



77 Colors of a Volcanic Landscape

solo presentation Galeria Labor in FIAC (FR), October 2016

Witte de With Center for Contemporary Art (Rotterdam, NL), May–August 2018

A few centuries ago art and science were not such different and separate fields as we know them today. They had many points of correlation and coexistence.

This project intertwines a variety of such points. On the one hand the tradition that comes from drawing and examining nature through travel accounts, on the other, the study of color which was carried out in the field of science, in order to communicate and describe its discoveries.

As practitioners in the art field we are aware of color studies in the history of art, but color dictionaries were also developed in the field of natural studies as a means of describing and communicating the examination of nature.

In 1831, Charles Darwin carried a book called *The Nomenclature of Colors* aboard the HMS Beagle. Scientists used this book and other 'color dictionaries', predecessors of today's Pantone swatch books, as a common reference when describing the appearance of whatever they were studying.

Color dictionaries were designed to give people around the world a common vocabulary to describe the colors of everything from rocks and flowers to stars, birds and postage stamps. These afforded scientists and naturalists the means of descriptive biological precision that could be easily shared so naturalists in Kalamazoo and Germany, for instance, could communicate effectively about a family of birds found in both places in related (but different) forms. They typically consisted of a set of

color swatches; each assigned a name (usually rendered in several languages, to facilitate international use), an identifying number, and an often lyrical description of the color ("the color of the blood of a freshly killed rabbit" or "mummy brown").

The colors sampled at the 'Index of Colors' come from volcanic stones I collected in Hawaii during a field trip in 2015. Most of them are variations of black. One would imagine that black is black and a volcanic landscape is dark brown and black by default, but a color is never one color and the index puts in evidence that the variations and permutations of 'black' are almost endless.

The colors studied in the index are applied to the paintings that I produced once I was back in the studio.

The forms that are depicted in these paintings were collated during the same field trip, in the very same landscape, via a drawing process. Even though the drawings were made observing the landscape 'in situ', the landscape was deconstructed and visually filtered to the extent that the forms become totally abstract. They are small fragments of an immense landscape, observed from a very close distance, zooming in to it, thus creating a composition in which the figure and the ground are not easily distinguishable.

landscape



i
series of 3 drawings
pencil on paper
25 × 25 cm







ii

Sampling Black

series of 12 diptychs

oil on paper

index: 24 × 30 cm

squares: 11 × 11 cm





iii
3 paintings
oil on canvas
200 × 200 cm





details





details





details



Related exhibition

Irene Kopelman, a solo exhibition

Witte de With Center for Contemporary Art (Rotterdam, The Netherlands)

May – August 2018

For more details of each work, see also:

[Puzzle piece #2, 2009, from *The Levy's Flight*](#) ↗

[Sampling Greens, 2012](#) ↗



For more details of each work, see also:

[*Tree Lines A–D*, 2013, from *On Glaciers and Avalanches*](#) ↗

[*Forest Windows*, 2012, from *The Exact Opposite of Distance*](#) ↗



Irene Kopelman
77 Colors of a Volcanic Landscape

Installation:
FIAC – International Contemporary Art Fair
(France), solo presentation Galeria Labor

Exhibition:
Witte de With Center for Contemporary Art
Curated by:
Sofía Hernández Chong Cuy and Samuel
Saelemakers

Credit documentation of the installation:
Aurelien Moleau (FIAC)
Kristien Daem (Witte de With Center for
Contemporary Art)

Credits documentation paintings:
Ilya Rabinovich

Design PDF:
Ayumi Higuchi

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and Cathy De Haan

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