



COLOUR IN ART

REVISITING 1919

R. de Meirene
1919.

COLOUR IN ART

REVISITING 1919

22 August – 27 September 2008
Curators: Nick Waterlow & Annabel Pegus

Ivan Dougherty Gallery Touring Exhibition

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Original *Colour in Art* 1919 Exhibition Catalogue. Private Collection.

EXTRACT from lecture on "Colour in relation to Painting," to be given at the Australian Arts Club on Friday, August 8th, 1919

—And now one finds that man has all through the ages been seeking for some means of self expression through colour; to-day the need seems more strongly felt than ever. In every country throughout the world one may observe the first manifestations of the awakening of the latent Colour sense—already here in Sydney a number of people are drawing together to form a society for Colour research.

What is Colour? Many accept it unquestioningly - a few, I believe, are almost unconscious of its presence—for others it constitutes an aesthetic pleasure or an interesting scientific phenomenon—the result of light vibrations acting upon their optic nerves. But there are many for whom Colour means far more than this—to them it brings the conscious realisation of the deepest underlying principles of nature, and in it they find deep and lasting happiness—for those people it constitutes the very song of life and is, as it were, the spiritual speech of every living thing.

R. de M.

	Guineas
1 Syncromy in Blue Green, Major Key By R. de Mestre	20
2 "The Bridge"—An arrangement in Yellow Major resolving into Red Minor By R. S. Wakelin	35
3 Syncromy in Yellow Green Minor By R. de Mestre	15
4 Syncromy in Orange Red By R. S. Wakelin	30
5 The Boat Sheds, in Violet Red Key By R. de Mestre	15
6 Landscape, in Orange Key By R. S. Wakelin	15
7 Study in Orange Major By R. de Mestre Kindly lent by Leonard Dodds, Esq.	
8 Still Life Study, in Blue Violet, Minor Key By R. S. Wakelin	10
9 Colour Sketch—Dangar Island By R. de Mestre Kindly lent by Mrs. Neville Dangar	
10 Landscape Sketch By R. S. Wakelin	6
11 Landscape Sketch, in Violet Red Key By R. S. Wakelin Kindly lent by Leonard Dodds, Esq.	

Colour Organisation in Interior Decoration
By R. de Mestre

- 12 Interior in the Key of Yellow
- 13 Interior, showing two rooms in related colour keys—Blue Green Major leading into Yellow Green Minor
- 14 Interior, in Orange Red Key

These designs are for sale subject to certain conditions.

Colour Key Board — Discs — Scales, etc.

INTRODUCTION

On 8 August 1919 at Gayfield Shaw's Art Salon, 29 Elizabeth Street, Sydney the *Colour in Art* exhibition introduced "...R de Mestre's new theory of colour organisation as it applies to the Art of the Painter and, incidentally, to Interior Decoration, together with ...R S Wakelin, already known in Sydney as an exponent of modern methods of colour expression".¹ *Colour in Art* was the first public showing of paintings and 'colour organisations' by Roland Wakelin and Roy de Maistre based on de Maistre's colour-music theory.

Roy de Maistre (1894–1968) and Roland Wakelin (1887–1971) shared an interest in modern art, practicing amongst a small group of like-minded Sydney artists keen to develop and explore new ideas in painting. For a short period between 1918-1920 de Maistre and Wakelin practiced a means of painting according to de Maistre's theory. The results of their experiments culminated in *Colour in Art*, which showed eleven paintings, three "colour organisations for interior decoration", as well as discs, charts, scales and a colour keyboard.

De Maistre's colour-music theory was defined in 'scientific' terms, based on an alliance between seven colours of the spectrum and notes on a musical octave and was established in its first format as a colour wheel. According to Niels Hutchison:

De Maistre's colour chart took the form of a wheel. A flow of colour, like a rainbow, formed the rim. Spokes divided the wheel into twelve segments and with different colours and notes allocated to each segment. The relationship between colours and notes followed a simple order: the seven white notes of the keyboard

(A, B, C, D, E, F and G) were given to the seven rainbow colours of red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo and violet (or ROYGBIV for short), and in that order. This made up a colour-music code, starting with red-equals-A at the bottom end. Musical pitch then increased note by note up the scale, paralleled by a similar movement of colour through the spectrum, ended with violet-equals-G. Scientifically, this created a sequence in which the frequencies, or vibrational rates, of both light and sound progressively increased...a crude colour-music code was created.²

This basic wheel structure was then extended to include more colour / note combinations and major / minor keys resulting in a flowing and harmonious relationship; colours moved from light to dark as they ascended or descended respectively, minor keys produced paintings in subdued colours and major keys produced paintings of bright, high-keyed colours.

Ever since Bernard Smith first documented this event in 1962, the colour-music period by de Maistre and Wakelin is recalled in most historical accounts of twentieth century Australian art, since it is celebrated for producing the first non-figurative painting in Australia.³ Such conventional narratives portray the colour-music period out of context within the development of Australian painting. *Colour in Art – Revisiting 1919* (2008) aims to contextualise the emergence of colour-music by bringing together for the first time a significant number of paintings and related material from 1917-1920 as well as the 1930s. The painting *Study for boat sheds* (1917) (also known as *Colour symphony*) demonstrates Wakelin's advancement

towards his more fully realised colour-music works with its flattened perspective and emphasis on geometric shapes. De Maistre's later colour-music period during the 1930s, a time when the artist returned to his theory to produce significant non-figurative work, is represented in *Arrested phrase from Beethoven's Ninth Symphony in red major* and *Arrested phrase from Haydn trio in orange-red minor*. The *Colour in Art – Revisiting 1919* exhibition and catalogue essay by Nick Waterlow explore the legacy of colour-music, and in revisiting the era almost ninety years later, questions its impact and relevance to non-figurative painting today.

Colour in Art – Revisiting 1919 does not wholly recreate the 1919 exhibition in its entirety since there exists no visual documentation of the works shown in the original exhibition. However, the titles by which they were exhibited are known, although these have often changed over the years. Several works included here were conclusively in the original 1919 exhibition. They visually demonstrate the theory through their high-keyed colour, simplified forms and geometric shapes. These characteristics are all evident in other fully accomplished colour-music paintings included in this exhibition such as Wakelin's *Causeway, Tuggerah* (1919) and *Berry's Bay* (1919). Speculation has been made about other paintings, for example the artwork currently known as *Syncromy, Berry's Bay* by de Maistre could have been exhibited as *Syncromy in yellow green minor* in 1919 (no. 3 in the 1919 *Colour in Art* catalogue).⁴ Many of the colour-music paintings depict the locale of Berry's Bay on Sydney's northern harbour foreshore. The whereabouts of other works in the original exhibition such as *Still life study, in blue violet minor key* by Wakelin are presently unknown, however the intensely coloured *Still life* (1920) from the National Gallery of Australia as well as the work *Still life* (1920) allude to the results of this genre according to the colour-music theory.

Colour in Art – Revisiting 1919 also includes the discs, scales and colour keyboards which explained the theory and were on display at the 1919 exhibition. De Maistre later produced a further twenty 'rainbow' scales and eight gouache colour 'key' studies detailing his theory. These were likely to have been used as exercises to refine his theory and demonstrate its complex workings.

Colour in Art – Revisiting 1919 is the first exhibition devoted solely to the colour-music works by both artists drawing on major public collections around Australia as well as regional galleries, private and corporate collections. A small number of colour-music paintings held in private collections overseas were not within the scope of this exhibition for inclusion. Many works have never before been displayed publicly alongside their stylistic counterparts, for example, de Maistre's *Barns at Berrima* (1918), *Untitled landscape* (1918) and the two works both titled *Colour sketch* (1920) as well as Wakelin's *Untitled landscape with red shed* (1918) and *Boathouses* (1920).

The scope of de Maistre and Wakelin's interest in colour and the activities that preceded de Maistre's development of the colour-music theory have been the subject of study previously by artists and historians.⁵ Daniel Thomas remains one of the few people today



Roland Shakespeare Wakelin c1915

to have spoken to de Maistre and Wakelin specifically about their experiments with colour-music during the 1960s when he revived an interest in Australian modern painters. Heather Johnson has revisited her work on de Maistre's colour-music period in this catalogue and examines how colour-music fitted more broadly into the world of experimental art production. Kate Bowan explores the early twentieth century music landscape in Sydney as well as internationally, linking this art form to its visual counterpart. Contemporary artist, Christopher Dean, looks at de Maistre and Wakelin as well as other Australian artists, who work outside a mainstream pictorial myth-based nationalism and as such are isolated by the local art establishment both then and now. And finally, I will consider the colour-music paintings of Roland Wakelin who, unlike de Maistre, ceased working in this manner and with the conviction that had resulted in his works exhibited in 1919.

Annabel Pegus

- ¹ Roy de Maistre, *Colour in Art*, exh. cat. (Sydney, 1919).
- ² Niels Hutchison, "Colour Music," 15 July 2008. <<http://home.vicnet.net.au/colourmusic/maistre.htm>>
- ³ Bernard Smith, *Australian Painting 1788-1970*, (Oxford University Press: Victoria, 1962) 174-6. Colour-music period was not mentioned by William Moore, *The Art of Australia*, 1 & 2 (Angus and Robertson: Sydney, 1934).
- ⁴ Daniel Thomas, *Outlines on Australian Art: The Joseph Brown Collection*, 3rd ed. (Macmillan: South Melbourne, 1989).
- ⁵ For example, see Heather Johnson, Elizabeth Gertsakis, Mary Eagle and Jenny MacFarlane in the *Colour in Art-Revisiting 1919* further reading list on page 61.



