and its evocative results, which she describes as "manifestations, transmutations, or 'petrifications' of emotions into a physical form." Tapping into her personal experiences as a queer person who lives with post-traumatic stress disorder and a hidden disability, she creates haunting abstracted landscapes that speak to the power of art to express vulnerability and encourage empathy.

Maru Aponte

Puerto Rican artist Maru Aponte vigorously revives the European tradition of plein air landscape painting. Working outdoors, she uses watercolours not only to create quick gestural studies, but as postcard-sized artworks in themselves, rendered in highly saturated colours. Recently, Aponte's dazzling paintings have increased in scale, becoming stand-alone sculptures, that rise like islands. Following the flow of the medium is integral to her work, as she describes here:

My practice unfolds through water—not merely as subject, but as an active collaborator. Working primarily in watercolor, I position the fluid as a co- author: it shapes edges, resists form and proposes gestures to which I respond. In doing so, I seek to reconfigure conventional expectations of the medium as an adjective but as a verb. Colour is alive.

Puerto Rico, surrounded by the Caribbean Sea and Atlantic Ocean, provides a major source of inspiration for Aponte. Its tropical island setting influences the brilliance of her palette, while traces of salt, sand, and other sediment can be found in her work. Aponte also contends with the United States' ongoing colonisation of Puerto Rico, using her art practice to "search for forms of freedom and self-determination that (her) culture has historically been denied."

Sandeep Johal

Inspired by Indian folk-art practices, Sandeep Johal brings her trademark artisanal aesthetic to the European still life painting genre of the *vanitas*, which contemplates the ephemerality of life. In this genre, each painted object usually has a specific symbolic meaning; for instance, the skull representing death and the candle, the soul.

Johal playfully shakes up these fixed codes, by inserting humble, sometimes humorous articles that have sentimental significance for her, from an apple core harking back to her father's first Canadian job, in an orchard, to her childhood piggy bank to the orange marigolds and white snapdragons that bloom in her mother's garden.

Expanding her practice into the three-dimensional, Johal reimagines the *vanitas* as a kind of altar or shrine through her installation of hand-sewn and embroidered textile sculptures. This new body of work, presented against a stark black backdrop, reveals Johal in an existential, elegiac mode as she contemplates the eventual passing of her parents, her own aging, and the enduring role of art in expressing this poignant awareness of one's mortality.

Moozhan Ahmadzadegan

Moozhan Ahmadzadegan looks towards the iconic elements of the rich aesthetic and cultural history of Iranian art, including Persian miniatures, carpets, and architecture that date back centuries—from their intricate geometric patterning, ornate decoration, and colour-filled drawing to their use as a platform for teaching and telling stories. Functioning both as an homage and a critique, his prints, paintings, and installation playfully draw from these practices, then vividly reimagine these forms through his own specific subjectivity as a queer person of the Iranian diaspora living within a contemporary setting. At times, this might play out in his use of neon bright colours; other times, in his envisioning of the popular reality tv series *Ruth Paul's Drag Race* as set in Iran.

Contextualising his use of a queer lens in his work, Ahmadzadegan writes:

This approach symbolically carves out space for queer narratives within historically heteronormative frameworks, addressing the erasure of queer identities in various contexts. (It) serves as an entry point for exploring critical dialogues surrounding queer identity, diaspora, and cultural hybridity, inviting viewers to engage with these themes in nuanced and open ways.

Jan Wade

Jan Wade scours thrift shops and Etsy alike to concoct her poetic, sometimes precarious assemblages of buttons, toys, ceramic jars, figurines, and African carvings. They evoke her voracious curiosity about the innerworkings of culture, history, and politics, and her deep passion for art, literature, music, and film.

Wade's background is profoundly shaped by colonisation's dismal impacts: her father was the offspring of slaves who left the southern United States for Canada, and she grew up in a segregated neighbourhood in Hamilton. Painted black, these sculptures communicate Wade's personal engagement with Black diasporic histories and forms of expression (Black Power and Black Lives Matter movements, African Methodist Episcopalian spirituality, soul music, African memory jugs), while embodying her specific aesthetic sensibility—which she playfully describes as “West Coast Funk”—cultivated over decades on the margins of Vancouver's artistic milieu.

Her ongoing *Breathe* series is made with embroidery, a skill that Wade learned as a young girl. Eschewing the diminutive floral patterns or placid scenes typically associated with needlework, Wade instead embroiders organically interconnected stripes and rectangles in vibrant colours. Sharing parallels with patchwork quilting, the result is a joyful yet meditative work of abstraction that stretches over several feet—like a breath, which flows through the length of an individual's life or passes from generation to generation, from ancestral past to the contemporary present.

Diyan Achjadi

The title of the series *Mooi Java* signifies “Beautiful Java” in Dutch. Representing the Dutch colonial gaze, Mooi Java refers to an artistic movement led by Dutch painters during the late 19th and early twentieth centuries, at the height of Indonesia’s colonization. Developed to justify Dutch rule and to encourage European expansion, investment, and tourism, the artworks of this era presented highly romanticized depictions of Java’s tropical landscape and the lives of its inhabitants.

Diyan Achjadi offers a cutting riposte to this genre, which as a form of propaganda for the Dutch empire omitted any signs of unrest in Indonesia. Rather than working with oil paint, Achjadi deliberately employs the Ben-Day printing dot method, which also emerged in the late nineteenth century, and was widely used in early forms of mass printing. The resulting prints emit an urgent, agitated energy that counters the tranquility of the original Mooi Java paintings. Through vibrating recurring imagery of palm trees swaying in stormy weather, a ship, an explosion volcano, a nutmeg, and a tulip—printed in various configurations and bold colours—Achjadi makes reference to Java’s volcanic terrain, as well as to the colonialist legacy of the VOC (Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie) or Dutch East India Company, including its ruthless monopolization of Indonesia’s spice trade.

