

MIT List Visual Arts Center
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[LIST PROJECTS]

Narrative Color

April 19 – May 22, 2016



COVER Mareike Bernien and Kerstin Schroedinger, *Rainbow's Gravity*, 2014
HD video, color, 33 min.
Courtesy the artists

INSIDE Derek Jarman, *Wittgenstein*, 1993, UK
35mm transferred to DVD, color, 69 min.
Courtesy Zeitgeist Films



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List Projects: Narrative Color is a focused selection of five artists' films and videos, made between 1970 and 2014. The works are narrative: each represents a sequence of events, or story, however unconventional these stories and their representations may be. Color is also a source of narrative action for these moving images. Colors—whether included in the form of surface (pigment) or optical (light) color—allow, block, permit, afford, or otherwise act, and colors are accorded activity by other sources of action, such as that of human characters. Furthermore, speech, whether spoken on-screen or by an off-screen narrator, is also pivotal to how color is described and explained in the works on view. These attributes distinguish these works from the legacy of artists' films from the 1960s and before, which primarily treat color non-narratively and as something that exists independently of language.

Rainbow's Gravity (2014, HD video, 33 min.) by **Mareike Bernien and Kerstin Schroedinger** examines the ideological, historical, and material influence of the Agfacolor Neu film stock produced in Nazi Germany. Shot at the defunct Agfa factory, it uses spoken narration and the film's three layers of emulsion—cyan, magenta, and yellow—to represent a story that includes the film stock's role in propaganda and the coupling of the chemicals that compose it to warfare and labor. The earliest work in the exhibition, **KP Brehmer's** *Ideal Landscape* (*Ideale Landschaft*) (1970, 16 mm to video, 3 min.) shows landscaped gardens and their abstracted color palates while one hears Brehmer on how these each operate in bourgeois and socialist conditions.

Derek Jarman's *Wittgenstein* (1993, 35mm to DVD, 69 min.) includes a blackened sound stage, intensely colored props and costumes, and a green Martian interlocutor. It is an a-chronological narrative of the philosopher's life and writings, someone who aimed, as he wrote in *Remarks on Color* (1950), to establish "a logic of color concepts." *Hell Frozen Over* (2000, video to HD video, 19:22 min.) by **Bernadette Corporation** juxtaposes takes during a highly stylized fashion shoot—the models in uniformly white, gold, or beige clothes—and Sylvère Lotringer standing on a frozen lake lecturing on Stéphane Mallarmé. Lotringer articulates how color makes something, rather than nothing, possible: "It is not that there is nothing," he says, "there could be a surface, a white surface, but there has to be some black marks called words."

Color functions differently in these moving images than it has in American narrative cinema, which has most commonly used color as a means of emphasizing characters' emotions.

Bruce and Norman Yonemoto's *Green Card: An American Romance* (1982, video to HD video, 79:15 min.) plays on the Hollywood psychology of color in a melodrama about a young Japanese woman, Summie, whose wish to be an artist in America leads her to marry for a green card. During a love scene she is bathed in pink light, for instance. Color also acts symbolically, as when Summie is outfitted in a green kimono while negotiating her green card marriage. However, the Yonemoto's use these color clichés reflectively. Their adoption had become inseparable from mass media moving images by 1982, such that they helped render narratives possible.

List Projects: Narrative Color is curated by Alise Uptis, Assistant Curator, Public Art and Exhibitions, MIT List Visual Arts Center.



PUBLIC PROGRAM

Gallery Talk with Mareike Bernien
Wednesday, April 20, 6 PM

Join filmmaker Mareike Bernien as she discusses her film on view, *Rainbow's Gravity* (2014), and other projects.

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SUPPORT

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