Roy de Maistre (far left) and companions, St Jean de Luz, France c1923-1925

COLOUR IN ART – 1919 AND NOW

1919 was the crucial moment when Modernism landed in Australia, and yet because of the First World War and its aftermath it was never effectively disseminated. This was the feeling that has driven my desire to reopen *Colour in Art* for further and intense scrutiny.

I also want to remind myself why *Colour in Art* continues to have such an effect on me. Roland Wakelin's paintings are all diminutive by today's standards and Roy de Maistre's applied theories are often quite unconvincing and the effect of their works was short lived. The questions asked were far greater than the answers provided. And yet it revealed, in a microcosm, a clear break from Australian art of the past. Painting, because it inevitably develops out of links and schisms with precursors as well as with the current world of ideas, has a far greater ability than its form would assume to act as a radical inquisitor. This was a moment of revelation, when a new paradigm was made manifest, one that continues to resonate almost ninety years later, as the continued interests of artists as diverse as Domenico De Clario, Elizabeth Gertsakis and Christopher Dean attest.

This exhibition extends the original 1919 context of *Colour in Art*, from 1917 to 1935 in order to present and explore its full expression that included de Maistre's 1930s return to the fold. And very few of the works now present, apart from Wakelin's *Synchromy in orange major* and de Maistre's *The boatsheds, in violet red key* and *A set of colour scales, wheels and discs* were conclusively shown in 1919. What the two aforementioned paintings do reveal is the use of colour to determine the entire structure and intrinsic relationships, indeed the total presence of the settings made visible. The harmonious results of integration between the natural world and the man made express holistic spiritualist views as well as the enjoined rhythmic feelings produced by musical notes and composition. Composers such as Debussy, Satie and Mahler come to mind. And Wakelin's paintings *Causeway Tuggerah* and *Houses at Hunters Hill*, small yet utterly decisive, are markers of their era, as are de Maistre's *A painted picture of the universe* and *Rhythmic composition in yellow green minor*, the largest painting in the exhibition.

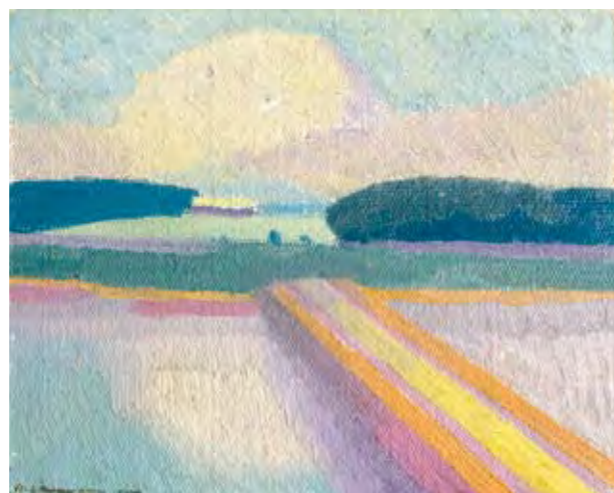
Wakelin's contribution to the thinking behind *Colour in Art*, his presence in it and the paintings in this exhibition bear testimony to a remarkable pioneer, even though he remained true to a figurative understanding. Yet his sense of colour, his consummate choreographic skills and acute interpretive observation enabled him to create a body of utterly memorable work, as vibrant now as ever it was. He also revealed an approach of true generosity:

By exploring the realm of colour, we have opened for ourselves new avenues of thought and enlarged our consciousness of the fundamentals of life. By giving our experiences concrete form through the medium of pigment, we hope to convey to others the result of our study, that they too may increase their knowledge of life. We are just as eager to absorb any truths we may receive from the works of others, that we may then become part of a great scheme of synthetic spiritual progress.¹

Colour in Art and all that surrounded its presence provided a moment of supreme challenge to the status quo, as did in very different ways *The Field* exhibition at the National Gallery of Victoria in 1968, and the wrapping of Little Bay in Sydney in 1969 by Christo and Jeanne-Claude. But the ultra conservative reactions, spearheaded by Julian Ashton's son Howard, who described the works as "elaborate and pretentious bosh", were virulent in 1919. *The Bulletin* expected people would "...go to jeer" at the paintings, and Lloyd Rees remembered the art establishment as being "...red or white with anger because they considered that De Mestre (sic) had in some way tarnished their calling by daring to associate music with his 'terrible paintings!'"²

It may be hard to believe in an era when information overload is prevalent, that when Roland Wakelin was first confronted by modern art in the guise of Marcel Duchamp's *Nude descending a staircase* in the *Sydney Sun* on 4 May 1913, referring to the furore caused by

Roland Wakelin
Causeway, Tuggerah 1919
oil on paper on paperboard
14.0 x 17.5 cm
Collection: Art Gallery of New South Wales
Purchased 1967
© Reproduced with permission



the New York Armory Show in which it featured, he could state, "The names of Cézanne, Gauguin and Van Gogh were then unknown here."³ In 1916 Dattilo Rubbo, a champion of the modern and a teacher of Roland Wakelin's at the Royal Art Society, was so incensed at the latter's painting *Down the hills to Berry's Bay* being excluded from the Society's exhibition, he challenged a member of the committee to a duel using fists, pistols or swords. The battlelines could hardly have been clearer.

Art, in many parts of Europe as well as in America, had propagated a succession of experiments, challenges and explorations that shook the existing values to their very roots and in the process altered forever the language of art. The Suprematists in Russia, De Stijl in the Netherlands, Cubism in France, the Futurists in Italy, the Vorticists in England, exhibitions including the Armory Show and Roger Fry's of Post-Impressionism in London, as well as the influence of Orphism, Synchromism and of Theosophy and Anthroposophy, were all manifestations of the great changes to surface before the First World War. All were affected by the devastation wrought by this event after which attempts to regroup, particularly in Europe, were overwhelmed by a new sobriety and pressing needs to rebuild communities and cities. It is fair to say that most of the fruits of these remarkable pioneers were not truly disseminated until after the Second World War, when a period of relative peace and prosperity prevailed, and the practice of art with the ideas, functions, concepts and theories at its base, became gradually more central to daily life, and the interests of a broader public.

Colour in Art was connected in several ways, that other writers examine in this publication, to these breakthrough movements and philosophies, though it took place considerably later and after the end of the war. Its shockwaves were immediate but there was no continuity in its effect. The seeds of Modernism had been sown but they were not to flourish in Australia until many years later, and yet still there remain unexplored elements of this endeavour that shed light on contemporary concerns and the creation of new understanding. It remains one of the few moments in Australian art of the twentieth century when the prevailing and at the time conservative dominant belief was so cogently assailed by contrary and alternative thinking and practice. For this alone it is worth reopening and re-exploring and asking why this was the case, what has indeed been its long term effect, and does this model offer anything for the future?

The moment was followed by a recoil from their truly avant-garde positions, as was the case with Vorticists



Roy de Maistre
(A set of colour discs, scales, wheels) c1919
oil on paperboard
90.5 x 105.5 cm
Collection: Art Gallery of New South Wales
Gift of Sir John Rothenstein in memory of Roy de Maistre 1969

such as David Bomberg after the Great War, by both Wakelin and de Maistre, though the latter did crucially return, as luminously evident here, to those concerns in the 1930s when living in England. Australia after the war was seen as a refuge from all the ravages in Europe and a haven from socialism and bolshevism, a place where the civilised world would remain intact. But it had its limitations, as Norman Lindsay's slightly later yet pungent views attest: "In short, we have no Modernism whatsoever in Australian art, and if we utter a prayer to the powers of Destiny, it is that the whole cursed business from State-aided scholarships to movements in painting never will be visited on Australia."⁴

Although Australia was isolated both Wakelin and particularly de Maistre were aware of the prevailing zeitgeist in Europe and America, which I referred to earlier but will not explore fully as others address it in this publication, where confluences in science and the spirit were driving the breaking open of form, colour and concept in art and its relation to music, sound, space and spirituality. One such relevant pioneer was English colour-poet Beatrice Irwin who on May 21 1912, at Crosby Hall, Chelsea - she also performed in New York and Sydney - wrote in the Foreword to her Programme: "I come before you to demonstrate the art of geometric harmony, or triple vibration, through the expressed correspondences of form, colour and sound."⁵ De Maistre was sufficiently impressed by her performance and philosophy, espoused in *The New Science of Colour*, originally published in 1916, that he used several of her lines in the extract from his lecture on "Colour in Relation to Painting" given at the Australian Arts Club coinciding with the opening of *Colour in Art*, that was printed in the accompanying

catalogue. The conclusion, "Colour...constitutes the very song of life and is, as it were, the spiritual speech of every living thing", is an almost direct quote from Irwin⁶, a point well made by Deborah Hart when writing of de Maistre and Wakelin in relation to Grace Cossington Smith.⁷

Wassily Kandinsky's ideas concerning colour and music and their synthesis through art that he expressed in *Concerning the Spiritual in Art*, translated into English in 1917, were a natural influence, as were works in this vein by Mondrian, Duncan Grant, Robert Delaunay and Kupka. Indeed Heather Johnson maintains that, "de Maistre's belief in the spirituality of colour and its relationship to the essence of life, was similar to that of the theosophist artists such as Kandinsky and Mondrian."⁸ The Theosophical Society was at the centre of the interest in occultism and alternative spirituality in the early twentieth century and Sydney was at its core. C.W. Leadbeater, one of its leaders lived there from 1914 to 1920 and Annie Besant co-author of the influential book *Thought Forms*, also visited. *Key to the Meanings of Colours*, published by Leadbeater in 1902 in *Man Visible and Invisible* would have been known to de Maistre and Wakelin.

