

Abstract: “Toward a Definition of ChromOrgasm”

The artist’s romance with color has long been a seductive one. From the sensual shape-shifting quality of color to its adaptive and assimilative properties, color often seduces the visual culture producer into a dangerous relationship. Frequently, as an artist flirts with his/her desire to manipulate color he/she begins to develop a power struggle with the hidden hierarchical structure of color and its interlocutors. Yet the deception of traditional theoretical primary systems, arbitrary linguistical associations, and curatorial coding frequently restrain the artistic use of color.

Recently academics and artists in many fields have begun to question the homogenous visual distribution systems and manipulated marketing strategies of color. Just how can a decentralized, feminine, and nonlinear notion of color subvert the dominant paradigms often controlled by color corporations, pigment manufacturers, and color organizations? What preconditions, preconceptions and prejudices in our personal environs mold the spatiality of our color creations? What new provocative production strategies, teaching territories and artistic dialectics can be bridged from today’s metamerism movement beyond the spent art historical two-dimensional matrix?

For color to exist it must occupy multiple interdisciplinary vectors moving at multiple interdisciplinary velocities. This paper transgresses foundational myths, crosses technical boundaries, fashions interdisciplinary relationships, and open new hybridic conduits beyond the formal artistic and educational processes of color. Sociopolitical issues such as globalization, human rights, war, gender, and the “other” are considered in connection with color accessibility, color reproduction and color (MIS)management. With the wide array of contemporary polychromatic visual stimuli, does the continued engagement of color with artists have a flirtatious future or is color destined to become mere fleeting romance?

This paper introduces, outlines, and defines a theoretical and philosophical working model of ChromOrgasm. The term *ChromOrgasm* was coined by the author over a period of five years while teaching foundational color theory. It begins with the age-old question: What colors do we see during orgasm?, and expands from Barthes semiotic “stroke of bliss.” ChromOrgasm can be interpreted as the need to compare and comprehend color via the biological want of the sex drive: the obsessive need to see color and to have more of it--similar to our American drives for money, material, and power.

ChromOrgasm encompasses certain sociopolitical and holistic constructs and aligns itself with systems thinking, Bohm’s holographic paradigm, and Varela’s biological embodiment of color. Included are that romantic color must fall within the accepted social fabric to continue, otherwise it ceases to be visible. Color follows certain social codes and norms, and that these access and marginalization codes must be broken. Color is most often defined and categorized by a small group of humans in order for its organizational usage to take place in a capitalist society. These groups occupy and control the historical development and the institutional memory of our biochromatic conditioning. Color is defined as geographic, inherent in the choices made by local and global situations, and is a biologically embodied phenomenon closely linked to our creative and reproductive capabilities.

Finally, ChromOrgasm defines color as a power distributor and power as a distributor of color. This paper questions color’s innate connection to power and highlights ongoing problems inherent with teaching and creating color as they are broken down into interdisciplinary categories. Each category is a color sortie--where color is juxtaposed with power and looked at through comparative lens.