

**COLOR RELATIVITY**

GABRIELE EVERTZ

JUL 17, 2017 — JAN 5, 2018

## COLOR RELATIVITY

Color is a wondrous thing. While nearly all see the world in full-blown color, what do we really know about this fugitive and mysterious construct? Our perception of color changes depending on its proximity to other colors. Light affects color, as can physiology, personal experience and cultural heritage. Finally, color can be pure emotion, infused with limitless external associations.

Color and its qualities are the ongoing subject of Brooklyn-based painter Gabriele Evertz, who began a profound and sustained investigation into its depths more than thirty years ago. While many artists have examined color and attempted to systematize its attributes, looking at it through the lenses of philosophy, literature, physics, chemistry, and other disciplines, Evertz's personal inquiry – color phenomenology – is the prime mover in her studio. She once declared color to be “the most important problem...a pioneering problem.” In it, she sees both unending opportunity and absolute freedom.

Evertz is a humanist and a romantic. Born and raised in Berlin in the wake of World War II, she moved to New York City at the age of 19. As a consequence, she views her work as the merger of two divergent aesthetic traditions – a northern European philosophical approach blended with an overtly pragmatic American one. Today, Evertz is most closely associated with the renowned art department at Hunter College, where she continues to teach. Over the past 50 years, Hunter College evolved into a leading champion of abstraction and color painting among art schools in the United States. Along with her close colleagues and mentors, Robert Swain, Sanford Wurmfeld and Vincent Longo, Evertz shares an urgent concern for color and its transformative effect on viewers. She is one of the rare female voices contributing to this contemporary discourse, continuing the legacy of artists including Sonia Delaunay, Anni Albers and Bridget Riley. In fact, Evertz pays direct homage to Delaunay in her painting **For Sonia D.** (2013) on view in this exhibition.

After many years of experimentation, Evertz arrived at a singular color system organized around twelve specific hues, plus black and white, creating a core palette that is both vibrant and highly saturated. Her paintings of the 1990s and early 2000s employed and stretched her twelve-part color system to its very limits. It became an instrument sometimes used in its entirety, producing fully-spectral paintings, or at other times selectively, in paintings of a single color. Although not a focus in her original system, gray has become key to her work. Evertz discovered that gray's behavior is less predictable than that of chromatic hues. Paintings organized around light gray values produce a muted, shallow plane while dark gray value paintings present profoundly deep pictorial space. Gray is anything but neutral.



*After Light*, 2016, acrylic on canvas, 60 x 60 inches



*Day+Dream*, 2016, acrylic on canvas, 4 panels, 42x42 inches each, 168 inches overall

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Several years ago, Evertz began to selectively incorporate metallic colors in her paintings. Color painters, by tradition, harbor an aversion to what they perceive as easy and seductive visual shortcuts. Metallic, iridescent, and fluorescent pigments for most are off-limits. Evertz, however, quickly recognized the potential in metallics. Metallics are reflective, revealing highlights and shadows within even the thinnest of lines or slightest bit of weave of canvas and don't act as a single color. Moreover, they are durational and evince the fourth dimension – time. They're remarkably sensitive to lighting, and transform from pale and reflective to dark and somber. A single, thin gold stripe may present several distinct facets of itself. Metallic paints are animated and respond directly to our vantage point. We become a catalyst in an ever-shifting color experience and are continually reminded we are in a state of active looking. This underscores one of Evertz's core beliefs that color and the viewer are inseparable. "Without the viewer, the painting doesn't exist." In this case, we quite literally bring the painting to life.

Within the last ten years, the parallel lines and diagonal formats of her earlier work merged into what is now her signature structure – vertical tapering stripes, enabling her to create a visual system "that would not draw attention to itself, yet bring out the color language" most effectively. By varying the thickness of the lines, their quantity, and spacing, as well as color, Evertz has recognized the near infinite array of structural possibilities before her. The rigorous, repeating color patterns have given way to something altogether new and exhilarating. She has freed color from fixed patterns and begun to apply color intuitively. Her new paintings are no longer predetermined, nor are they completely aleatory. Evertz has begun making color decisions in real time, at the moment of painting. **After Light** (2016) represents six month's worth of sequential color decisions and is the artist's first work that breaks from her longstanding habit of including all colors of the spectrum in a single work.

Also on view is a highly ambitious multi-part painting entitled **Day+Dream** (2016), painted during 2016's bruising presidential election and, as the optimistic title suggests, offering up a glimmer of hope over despair. A polychromatic knockout, the work presents a progression of 168 achromatic bands stretched over fourteen horizontal feet of canvas containing 56 colors and 51 metallics. The stripes present an unfolding, time-lapsed color experience that mirrors a complete 24-hour urban experience, a painting conceived by the artist "for my New York friends" in the city that never sleeps.

**Matthew Deleget**



*Electric Fragment*, 2013, acrylic on canvas, 60 x 60 inches

*On Cover: Black Room Series (For Sonia D.), 2013, (detail), acrylic on canvas, 60 x 60 inches*

## **499** PARK AVENUE / The Lobby Gallery

Park Avenue and 59th Street, New York, NY 10022

Gallery hours: Monday - Friday, 8:00am - 6:00pm

### **Acknowledgements**

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We thank the artist for the loan of these paintings, as well as MINUS SPACE for their assistance with the brochure. MINUS SPACE Gallery, 16 Main Street, Suite A, Brooklyn, NY 11201, (T): 718.801.8095.

CURATORS        Jay Grimm, Jay Grimm Art Advisory; Lenore Goldberg, Hines

ESSAY            Matthew Deleget

### **About Matthew Deleget**

Matthew Deleget is a painter, curator, writer, and co-founder of the gallery MINUS SPACE in Dumbo, Brooklyn. For information about the paintings in this exhibit, please contact [info@minusspace.com](mailto:info@minusspace.com).

### **About Jay Grimm Art Advisory**

Jay Grimm is an independent arts professional with 25 years of experience in the New York gallery world. For more information about this program, please contact [Jay@jaygrimm.com](mailto:Jay@jaygrimm.com), (T): 917.690.0035



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