The Synchronists were a further source of inspiration. A.J. Eddy and W.H. Wright's book *Modern Paintings. Its Tendency and Meaning*, published in New York in 1915, had a chapter on Macdonald-Wright brother of the author, and Russell, the Synchronist painters, for whom colour was at the heart of their art. Such was the effect on Wakelin and de Maistre they used the term several times in the titling of their works in *Colour in Art*.

De Maistre trained as a musician, learning the violin and viola, and his knowledge of musical structure extended by his friendship with the son of the director of the Conservatorium Adrien Verbrugghen, as well as his keen interest in the scientist Alexander Hector's Electric Colour-Music Organ, propelled him to construct from all the information available an original theory and practice, rather than a pure replication, uniting colour and music. He rejected both the scientific and aesthetic foundations that laid claim to this new dawn, instead producing results both spiritual and practical that refused to be tethered by either music or colour and approached, through acute analysis and heightened intuition, a planetary language sufficiently robust and visionary to survive the Sydney skirmish in 1919 and live on to today.

Rhythmic composition in yellow green minor (1919) was one of the earliest non-objective Australian works and remains an icon of Modernism, in its own context as crucial as was Frantisek Kupka's *The first step* (1909). Both

propose an infinity with its own order, visualisations of unending connectedness within a firmament, and the belief that our inner worlds are inextricably linked with the cosmos. If there is a single work that convinces me of the timeless success of de Maistre's analytical desire to find expression of a world made whole, in the face of so much disruption, destruction and despair it is this painting. *A painted picture of the universe*, though smaller and not as all encompassing, is nevertheless a magical work, as are the larger scale *Arrested phrase from Beethoven's Ninth Symphony in red major*, and *Arrested phrase from Haydn Trio in orange-red minor*, both dated 1919 – 1935. There will always be conjecture about the musical exactness of these works, but they too have stood the test of time; their interlaced vertical forms punctuated by rhythmic horizontal counterpoints have the feel of symphonic structures, yet relate to Futurism, to Kupka's *Vertical planes* (1912-13), and even to Hilma af Klint's *Altar paintings series* such as *Untitled no. 1* (1915). Each is a consummate example of microcosmic and macrocosmic worlds connecting, and for de Maistre of uniting his rekindled passion for colour and music of the mid 1930s with his earlier pioneering, in a language entirely his own. Whether or not these paintings were influenced in any way by theosophical beliefs in "the vertical line that stands for male spirituality leading heavenward"⁹, or any other such understandings, can only remain, without clear evidence, pure speculation. What though does endure is a radical body of convincing work that set de Maistre apart as an Australian who made a significant international contribution to the development of abstraction, the key language of art to emerge in the twentieth century.

Nick Waterlow

- 1 Roland Wakelin, "Colour in Art," *Modernism & Australia: Documents on Art, Design and Architecture 1917 – 1967*, Ann Stephen, Andrew McNamara and Philip Goad (eds.) (Miegunyah Press: Melbourne, 2006) 63.
- 2 Lloyd Rees, *The Small Treasures of a Lifetime. Some Early Memories of Australian Art and Artists*, (Collins Australia: Sydney, 1988) 92.
- 3 Ann Stephen, Andrew McNamara and Philip Goad (eds.), 76.
- 4 Norman Lindsay, "The Transplanted Artist," *Home 2* (Sydney) 1 December 1921: 18.
- 5 Beatrice Irwin, *The New Science of Colour*, (William Rider and Son Ltd.: London, 1923) 123.
- 6 *ibid.*, 10.
- 7 Deborah Hart, *Grace Cossington Smith*, (National Gallery of Australia: Canberra, 2005) 19.
- 8 Heather Johnson, *Roy de Maistre: The Australian Years 1894-1930*, (Craftsman House: Sydney, 1988) 31.
- 9 Maurice Tuchman (ed.), *The Spiritual in Art: Abstract Painting 1890 – 1985*, (Los Angeles County Museum of Art & Abbeville Press: New York, 1985) 81.



Roy de Maistre
A painted picture of the universe 1920
 oil on board
 49.6 x 39.2 cm
 National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
 Purchased 1976

THE 1919 COLOUR/MUSIC EXHIBITION: HOW DID IT HAPPEN?

It has long been a matter of conjecture, among art historians and others, as to how two young artists, far removed from the international art scene, managed to produce artworks that paralleled the most avant-garde in the world. Did Roland Wakelin and Roy de Maistre [then calling himself Roi de Mestre] know about the art being made in Europe and America in the early part of the twentieth century? If so, how did they know? Or did they manage to produce original work that emanated from Australia (Sydney to be exact), albeit under the influence of factors simultaneously influencing artwork in other countries? Evidence suggests both. Some knowledge of overseas avant-garde art, some original experimentation fuelled by the same ideas stimulating artists in other parts of the world: ideas from the sciences and technology, from religion, spiritualism and the occult that influenced music, literature, film, dance and theatre. This essay will look at how de Maistre's and Wakelin's colour/music work fitted into the world of experimental art production.

There is a wealth of publications on the influence of the religious, spiritual and the occult on early modern art in Europe and America.¹ Authors describe a turn towards the religious and the spiritual after the devastating reality of death and destruction in the First World War. Newer religions such as theosophy and anthroposophy gained followers, as did spiritualism. Australia, particularly Sydney, was well acquainted with these trends. Sydney was for a time one of the largest theosophical centres in the world and the home, between 1914 and 1929, of one of the movement's leaders, C.W. Leadbeater.² The death of so many Australian soldiers in the war led many people to spiritualism as a means of communicating with suddenly lost husbands, sons and brothers.³ (Recently, Nick Waterlow, Jenny McFarlane and others have examined the influence of the spiritual in Australian art.⁴)

How did these religious and spiritual movements affect Wakelin and de Maistre? Of the two artists, de Maistre appears the one more attuned to the religious and spiritual. Raised an Anglican and converting to Roman Catholicism in 1951 de Maistre, throughout his life, exhibited a sympathy to religious and spiritual ideas. While there is no direct link between de Maistre and the Sydney branch of the theosophical society, there is evidence that he was aware of theosophical beliefs and of those of the break away movement, anthroposophy. Jenny McFarlane has argued that in devising his colour/music scheme, and in his speech at the 1919 *Colour in Art* exhibition, de Maistre positioned himself between the spiritual

linking of colour and music of the theosophists and a more scientific linking of the two.⁵

The influence of new technology on art has been the subject of several studies on European and American art.⁶ I am unaware of any similar specific study on Australian art, but Australia was certainly well aware of the technological changes. Robert Wohl has described the advent of flight on the artistic imagination of early twentieth-century European artists.⁷ Australia was not immune. Harry Houdini made the first flight in Australia in 1910 in Victoria and repeated the event in Rosehill in Sydney.⁸ This well publicised, photographed and filmed spectacle led rapidly to the beginnings of Australian aviation: calm weather, flat topography and long distances to be travelled made Australia the perfect place for the pioneering industry. Sydney had its own magazine devoted to technological advances: *Sea, Land and Air* (1918-1923). In 1919 the magazine published an article explaining, in technological/scientific terms, the respective theories behind the colour/music work of de Maistre and A.B. Hector.⁹ The excitement of living in Sydney between 1910 and 1920, using the new machines – the telephone and radiogram – enjoying the new picture palaces, living it up in the dance halls and jazz palaces, has been vividly evoked by Jill Julius Matthews.¹⁰

What did de Maistre and Wakelin know about art overseas? Australia was not completely isolated from international art happenings. Even the popular press, such as *The Bulletin* published articles on modern art, for example, 'Post Impressionism and the Racinistes', as early as 1911.¹¹ Lloyd Rees describes de Maistre as seeking out "a few books on the new movements which might have bearings upon their [de Maistre's and Wakelin's] plans and aspirations" and of de Maistre interrupting Wakelin's commercial work by bursting through the door and exclaiming "Stop, Wakelin! I've got a book."¹² The only two books that have, to date, been documented as certainly having been read by the pair are A.J. Eddy's *Cubists and Post Impressionists* (1914) and W.H. Wright's *Modern Painting its Tendency and Meaning* (1915), the latter being the source of the word 'synchromy' used in the titles of the works displayed in the 1919 colour/music exhibition. We can assume that de Maistre and Wakelin knew that artists overseas were experimenting with new art forms and that they wanted to join the brigade.