Diyan Achjadi

For the creation of these vibrantly coloured sculptures or “books,” Diyan Achjadi painted colourful imagery onto both sides of sheets of paper, which they then folded in unexpected ways, as a way of countering traditional narrative structures and improvising open-ended new ones.

Made during the pandemic, a tree just outside of Achjadi’s sister’s house in Jakarta was the source of inspiration for *A ghost of a tree remains* and *There once was a mango tree on Jupiter*. The lush mango tree that provided shelter for humans and birds was violently trimmed one day, leaving the artist to wonder about the impact of this loss on the local ecosystem. The image of the tree is powerfully tied up with their feelings of isolation and nostalgia for family because of travel bans, alongside their witnessing of the positive ecological impacts of reduced travel and lockdowns on the environment.

Developed over a full year, yes, and, also is a much longer folded sculpture. Achjadi frustrates viewers’ expectations by making it impossible to ever see the entirety of the drawing. Indeed, its complex structure reflects the complexity of the personal and familial history the artist attempts to understand. As they describe here, it

...explores a romantic relationship I was in at the time with a person of Dutch heritage whose family had been part of the colonial regime in Indonesia at the same time that my father and grandfather would have been actively against the regime; exploring the complications of those histories colliding and eventually separating again.

Charlene Vickers

Pink Haze, 2025

Lava Cosmos Skyland, 2025

Dormant Spirit Presence, 2025

Little Bead Spirits, 2025

acrylic, canvas, thread, glass beads, shell buttons, craft
felt on canvas

Courtesy of the artist and Macaulay + Co.

Laura Meza Orozco

[centre]

Untitled (Orgasmo Terceirizado), from *Queer Utopia* series, 2025

handwoven tapestry

Courtesy of the artist

Laura Meza Orozco

[left to right]

Untitled (Future Cosmic 01), from Queer Utopia series, 2025

Untitled (The Panther Woman), from Queer Utopia series, 2025

handwoven tapestry

Courtesy of the artist

Laura Meza Orozco

Untitled (Desire is a passage to reverie),
from *Queer Utopia* series, 2025

handwoven tapestry

Courtesy of the artist

Sandeep Johal

*When the mortality of age overtakes the
blind conceit of youth ...*, 2026

hand-sewn and embroidered textiles

Courtesy of the artist

Oswaldo Ramirez Castillo

Re-ruin, 2025

Untitled, 2024

Untitled, 2025

pencil crayon, conté, charcoal, watercolor, acrylic ink,
alcohol ink, oil paint, relief print

Courtesy of the artist

Malina Sintricolaas

Always Growing, Never Healing, 2021

hyperbolic crocheted wool, velvet, ceramics, fabric

Courtesy of the artist

Charlene Vickers

Ovoid Soundings, 2017-to the present

felt, buttons, glass beads, thread

Courtesy of the artist and Macaulay + Co.

Yaimel López Zaldívar

Ciudad [City]

screenprint on paper, glue, digital prints

Courtesy of the artist

Malina Sintricolaas

The Red Queen, 2025

hyperbolic crocheted yarn

Courtesy of the artist

Yaimel López Zaldívar

The Chromophiliacs title wall, 2026

acrylic paint on wall

Jan Wade

Breathe, 2004–2020

cotton embroidery on linen

Courtesy of the artist and Mónica Reyes Gallery

Jan Wade

Garden of Earthly Delights, 2024

mixed media

Courtesy of the artist and Mónica Reyes Gallery

Jan Wade

Belle Noir, 2022

mixed media

Courtesy of the artist and Mónica Reyes Gallery

Jan Wade

***Black Baby*, 2021**

mixed media

Courtesy of the artist and Mónica Reyes Gallery

Maru Aponte

Sanctuary of Lavander Sand, 2025

watercolour and gouache on grey-toned paper

Courtesy of the artist

Diyan Achjadi

Mooi Java, 2008

silkscreen and linocut on paper

Courtesy of the artist

Diyan Achjadi

yes, and, also, 2023

ink and gouache on paper

Courtesy of the artist

Moozhan Ahmadzadegan

Persian Carpet Series, 2024

UV screenprint, wood panel, acrylic paint, rope

Courtesy of the artist

Diyan Achjadi

There once was a mango tree on jupiter,
2021

ink and gouache on paper, adhesive

A ghost of the tree remains, 2021

ink and gouache on paper, lithography, adhesive

Courtesy of the artist

Moozhan Ahmadzadegan

[top and bottom row]

Pattern 06, 2024

UV screenprint on paper

[left to right]

Persian Hammam, 2025

Zan Zendegi Azadi (Women Life Freedom), 2023

Scene from a Miniature, 2022

Untitled Persian Miniature (Ducks), 2024

Ruth Paul's Drag Race Iran, 2025

UV screenprint on paper

Courtesy of the artist

Maru Aponte

[left to right]

Flyi, 2025

Good Juju, 2025

Sun, 2025

Swimming in the rain, 2025

watercolor and gouache on grey-toned paper

Courtesy of the artist

Maru Aponte

[left to right]

Red Bush, 2025

Good Juju, 2025

Sun Milk, 2025

Swimming in the rain, 2025

watercolor and gouache on grey-toned paper

Courtesy of the artist