



MASTERPIECE

SYMPOSIUM | 16 & 17 JUNE 2021
KALEIDOSCOPIC CONVERSATIONS



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WEDNESDAY 16 & THURSDAY 17 JUNE 2021

Masterpiece is delighted to host a programme of digital debate and discussion co-organised by the Fair and Thomas Marks, editor of Apollo, to bring together pre-eminent museum curators and conservators with the leading figures in the art and antiques trade, with the aim of encouraging constructive discussion, networking and the exchange of knowledge and practical advice.

‘Kaleidoscopic Conversations’ is the fifth in a series of events that Masterpiece launched in 2018 – and which in the past 12 months have fully embraced the possibilities of digital discussion, with recent online events focusing on conservation and artistic materials. This June the spotlight is on the history of colour, and particularly how the colours and pigments of artistic materials – and how those have been harnessed in works of art – have borne specific meanings in different times and cultures.

Over two days, experts will discuss how the local significance of colours should be fundamental to how we interpret and appreciate a range of artistic fields; and how best the history and science of colour can be communicated to as wide an audience as possible in museums and other contexts. How do we move beyond the aesthetic presentation of paintings or brightly coloured objects to discussion of what colours once meant? How can we perceive or reimagine colours that have changed or faded over time? How do museums allow us to see colours in the best possible light and provide an understanding of the role that colour plays in display?

As ever at the Masterpiece Symposium, attendees will be invited to participate in the discussion during break-out sessions that will follow the panels – with the aim of stimulating vibrant debate. ‘This event builds on our online programme, which has aimed to foster a better understanding of works of art through the exploration of materials,’ says Philip Hewat-Jaboor, Chairman of Masterpiece London. ‘The fifth Masterpiece Symposium will continue this thread by looking at the often forgotten role that colour plays in works of art themselves, as well as in historical interiors, and how colour is reconceived and communicated in modern museum displays.’

Register for the Masterpiece Symposium [here](#).



Wednesday 16 June 2021

Introduction by Philip Hewat-Jaboor and Thomas Marks / 5pm (BST)

Panel Discussion: Vivid Histories / 5.05pm–6pm (BST)

The inclusion of specific colours in paintings and works of art has rarely, if ever, been merely decorative. From the value historically associated with splendid raw materials, such as lapis lazuli or natural dyes for textiles, to the symbolic meanings that different hues have held in different times and places, colour contains and reflects meaning – even if that meaning may fade over time. From magnificent marbles to splendid stained glass, vibrant colours or their combinations have not only awed viewers but have historically also spoken to them of a wide spectrum of significance. This panel will explore: the fastness or fleeting nature of some of the meanings historically attached to colour; the relationship between colour and style; that between colour and power or status; the challenges of retrieving the historical significance of colour; the role of heritage scientists in recovering the history of colour; and the role of art historians in telling its stories.

Panellists

Renée Dreyfus | Distinguished Curator and Curator in Charge, Ancient Art and Interpretation, Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco

Alexandra Loske | Curator, Royal Pavilion, Brighton

Georges Roque | Philosopher, art historian and author of *La cochenille, de la teinture à la peinture: Une histoire matérielle de la couleur*

Matthew Winterbottom | Curator of Sculpture and Decorative Arts, The Ashmolean Museum, Oxford

Break-out Session: Bright Ideas / 6pm–6.25pm (BST)

All symposium participants will be split into small discussion groups. In this session, they will be invited to continue the conversation of the preceding panel, drawing on their own knowledge and experience to explore how the history of colour can and should still be integral to how we think about art – and why this might be more urgent than ever as we strive to understand objects in global and local contexts.



Thursday 17 June 2021

Panel Discussion: The Chromatic Museum / 5–5.55pm (BST)

In our memories, perhaps, museums sometimes exist in black and white – or in sepia tones. But working with colour – working in colour, even – is fundamental to museum installations and displays. And interpreting the historical meaning of colours is vital to how collections are communicated to the public. Richly coloured objects may be eye-catching, certainly, but how do curators and museum professionals translate that into significance for as broad an audience as possible? And how far do decisions made by curators and exhibition designers affect how we perceive and appreciate colour – or even reconstruct it – in the museum? This panel will explore: communicating the history of colour and its relationship to materials in the museum; lighting and colour; white cubes and wall colours; and how far new technologies can help in the understanding of colour.

Panellists

Emerson Bowyer | Searle Associate Curator of European Painting and Sculpture, Art Institute of Chicago

Lisa O'Neill | Projects & Company Director, Centre Screen

Philippa Simpson | Director of Design, Estate and Public Programme at the Victoria & Albert Museum, London

Jennifer Sliwka | Deputy Director of the VCS project, Senior Research Fellow and Visiting Lecturer at King's College London

Break-out session: Widening the Spectrum / 5.55–6.25pm (BST)

All symposium participants will be split into small discussion groups. In this session, they will be invited to discuss how museums, academics and the art market can work together to build a better understanding of displaying colour, and how such knowledge can be communicated to a wide public. What practical steps would further public engagement with the colourful history of art?

Closing Remarks – Philip Hewat-Jaboor / 6.25pm (BST)

Ends 6.30pm (BST)