Why did they choose colour/music? The association of colour and music has a long history. William Moritz traces the association back to the Egyptian

and Greek civilisations and believes that "mankind has an innate urge towards Visual Music".¹³ Niels Hutchison has located de Maistre's theory of colour music within this history.¹⁴ Moritz describes the first 'ocular harpsichord' as having been built in 1730 and traces the development of some of the dozens of composer/inventors who have contrived colour organs since. One of the protagonists was Alexander Burnett Hector who patented his first colour organ in 1908, and a second in 1912, and gave extremely popular performances in Sydney.¹⁵ (Jenny McFarlane has documented the connections between de Maistre and Hector.¹⁶)

De Maistre himself practised both music and art, studying at the Conservatorium of Music in Sydney, playing the viola in the conservatorium orchestra, and attending art school both at the Royal Art Society where he was taught by Anthony Dattilo Rubbo, and with Julian Ashton. Devising a theory to relate colour and music was part of a world trend practised by artists (for example, Duncan Grant in England and Frederick Schwankovsky in America)¹⁷ and musicians (for example, Scriabin). Schwankovsky's work, particularly, echoes that of de Maistre in that he associates specific colours with specific musical notes and states, "So the artist has instinctively reacted to the same laws of harmony in colour that have been actually worked out in music".¹⁸ Wakelin too has been described as having a passion for music. Lloyd Rees relates spending "wonderful evenings devoted entirely to music" with Wakelin and de Maistre, "made possible by the emergence of the gramophone".¹⁹

De Maistre's interest in colour extended beyond his colour/music work into the psychological use of colour. Working with Charles Gordon Moffitt, a doctor stationed at Callan Park Hospital, Sydney and later at Kenmore Hospital, Goulburn, whom he met around 1917, de Maistre developed colour schemes to paint the rooms of shell shocked soldiers as part of their treatment. An effective treatment for the then new condition, shell shock, engaged doctors around the world. Experimental treatments ranged from hypnosis to electrolysis to sedation. Moffitt's and de Maistre's work was based on that of H. Kemp Prossor, an English colourist who designed colour schemes for hospital wards. Articles describing his work appeared in the *Lancet* in 1917, in *Colour* magazine in 1918 and in a book, *Colour and health*, published in 1919.²⁰ The similarity of the colour scheme used by de Maistre in painting a Red Cross home at Five Dock with that of Kemp Prossor, described in the *Lancet*, indicates that de Maistre had certainly read of Kemp Prossor's work.²¹ Using colour as a treatment for shell shock was



Roy de Maistre
Arrested phrase from Beethoven's Ninth Symphony in red major
1919-1935
oil on cardboard on composition board
72.1 x 98.8 cm
Collection: National Gallery of Australia, Canberra

but one of the many psychological and therapeutic uses advocated for colour at the time. Numerous articles appeared in the popular press and specialised magazines and books. Part of the theosophist and anthroposophist interest in colour was related to spiritual healing, wellbeing and wholeness.

De Maistre also had a strong interest in colour in interior decoration. There are reports of his decorating the homes of friends before 1920.²² During the 1920s this became a source of income and his experimental colour charts and wheels were patented, printed and sold through Grace Bros. for use by home decorators.

While de Maistre and Wakelin were experimenting, were they aware of other experimental art within their region – the experiments in hand-painted film of Len Lye? Lye did not move to Sydney from New Zealand until 1922 and his work in film did not resemble the work being done by de Maistre and Wakelin except in its experimental nature, but all three artists were devising new ideas. Being a fellow New Zealander, interested in modern art before he left New Zealand, had Wakelin perhaps heard of Lye's work through New Zealand contacts? To date there is no evidence either way. The importance of Lye in the story of Wakelin and de Maistre is that he too devised an experimental art form while far removed from the centre of avant-garde art. Roger Horrocks describes his access to some books, his knowledge of modern European art, his love of new technology – film and his gramophone – and jazz music; and how he too benefited from the life and art world of Sydney after he moved there:

the cosmopolitan nature of the city, the bohemian atmosphere, the sub-cultures of artists and writers, the intellectual independence, and the availability of books in public collections.²³ Horrocks has also described the work of the pioneering sound artist, Jack Ellitt, who started studying at the Conservatorium of Music around 1918: "...increasingly his interests were modern and he became adept at obtaining scores of new music from overseas. His enthusiasms included Scriabin with his mystic chords and "colour music" and Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring*."²⁴ Ellitt met Lye and worked with him after Lye moved to Sydney, but did he also know de Maistre or have any part in the colour/music work? In spite of their common interests, to date, no association between de Maistre, and Ellitt has been found.

De Maistre's and Wakelin's experimental work in Sydney around 1919 and earlier was part of a worldwide trend in experimental art, a trend that affected not only European and American artists but also artists in Australia and New Zealand – even though only a small number. The colour/music work of de Maistre and Wakelin cannot be seen as imitative of overseas art, but a home grown experimental art stimulated by the same influences that generated modern art overseas in the second decade of the twentieth century.

Following the *Colour in Art* exhibition, perhaps a little daunted by the reception the work received in Sydney, both de Maistre and Wakelin retreated from their adventurous experiments to a more post-impressionist style of painting. The seriousness of their enterprise is apparent, however, in de Maistre's return to his colour/music work in 1934, when he had moved to England. After leaving Australia in 1930 de Maistre quickly became part of the English avant-garde, at the time centred on the Mayor Gallery in London, and his work was reproduced in Herbert Read's *Art Now* (London, 1933): an indication that the work of an Australian artist, developed in Australia, was recognised in the international avant-garde. In London, de Maistre produced several large canvases: abstract works comprised mostly of vertical rectangles of colour (not unlike a piano keyboard) enlivened by lines, and bands of other geometric shapes. Most of the works were given titles relating to passages of music and dated 1919-1935, indicating that they were a continuation of his colour/music theories.²⁵ He also drafted plans, wrote a script, painted sketches and sought financial support for a colour/music ballet. In contrast to the small, lively works exhibited in the *Colour in Art* exhibition, the London- produced paintings were sophisticated and closely considered,

every band of colour, every tone, every line carefully placed. De Maistre did not overtly pursue his colour/music after these works, but colour remained one of the strengths of the decorative cubist style he later adopted and musical references often appear in his works.

The story of the 1919 *Colour in Art* exhibition is larger than de Maistre and Wakelin. It indicates that rather than being a cultural backwater, as it has been often described in reference to the art produced here, Australia, at the time, fostered an art production akin to that internationally.

Heather Johnson

- ¹ See, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, *The Spiritual in Art: Abstract Painting 1890-1985* (Abbeville Press: New York, 1986).
- ² See, Jill Roe, *Beyond belief: Theosophy in Australia 1897-1939* (University of NSW Press: Sydney, 1986).
- ³ Sir Arthur Conan Doyle visited Australia in 1920 on a world tour (1918-1922) lecturing on spiritualism.
- ⁴ See, N.A.R. Waterlow, "The Spiritual, the Rational, and the Material: Spirit and Place – Art in Australia 1861-1996," *Artlink* 18.1: 33-37; Jenny McFarlane, "Alexander Hector's Electric Colour-Music Organ," *Art and Australia* 40.2 (Summer 2002): 292-97, and other publications and research; Mary Eagle, *Australian Modern Painting Between the Wars 1914-1939* (Bay Books: Sydney, 1989); Kirsti Sarmiala-Berger, "Occult and Mystical Influences in Australian art," PhD Thesis. Monash University, 2002.
- ⁵ McFarlane, 296.
- ⁶ See, Robert Wohl, *A Passion for Wings. Aviation and the Western Imagination 1908-1918* (Yale University Press: New Haven, 1994); Kenneth E. Silver, *Esprit de Corps: The Art of the Parisian Avant-garde and the First World War, 1914-1925* (Princeton University Press: Princeton, 1989); Terry Smith, *Making the Modern. Industry, Art and Design in America* (Chicago University Press: Chicago, 1993); Charles Harrison, *English Art and Modernism 1900-1939* (Yale University Press: New Haven, 1981) (particularly chapters 4 and 5); David Peters Corbett, *The Modernity of English Art 1914-30* (Manchester University Press: Manchester, 1997).
- ⁷ Wohl, *A Passion for Wings...*
- ⁸ "The Pioneers. Aviation and Aeromodelling – Independent Evolutions and Histories," 22 June 2008. <http://www.ctie.monash.edu.au/hargrave/houdini_bio.html>
- ⁹ Kae McDowell, "Colour music." *Sea, Land and Air* (October 1919): 417-22; "Colour Music," *Lone Hand* (1 July 1913): 240-44.
- ¹⁰ Jill Julius Mathews, *Dance Hall and Picture Palace. Sydney's Romance with Modernity* (Currency Press: Sydney, 2005).
- ¹¹ For example, "Post-Impressionism and the Racinistes," *Bulletin* (23 February 1911) Red Page; "The Cheerful Cubist," *Bulletin* (20 November 1913), Red Page; Leslie Beer, "Modern Art and the War," *Lone Hand* 4.5 (October 1916): 274; and others. See also, J.F. Williams, "Modernism and the Lost Generation," *Art and Australia* 29.1 (spring 1991): 52-59 and John F. Williams, *The Quarantined Culture. Australian Reactions to Modernism* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1995).
- ¹² Lloyd Rees, *The Small Treasures of a Lifetime. Some Early Memories of Australian Art and Artists* (Collins: Sydney, 1984): 91.

- ¹³ William Moritz, "Towards a visual music," *Cantrills Filmnotes* 47/48 (August 1985): 35-42, 35; see also Niels Hutchison, "Colour Music" (1997) <<http://home.vicnet.net.au/~colmusic/>>.
- ¹⁴ Hutchison, "Colour Music".
- ¹⁵ See Moritz, "Towards a Visual Music", 36; McFarlane, "Alexander Hector's Electric Colour-Music Organ"; and Elizabeth Gertsakis, "Roy de Maistre and Colour Music, 1916-c1920", Fine Arts IV. Thesis. Melbourne University, 1975.
- ¹⁶ McFarlane, "Alexander Hector's Electric Colour-Music Organ".
- ¹⁷ For example, Duncan Grant, *Abstract Kinetic Scroll*, 1914 (a work simulating a piano keyboard) reproduced in Simon Watney, *The Art of Duncan Grant* (John Murray Publishers: London, 1990), plates 17, 18, 19; Frederick J. Schwankovsky, *The Use of Power and Colour* (Duncan, Vail Company: Los Angeles, 1931). I am indebted to the Smithsonian Institution for a copy of this book.
- ¹⁸ Schwankovsky, 9-26.

