



Espai Cub

SAMUEL LABADIE

SPECTRUM

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Samuel Labadie holds a degree in Fine Art from the National School of Fine Art in Lyon and divides his time mainly between France (Lyon and Bayonne) and Barcelona, where he has received various awards (including the Prix de Paris and the Premi Miquel Casablanca). He has also shown work in various exhibitions in these places, most recently “The Examined Soul” in Espai 13 at the Miró Foundation. In his pieces, he employs a wide variety of materials and techniques – drawing, videos and installations – to question universal concepts while using processes that are in many cases intuitive.

For *Spectrum*, the project he is presenting in the Espai Cub at La Capella, Labadie takes Josef Albers’ theory of the interaction of colour as his starting point for reflecting critically and ironically on certain cultural elements, producing work that is a priori subjective but which stirs reflection of a universal nature on the use and meaning of the image.

Aemilius Müller and Alfred Hicethier were the first to propose a theory of colours as colour-space, the trichromatic cube. According to this theory, the cube serves as a chromatic support and its diagonals are arranged from one corner to another in such a way that they show the entire chromatic spectrum. This scientific vision of colour in Labadie’s project is complemented by Josef Albers’ works and his concept of the interaction of colour, which imbues it once again with its full sensorial dimension, and also supports a disciplined composition in which the four-sided shape becomes the central element.

By juxtaposing these two colour theories, Labadie creates a subjective and critical projection between colour and two cultural objects: the French flag and the pornographic image. The first is analysed as an ‘inviolable’ symbol-object, regardless of any political or historical implication; the second as an image for private yet mass consumption, without consideration of the aesthetics of pornography as a genre or its morality. Due to the particular nature of these two objects, this analysis could be regarded as complex.

The French flag, a constant in Labadie’s work, is broken down into colour Ref.o, a blend of all the colours of the flag (red, blue and white) that constitutes the background of the cube, which is now turned into a chromatic space. A series of monochrome paintings that are nothing other than pixels – the supreme digital abstraction – of porn websites is arranged across the flag, itself just one colour. In both cases, the images of reference are subjected to a systematic computer process that reduces them to a single pixel in order to arrive at the average colour of the image.

In Labadie’s series “Pornographic Monochromes”, the physical, corporeal image has disappeared and is reduced

to its minimum expression, a simplification that eliminates its visual and figurative force and at the same time endows it with meanings. This series also speaks to us of the Internet and the circulation of digital images in a never-ending and highly notable flow, like a mosaic under continuous construction, without regard for boundaries and countries. These images are reduced to their smallest possible expression – the pixel – which entails the elimination of hierarchies (an image cannot be constructed without all the pixels) and roles, but not of the colours that refer us to physical and corporeal reality and which presuppose a return to the source, which is, to a certain extent, the common denominator of the production process of this installation. The tangible has been turned into a digital abstraction that has to be translated into a physical, pictorial chromatic language.

The distribution of the walls of the cube is a response to three aspects of Albers’ theory of colour: vibration, two different colours with the same luminosity; hue, in which we can distinguish different levels in the tone of a single colour; and lastly contrast, the colours that oppose each other yet are the ones that best complement the background colour.

These colour exercises constitute a formal abstraction that takes modernity as its starting point and which is developed in multiple readings. They are an exploration of colour, and of the very limits of the painting that we enter and which surrounds us, creating a space in which colours become the centre of reflection on the Internet, our overexposure to images and the connection between the pictorial and the digital regardless of boundaries or skin colours.