- ¹⁹ Rees, 90.
- ²⁰ "A Colour Ward," *Lancet* (6 October 1917): 542; *Colour* (April 1918): xviii; H. Kemp Prossor, "The Therapeutic Value of Colour" in Rev. John J. Poole (ed.), *Colour and Health. A Symposium* (Cope and Fenwick: London, 1919): 13-22.
- ²¹ Kemp Prossor's colour scheme described in *Lancet* (6 October 1917): 542; de Maistre's colour scheme described in "Colour Cure. Hospital Camouflage. Treatment for Shell Shock," *Sun* 10 March 1919: 6 and "The Moving Picture Show. The Colour Cure," *Sun* 11 March 1919: 6.
- ²² See my *Roy de Maistre. The Australian Years 1894-1930* (Craftsman House: Sydney, 1988): 27.
- ²³ Roger Horrocks, *Len Lye. A Biography* (Auckland University Press: Auckland, 2001): 32-51.
- ²⁴ Roger Horrocks, "Jack Ellitt Pioneer Australian Sound Artist, The Early Years," *Cantrills Filmnotes* 93-100 (December 1999-January 2000): 20-26, 20.
- ²⁵ For a full account of this work see my, *Roy de Maistre. The English Years 1930-1968* (Craftsman House: Sydney, 1995).



Roy de Maistre
 (Study for painting 'Arrested phrase from Beethoven's Ninth Symphony in red major') c1919
 pastel, watercolour, pencil, crayon
 35.8 x 45.5 cm
 Collection: National Gallery of Australia, Canberra

ROLAND WAKELIN'S COLOUR MUSIC

Roland Wakelin was thirty-two years old when he exhibited colour-music paintings in Sydney in 1919. Wakelin was a committed painter long before he moved to Sydney from New Zealand in 1912, and passionately produced art until his death at age eighty-four. Interestingly, Wakelin, an innovative painter who was keen to develop new ideas, had never left the Antipodes when he was experimenting with the colour-music oeuvre. Although, Wakelin's colour-music paintings are his most daring, it is Roy de Maistre who has been credited with devising the theory and is remembered for this groundbreaking moment in Australia's artistic development. Nonetheless, even by the end of his career Wakelin's colour-music period remains the most memorable, iconic and significant of his entire body of work.

Wakelin and de Maistre interpreted colour-music in their own individual manner. Despite their different approaches, there are some characteristics that feature in the paintings of both artists. Elements such as their use of high-keyed colour, simplified geometric shapes and flatly coloured forms, often depicting the modernist architectural style typical of this period and the vista of the bays of Sydney harbour, can be seen in Wakelin's *Syncromy in orange major* (1919) and *Berry's Bay* (1919) and de Maistre's *Syncromy, Berry's Bay* (1919). Whereas Wakelin's own graceful interpretation of colour-music in *Barn near Tuggerah* (1919) and *On Ball's Head* (1919) provide a subtle contrast to other works made during this period.



Roland Wakelin
Hillside houses, Berry's Bay c1919
oil on cardboard
19.5 x 23.0 cm
Collection: National Gallery of Australia, Canberra
Bequest of Dorothy and Douglas Dundas 1988

Interestingly, Wakelin's paintings *Hillside houses, Berry's Bay* (c1919) and *Study for boatsheds* (1917) have not generally been recognised as part of his colour-music oeuvre and are rarely exhibited under this banner. Unlike their better-known counterparts, these paintings lack a distinctive and vivid use of bold colour, yet still relate to the classic colour-music paintings through the artist's use of simplified composition, a reduction of complex forms and a reduced perspective. Despite this, *Hillside houses, Berry's Bay* was exhibited as its previous title *Colour Music II* in *Modern Pioneers* (1960) at Macquarie Galleries. This painting's subsequent title endorses a stylistic relationship to other colour-music paintings. If indeed Wakelin was not confident with colour when executing these more subdued works it was perhaps a combination of style, brushwork and colour, that he was not yet completely at ease with, as earlier paintings dated 1916-1917 clearly show Wakelin confidently using high-keyed colour.¹

In 1918 Wakelin painted a number of remarkably small yet vivid works including *Colour note - landscape* (1918), *(Untitled landscape)* (1918), *(Untitled landscape with red shed)* (1918) and *Beach and houses* (1918) which represent his efforts to investigate painting according to the colour-music theory, in contrast to his fully realised works of 1919. More than mere studies, Wakelin had consideration for them as they are all signed and dated. These paintings depict an indistinguishable rural or semi-rural landscape, distinctly different to *Berry's Bay*, the much loved harbour subject. Over the years, the Wakelin family regularly holidayed in Tuggerah, north of Sydney, and stayed in a boarding house. Perhaps this is where these paintings were executed.²

Prior to Wakelin turning his interest to Max Meldrum's theories and in spite of an unsympathetic response from conservative artistic and musical circles to *Colour in Art* (1919), he painted a number of works after the 1919 exhibition in the same idiom. Examples of these are *Boathouses, Still life* (collection presently unknown and not shown in this exhibition) and the National Gallery of Australia's *Still life*, all dated 1920. Unfortunately, other colour-music works created by Wakelin were possibly destroyed or painted over, after de Maistre and he ceased painting in the colour-music manner.³ The few that survive today have done so because they came into the possession of friends, other artists, and loyal patrons or were retained by the artist himself. *Still Life* (collection unknown) for example was kept by Wakelin, until sometime between 1925-27, when a "very musical family" who neighboured the Wakelins acquired it.⁴

In the early 1960s, when a revived interest in Australia's early modernists took place, Wakelin had the opportunity to reflect upon the paintings that he and de Maistre produced in 1919, concluding, "I soon abandoned the idea because I found it illogical".⁵ His sentiments on the period were most persuasive soon after he ceased painting in the colour-music style. In a letter to his good friend and framer, John Young, he wrote, "scientific formula such as the colour scale, are the bug bears and damnation of painters".⁶

In hindsight and perhaps in recognising the virtues of his experiments over forty years later, Wakelin's sentiments mellowed:

De Maistre and I both experimented with abstract painting... but after several experiments I decided that that wasn't exactly my line of country, that I needed something of the visual image in my work.⁷

Douglas Dundas, painter and friend of Wakelin, reiterated Wakelin's dismissive view towards the overall influence of colour-music on his oeuvre, saying:

A year of experimentation along these lines provided Wakelin with a thorough command of his palette while at the same time leading him to the conclusion that a complete correspondence could not be established between the two systems.⁸

Even though Wakelin played down the lasting influence de Maistre's colour-music theory had on his painting, to this day it continues to be highlighted as one of the most outstanding aspects of his career when his work is exhibited. Its prominence is equally reflected in the display of Wakelin's colour-music paintings in many state gallery collections of twentieth century Australian painting. Wakelin had two retrospectives before the comprehensive exhibition at the Art Gallery of New South Wales in 1967.⁹ At the 1967 exhibition, his oeuvre was divided into three distinct categories, one of which was the colour-music genre portrayed as his most important and interesting, and six of these paintings were exhibited. Furthermore, *Berry's Bay* (1919) was reproduced on the cover of the retrospective catalogue underlining the importance of colour-music on Wakelin's entire painting career. Similarly, a colour reproduction of *Syncromy in orange major* (1919) appears in the March 1967 edition of *Art and Australia* to acknowledge Wakelin's long painting career and the retrospective.



Roland Wakelin
Still life 1920
oil on board
27.9 x 15.9 cm
Collection unknown

In order to illustrate the permeating influence of colour and specifically, de Maistre's colour music theory upon Wakelin's work, one need only look to his paintings of the late 1960s and early 1970s. These show a culmination of over fifty years of practice and demonstrate his use of brilliant colour that continued to feature in Wakelin's work, revealing a sentimental return to his early 1919 experiments. Throughout the later years of his life, he did at times refer to colour when describing music.¹⁰

Colour-music was influential upon Wakelin's visual expression long after he consciously abandoned these ideas. Colour remained the most enduring quality in his paintings using it intuitively rather than following a formulaic method. His early experiments with de Maistre contributed deeply to his understanding and future use of colour.

Annabel Pegus

- ¹ Anne Watson, "Roland Wakelin," Unpublished Thesis. University of Sydney, 1975, 30.
- ² Judith Murray, *Interview with the author*, January 1999.
- ³ Judith Murray, *Interview with the author*, op cit.
- ⁴ *ibid.* Wakelin's daughter remembered the family who owned it.
- ⁵ Roland Wakelin, "Some Recollections," unpublished, November 1960.
- ⁶ Wakelin in conversation with John Young, 6 May 1924, Art Gallery of New South Wales' Archive.
- ⁷ Roland Wakelin, *Interview with Hazel de Berg*, 1962, National Library of Australia.
- ⁸ Douglas Dundas, "Catalogue Foreword," *Roland Wakelin Retrospective*, (Art Gallery of New South Wales: Sydney, 1967).
- ⁹ Roland Wakelin: Retrospective, Art Gallery of New South Wales, 4 May 1942 showed 66 paintings from 1916 to 1942 selected by Wakelin and included a small number of new works and, in 1962 was organised by the Arts Council of Australia (NSW).
- ¹⁰ Daniel Thomas, *Interview with author*, 1999. When Thomas was re-evaluating the modern period in the late 1960s, Wakelin told him that he did return to some of his earliest colour music ideas.



Roland Wakelin
Still Life 1920
oil on cardboard
21.8 x 30.5 cm

Collection: National Gallery of Australia, Canberra

'THE VERY SONG OF LIFE': A MUSICAL CONTEXT FOR THE 1919 COLOUR IN ART EXHIBITION

In 1914 leading Theosophical figure, C. W. Leadbeater, escaping allegations of pederasty, decided to move to Sydney to lead its Theosophical Society. Unaffected by the hint of scandal the Society quickly bloomed in the presence of such an exalted member. Early the following year Belgian-born British musician and committed theosophist, Henri Verbrugghen, accepted the position of Director at the New South Wales Conservatorium of Music. The convergence of these events was perhaps not coincidental. For Roy de Maistre, a young viola student enrolled at the Conservatorium, a new world opened up. De Maistre never succeeded as a musician but he became close friends with Verbrugghen's son Adrien. 'Curly' Verbrugghen brought with him a good grasp of contemporary art movements in Europe. He moved in the same artistic circles as Roland Wakelin and de Maistre and, for a time, shared a room with Roy.

The path to the 1919 *Colour in Art* exhibition was shaped by a range of external forces. It is well known that de Maistre and Wakelin kept abreast of recent theories and artistic practice in America and Europe through a range of publications available in Sydney. In Dattilo Rubbo's studio they were some of the young Sydney artists kept informed of the latest developments in Cubism and Post-Impressionism. De Maistre's close involvement with the Verbrugghen family, the Conservatorium and, tangentially, the Theosophical Society, also exposed him to new ways of thinking about colour and sound.

The work of Wakelin and de Maistre that culminated in the 1919 *Colour in Art* exhibition was an Australian expression of a much wider international phenomenon. As De Maistre noted himself in the exhibition's catalogue: "In every country throughout the world one may observe the first manifestations of the awakening of the latent Colour sense — already here in Sydney a number of people are drawing together to form a society for Colour research."¹ This was an age where esoteric mystical religions abounded, where explorations into the human psyche had a galvanising effect on art, and where pseudo-scientific systems were devised all to delve into the complexities of spirituality and emotion. Increasingly throughout the nineteenth century and into the early twentieth, "all art", as Walter Pater, the decadent Victorian aesthete, put it, "aspired towards the state of music". Music, by its very ineffability, its direct appeal to the emotions, became virtually an obsession for many writers and visual artists. Many non-musicians turned to musical terminology for their choice of title. T.S. Eliot wrote his *Quartets*; the Russian Symbolist poet, Andrey Bely, produced his set of poems called *Symphonies*; Georgia

O'Keeffe in 1919 produced works such as *Music – Pink and Blue*; Frank Kupka painted *Fugue in Two Colours*, and Kandinsky, apart from the frequent use of generic titles such as *Composition* and *Improvisation*, also produced *Poems without Words* and *Klänge* (Sounds) to name only a few. These painters belong to a larger group who, in the early years of the last century, were captivated by the idea of artistic synaesthesia. Wagner's idea of the *Gesamtkunstwerk* had taken hold of the febrile imaginations of subsequent generations particularly the Symbolists and Expressionists. Colour music, was, as Judith Zilczer argues, "the most extreme manifestation of this concept of musical analogy in the visual arts"². Visual artists' desire to capture the non-representational character of music pushed them further along towards modernist abstraction. Composers were also interested in breaking down the barriers between visual and sonic colour. Arnold Schoenberg and Alexander Scriabin were two such musicians. It was, in particular, Schoenberg's friendship with Wassily Kandinsky, their letters and collaboration, which have a bearing on questions of colour and music.

Kandinsky *heard* colour, his constant use of musical metaphor when writing about colour shows that for him sound and colour were almost one and the same. As with the Russian composer, Alexander Scriabin, there has been much debate and speculation about whether Kandinsky was synaesthetic in the physical sense of cross-modal association. Kandinsky distinguished between two kinds of colour – physical and spiritual.³ Like many artists of this time, he was swayed by occult thought; in his case it was the philosophy of Rudolf Steiner, the founder of anthroposophy. For Kandinsky colour sang. He proclaimed feverishly: "Colour is the keyboard. The eye is the hammer. The soul is the piano with its many strings the artist is the hand that purposely sets the soul vibrating by means of this or that key."⁴ It is, however, Kandinsky's relationship with the avant-garde Austrian composer, Arnold Schoenberg, that is pertinent to this story of colour music. Kandinsky's colour theory as set out in his *On the Spiritual in Art* includes a chart in which he assigns a musical timbre to particular colours in addition to affective states. The colour green for instance is "stillness, peace, but with hidden strength, passive". "Green", he continues in a somewhat humorous fashion, "is like a fat, very healthy cow lying still and unmoving, only capable of chewing the cud, regarding the world with stupid dull eyes" and the corresponding musical timbre is the quiet, drawn-out, middle position of the violin. This sense of sound/colour relationship resonated with Schoenberg, who on reading the work acknowledged to his friend: "You are certainly right about so many things, particularly

what you say about colour in comparison to musical timbre. That is in accord with my own perceptions".⁵ Schoenberg had already experimented with aspects of tone colour, or, as it is in German, *Klangfarbe*. The third movement of his *Five Orchestral Pieces* op. 16, composed in 1909 during a time when he was still active as a painter, is a study of instrumental timbre. His first suggested title *Akkordfärbungen* (Chord Hues) was ultimately shortened to *Farben* (Colours).

The Russian composer, Alexander Scriabin, is however most renowned for his eccentric synaesthetic predilections. Scriabin, under the spell of mystical thought, particularly Madam Blavatsky's Theosophy, developed his own idiosyncratic form of arcane mysticism, one in which sensory fusion was central. His never-to-be-realised final work, the *Mysterium*, was to be a synaesthetic masterpiece on a colossal scale, involving all the senses in a powerfully transcending experience. Much has been written on Scriabin's synaesthesia. He was the subject of research in this area even during his life, declaring that on hearing certain keys and chords he saw corresponding colours. He provided a list of correspondences for all twelve keys which resemble Kandinsky in their arrangement: C = The Human Will = Deep Red, G = Creative Play = Orange, D = Joy = Yellow and so on.⁶ His experiments with sound and colour found particular expression in his earlier symphonic poem *Prometheus: Poem of Fire* that he began in 1909 the same years as Schoenberg wrote his *Five Orchestral Pieces*. Although the first colour organ, or *clavecin oculaire* was built in 1740 (although first conceived in 1724) by the Jesuit priest Louis Castel, there was a renewed interest in them in the early twentieth century. Taking his lead from the English inventor of colour organs, Alexander Rimmington, whom he had visited in London, Scriabin constructed his own *tastiera per luce* for *Prometheus*. This 'keyboard of lights' was designed to fill the concert hall with changing floods of colour providing a visual counterpart to the auditory.

A brief glance at the related activities of the Conservatorium and Theosophical Society thickens the Australian context for the emergence of this most 'extreme manifestation' of musical analogy which culminated in the 1919 exhibition. In the early years of the Conservatorium, ideas of colour and music, light and sound were bouncing off the walls. They were very much in the air. In "overwhelmingly Anglo-Celtic Sydney", as Diane Collins has noted, "the new Conservatorium must have seemed like a hotbed of cosmopolitanism..."⁷

The Conservatorium during the Verbrugghen years hosted several lectures by eminent Theosophists such as C. Jinarajadasa (who was recruited as a boy in Ceylon by Leadbeater and later became president of the Theosophical Society) and Leadbeater himself.⁸ A report on a lecture by Jinarajadasa appears in the *Conservatorium Magazine* in 1919, and the following year he lectured on, "Music as the Synthesis of Emotional and Intellectual Activity", which was printed in *Musical Australia*, the successor of the *Conservatorium Magazine*. A decade earlier, in 1905, Leadbeater had written a book with Annie Besant called *Thought Forms* in which they explore the relationship between sound and colour, once again highlighting sensory fusion in an argument towards accepting synaesthesia as a higher mode of perception:

Many people are aware that sound is always associated with colour—that when, for example, a musical note is sounded, a flash of colour corresponding to it may be seen by those whose finer senses are already to some extent developed. It seems not to be so generally known that sound produces form as well as colour, and that every piece of music leaves behind it an impression of this nature, which persists for some considerable time, and is clearly visible and intelligible to those who have eyes to see.⁹

De Maistre's *Rhythmic composition in yellow green minor* (1919) resembles in colour and shape some of the illustrations contained in *Thought Forms*.

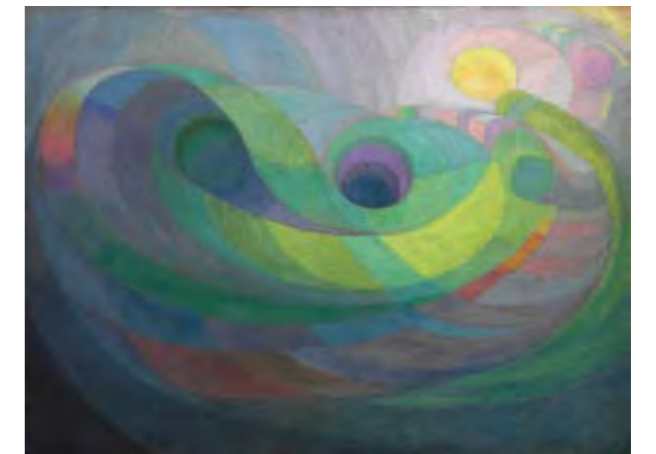
Verbrugghen himself, perhaps influenced by what he had learned from his son's friend, gave a lecture at the Conservatorium in 1922 on 'light and music'. In it he discussed ideas of combining music and colour proposing that "Light is analogous to sound in more respects than most of us realise." He also broached Scriabin's synaesthetic theories on colour and music and described in detail the *tastiera per luce* and its failure at the Carnegie Hall performance of *Prometheus*, which, he told his audience, was not a success. An Australian equivalent to the colour organ experiments of Rimmington, A.B. Hector's colour machine – a keyboard connected to a series of coloured lamps – had been in existence since 1913 and was reported on at length by the *Lone Hand* in that year.¹⁰ In 1914, the *Australian Musical News* had covered the important London premiere of *Prometheus* only weeks after the event.¹¹ Verbrugghen perhaps revealing the influence of de Maistre declared Scriabin's conception of colour to be "distinctly unscientific".¹² The following month an article similarly titled but not authored appeared in the

same publication, this time on light and sound. Again it was scientific in tone with particular attention to mathematical detail. "A ray of red light", it maintained, "is made up of waves, each of which has a length of 1/36918 of an inch, while a ray of violet light is made up of waves each of which has a length of 1/64631 of an inch."¹³ The establishment of a relationship between sound and light waves provided a basis for the arguments linking colour and music. *Colour in Art* presaged a flurry of interest in Scriabin's music and philosophy that was felt in the musical press and filled the concert halls in the 1920s.

De Maistre tempered the overtly emotional and spiritual underpinning of his colour music theory with a desire for reason and order. Perhaps also affected by his wartime work in colour therapy for shell-shocked patients, he sought to systematise the relationship between colour and sound by mapping the intervallic distances of the major/minor scale system onto the colour spectrum. With this more 'scientific' approach he joined others such as the American Synchromists Morgan Russell and Stanton Macdonald-Wright. Like de Maistre, Macdonald-Wright endeavoured to find an exact correspondence between the colour spectrum and the musical scale.

Even if his experiments in colour music hanging on the walls of Gayfield Shaw's Art Salon aroused the ire of his Conservatorium friends, in a wider sense de Maistre was certainly not alone. He was part of a broader international artistic trend that yearned to understand the essence of being. As he wrote in 1919, "colour constitutes the very song of life".¹⁴

Kate Bowan



Roy de Maistre
Rhythmic composition in yellow green minor 1919
oil on paperboard
85.3 x 115.3 cm
Collection: Art Gallery of New South Wales
Purchased 1960
© Caroline de Mestre Walker
Photograph: Jenni Carter

- Roy De Maistre, "Colour in Art," (exh. cat.) 1919. Generously provided by Dr Mary Eagle.
- Judith Zilzer, "Colour Music': Synaesthesia and Nineteenth-Century Sources for Abstract Art," *Artibus et Historia* 8.16 (1987): 101.
- "Letter from Kandinsky to Arnold Schoenberg," 1 July 1936. 28 June 2008. <http://www.schoenberg.at/4_exhibits/asc/Kandinsky/letters_e.htm>.
- Gerald McBurney, "Sound and Vision," *Guardian* 24 June 2006. 8 June 2008. <<http://books.guardian.co.uk/review/story/0,,1804215,00.html>>.
- "Schoenberg to Kandinsky," 14 December 1911. 8 June 2008. <<http://www.schoenberg.at/4exhibits/asc/Kandinsky/letterse.htm>>.
- A complete list of Scriabin's key colour scheme is available at <http://www.geocities.com/Vienna/1077/color.html>. 28 July 2008.
- Collins, *Sounds from the Stables*, 92.
- For example a report on a lecture by Jinarajadasa appears in the *Conservatorium Magazine* 15 (1919): 4-6. See also C. Jinarajadasa, "Music as the Synthesis of Emotional and Intellectual Activity," *Musical Australia* 1.6 (1920): 7.
- Annie Besant and C.W. Leadbeater, *Thought Forms*, (Theosophical Publishing Society: London & Benares, London, 1905). 27 June 2008. <http://www.anandgholap.net/Thought_Forms-AB_CWL.htm>.
- See "Colour Music," *Lone Hand* 13 (July 1913): 240-244.
- "Notes," *Australian Musical News* 3.12 (1914): 381.
- Henri Verbrugghen, "Light and Music," *Musical Australia* 3.4 (1922): 25.
- "Light and Sound," *Musical Australia* 3.5 (1922): 16-17.
- Roy De Maistre, "Colour in Art," (exh. cat.) 1919. Generously provided by Dr Mary Eagle.

THE EVOLUTION OF COLOUR AND MUSIC IN AUSTRALIAN PAINTING

Roy de Maistre and Roland Wakelin's experiments in colour-music arrived at a time in the history of Australian art when an antipathy towards Modernism was on the rise. In contrast to the cultural conditions found in Europe which provided individuals with support through a network of the avant-garde, Australian artists who chose to work outside of the parameters of pictorial myth-based nationalism were continuously isolated by the local art establishment. Sadly the problems that beset de Maistre and Wakelin through what might accurately be described as the colour-music debacle are not isolated events in the history of Australian Art. Unfortunately this situation has repeated itself until the present day. Echoes can be found in Bernard Smith's response to the rise of Abstract Expressionism via the Antipodean Manifesto as well as the wholesale historical neglect of truly great artists such as Tony McGillick and the more recent rise in the patronage of traditional art prizes that attach large sums of money towards the promotion of traditional artistic genres.

This essay discusses a series of questions that aim to qualify the impact that de Maistre and Wakelin's experiments in colour-music have had on Modern and Contemporary Australian Art. What is colour-music and how can it be interpreted from a contemporary perspective? How did de Maistre and Wakelin respond to the negative criticisms that were generated by their colour-music exhibition? In what ways did de Maistre and Wakelin retreat to a more conservative position after the 1919 exhibition? Are any traces of the colour-music experiments to be found in de Maistre and Wakelin's later works? Has colour-music had any influence on subsequent generations of Australian artists?

Colour-music was a complex syncretic system that went far beyond a superficial analysis of the interrelationships of colour and music. In reality de Maistre and Wakelin's innovative system of progressive thinking developed a visual language that surpassed the conventional logic of pictorial representation. Either by accident or design de Maistre and Wakelin had created what contemporary theorists of abstraction such as Frances Colpitt have defined as a "system of opinion".¹ According to Colpitt systems are frequently developed by artists using abstraction to express opinions that are often related to personal or social issues. From this position abstraction is best understood to be an alternative type of representation rather than a form of non-representation. Similarly de Maistre and Wakelin's experiments can be seen as a critical polemic that addressed a broad range of issues relating to philosophy, spirituality, aesthetics,

fashion and design as well as abstraction and the interrelationship of colour and music.

Throughout the twentieth century abstract art evolved through three main phases, namely the metaphysical, the formal and the subjective. As with much Theosophically inspired thinking of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries colour-music was a combination of these three traditions. Unfortunately conservatives such as Norman Lindsay would have interpreted colour-music as a "curse" because it was based on an "intellectual conviction".²

The fall-out after the colour-music exhibition had repercussions that affected de Maistre and Wakelin for the rest of their lives, as noted by Leslie Walton in his book on Roland Wakelin. Both artists were labelled as being decadent, eccentric and perhaps worst of all effeminate and a complete lack of peer group and institutional support must have compounded their sense of isolation. De Maistre and Wakelin who had completely different personalities coped with what must have been a massive rejection in very different ways.

For many years I have been haunted by the late photographs of Roy de Maistre. These images were taken in the artist's London studio towards the end of his life in the late 1960s. They depict a person whose face appears mask-like, emotionless, his mouth and eyes form thin slits in the roughly hewn surface of a face framed by nothing other than baldness. De Maistre must have been bitter because he felt that his country, the art world and his lovers had abandoned him. One photograph by J.S. Lewinski in 1960 depicts a studio interior where a transparent lace curtain barely shuts out the energy and vitality of the outside world. There are no vestiges of Swinging London in this studio, in exile de Maistre appears to have resigned from the modern world.

After colour-music the styles used in de Maistre's paintings swing like a pendulum, erratically moving from sedate modes of conventional representation to aggressive forms of brightly coloured analytical Cubism. An example of what resembles an almost post-modernist use of stylistic appropriation is contained within his portraits. Examples of this type of approach can be found in his *Portrait of Ann, Lady Butler* (1935) and *Ann, Lady Butler* (1954). The earlier work is a conventional representation of the sitter while the later work is a geometric remix of the original. These paintings typify the almost schizophrenic attitude that de Maistre must have

had in relation to his own personal history as an artist as well as the desire to be acknowledged by the establishment while retaining his restless quest for innovation. Throughout his life de Maistre often resorted to quoting a range of formal and conceptual techniques and methods that had their origins in the colour-music experiments. Another example is the way that many of the colour-music experiments feature as a focal point in the paintings of his studio interiors. These contradictory and unpredictable shifts in style mirror the tumultuous struggle that characterised much of his personal life.

On the one hand de Maistre was a highly conventional man who adhered to a belief in Catholicism while promoting his familial connection to the Royal Family. On the other he was an outsider who continuously struggled with his homosexuality, poverty and even the spelling of his own name. Interestingly de Maistre was an influence on the creative development of younger gay men including Francis Bacon and Patrick White. However, the recent film on Bacon makes no mention of de Maistre and David Marr's definitive biography of White pays scant attention to him. Notwithstanding, traces of de Maistre's influence remain embedded within the brushstrokes, palette and compositions of Bacon's paintings and similarly within the colour allusions of White's prose. Significantly de Maistre was destined to become an exile leaving Australia for a second time in 1930 never to return.

The post-1919 photographs and paintings of Wakelin reveal a very different story. A decade after his collaboration in the colour-music experiments Wakelin returned from Europe to settle in Sydney and withdrew into the confines and consolation of a suburban married life. Unfortunately for de Maistre his homosexuality prohibited him from this option which would have been a much easier alternative to enduring four decades of hardship in London. Many of the photographs of Wakelin from the 1930s onwards depict him attending family picnics or discussing art with friends including Lloyd Rees in scenic locations on Sydney's lower North Shore.

By the 1930s Wakelin's art had become increasingly traditional, much to the approval of his former critics. Many of Wakelin's paintings and drawings from this period onwards illustrate his domestic life. Typically many of Wakelin's images depict his wife Estelle or Weedy the cat. From early middle-age onwards Wakelin slipped into the persona of "Rolly" and he was widely known as a jovial suburban artist who produced what can be best described as amateur

art. Not surprisingly however Wakelin must have longed for his days as a young experimental artist. Remarkably a close inspection of his later work reveals the presence of traces of colour-music. An example is his depiction of a newly constructed building in the city titled *Qantas House, Sydney* (1957). Superficially this painting is just another traditional cityscape yet beyond the Victorian tenements and shop-fronts are traces of what appear to be the remnants of a colour-music experiment that has been encrypted into the gleaming façade of an ultra modern building. Based on these observations it is reasonable to surmise that de Maistre and Wakelin's withdrawal from their innovative position was borne out of necessity rather than choice.

Until now the general consensus has been that the early experiments in colour-music have had little or no influence on subsequent generations of Australian artists. This myth is repeated in Heather Johnson's first book on Roy de Maistre, *The Australian Years: 1894-1930*, which suggests that experiments in colour-music had no sustained influence on the development of Australian art.³

One of the most remarkable things about influence is that it is often delayed. By the 1950s a new generation of Australian artists had abandoned representational painting and sculpture for abstraction. By this time

John Nixon
COLOUR-MUSIC
MUSIC COMPOSITION
(3 COLOUR GROUPS)
2007
graphic notation for music composition (for electric piano)
enamel on MDF
45.0 x 60.0 cm
Installation photograph, painting leaning on Yamaha Electric
Piano with colour-coded keys (enamel on MDF)
Photographed in the artist's house, Briar Hill, 2008.
Image courtesy the artist.



abstraction which was mainly being practiced in Sydney presented a genuine threat to the traditional genres of landscape and portrait painting. By combining an interest in Zen, gesture and jazz, artists such as Peter Upward pushed abstraction to new heights. During the 1950s and into the 60s Upward worked closely with jazz musicians occasionally exhibiting his works in night clubs in Kings Cross. After his return from London in 1971 Upward worked closely with Horst Liepolt, an influential manager of the local jazz music industry who sold paintings by consignment. Many of the titles of Upward's paintings made specific references to music including *Syncopation* a major work produced in 1959. The marriage of Abstract Expressionism with the concept of improvised music opened the door to what was to become the next generation of colour-musicians.

Colour Field painters including David Aspden combined the use of colour and music in new and innovative ways. Aspden's life-long interest in music enabled him to develop an individual system of colour and form that made reference to a variety of musical traditions. Although Aspden's main interest was jazz he was also inspired by classical music in particular composers such as Johann Sebastian Bach. Aspden's choice of colours and formal compositions were based around a process that he referred to as "fine tuning". This system resembled Bach's elaborate musical compositions and his careful use of colour and form resembles the musical techniques such as *counterpoint* and *fugue*. This enabled Aspden to produce large works such as *Bach's Blues* that contains a vast selection of shades and tones of blue to create an overall composition that is constructed through a system of subtle formal variations.

Since the late 1970s John Nixon has developed an ongoing dialogue between monochrome painting and punk and experimental music. Within the tradition of painting the monochrome still represents a radical break from pictorial art in that it emphasises the difference between paintings and pictures. The main strategies that monochromes and punk and experimental music as well as readymades and conceptual art share are that they critically engage with the conventions associated with authorship, originality and technique. Some of Nixon's recent paintings from the *EPW: Polychrome* group of work such as *Colour Music (Music Composition)* of which over twenty-five works have been produced during 2007-2008 have developed well beyond the conventional sensory associations that have previously connected colour to music. These paintings that have been constructed using coded shapes and colour stripes

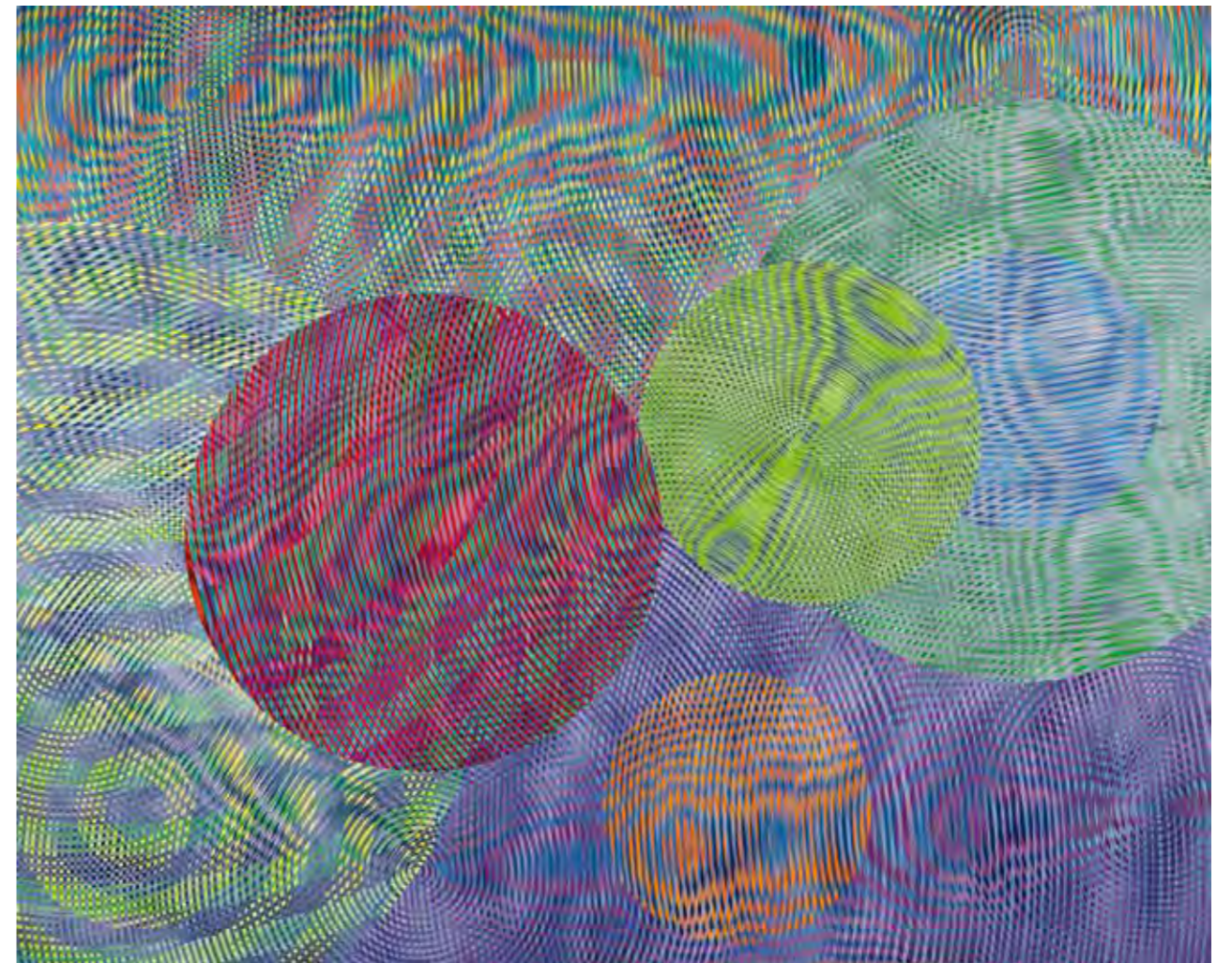
are designed to primarily be read as graphic notation colour scores and as a result can be played by musicians.⁴ Through the use of pictorial symbols Nixon has become a composer by producing non-objective paintings that answer the central question that de Maistre and Wakelin struggled with in 1919, *can a painting be performed?*

Another innovative development in the history of Australian colour-music is to be found in the work of John Aslanidis. As with de Maistre, Aslanidis was a student at Sydney's Conservatorium of Music before going to art school. Since the early 1990s he has continuously explored the relationship between optical and sonic art through a detailed examination of the patterns of waves, frequencies and vibrations. For Aslanidis the aim of painting is to create chromatic intensities that resemble the experience of listening to music. Through the study of art historical styles such as Futurism and Synchronism Aslanidis has been able to explore the history of multi-sensory techniques including synaesthesia. The connection between form and content in his work is crucial in that the compositions are qualified by their cultural associations. Aslanidis is an active participant in the field of electronic music whose work engages with sub-genres of electronica including dub, minimal techno and hip hop. As a visual artist much of his inspiration has come from listening to live music and participating in the culture that surrounds it.

In retrospect the obstacles that confronted de Maistre and Wakelin in the development of their philosophical system are reminiscent of the difficulties that contemporary painters working in Australia face today. The cultural expectations surrounding the role of painting remain largely unchanged since 1919.

Christopher Dean

- ¹ Frances Colpitt, *Abstract Art in the Late Twentieth Century* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 2002): 151.
- ² Norman Lindsay, "A Modern Malady," *Art and Australia* 1 (1916) reproduced in Ann Stephen, Andrew McNamara and Philip Goad, (eds.) *Modernism and Australia* (The Miegunyah Press: Melbourne, 2007): 58.
- ³ Johnson cites Ian Burn's catalogue essay "Popular Melbourne Landscape Painting Between the Wars".
- ⁴ The first instrument being an electronic piano where the keys have been colour coded (other instruments included are the trumpet, violin, trombone, wineglass and electronic saw). Nixon plans that a concert will be held for the exposure of these paintings and the music produced will be released on CD.



John Aslanidis
Sonic-network no.3 2007
 oil and acrylic on canvas
 244 x 305cm
 Image courtesy the artist

COLOUR IN ART - REVISITING 1919
ROY DE MAISTRE AND ROLAND WAKELIN



Roland Wakelin
Study for boat sheds 1917
oil on cardboard
15.4 x 23.1 cm
Collection: National Gallery of Australia, Canberra



Roland Wakelin
Beach and houses 1918
oil on board
11.5 x 17.2 cm
P H & R A Glow Fund 1992
Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide



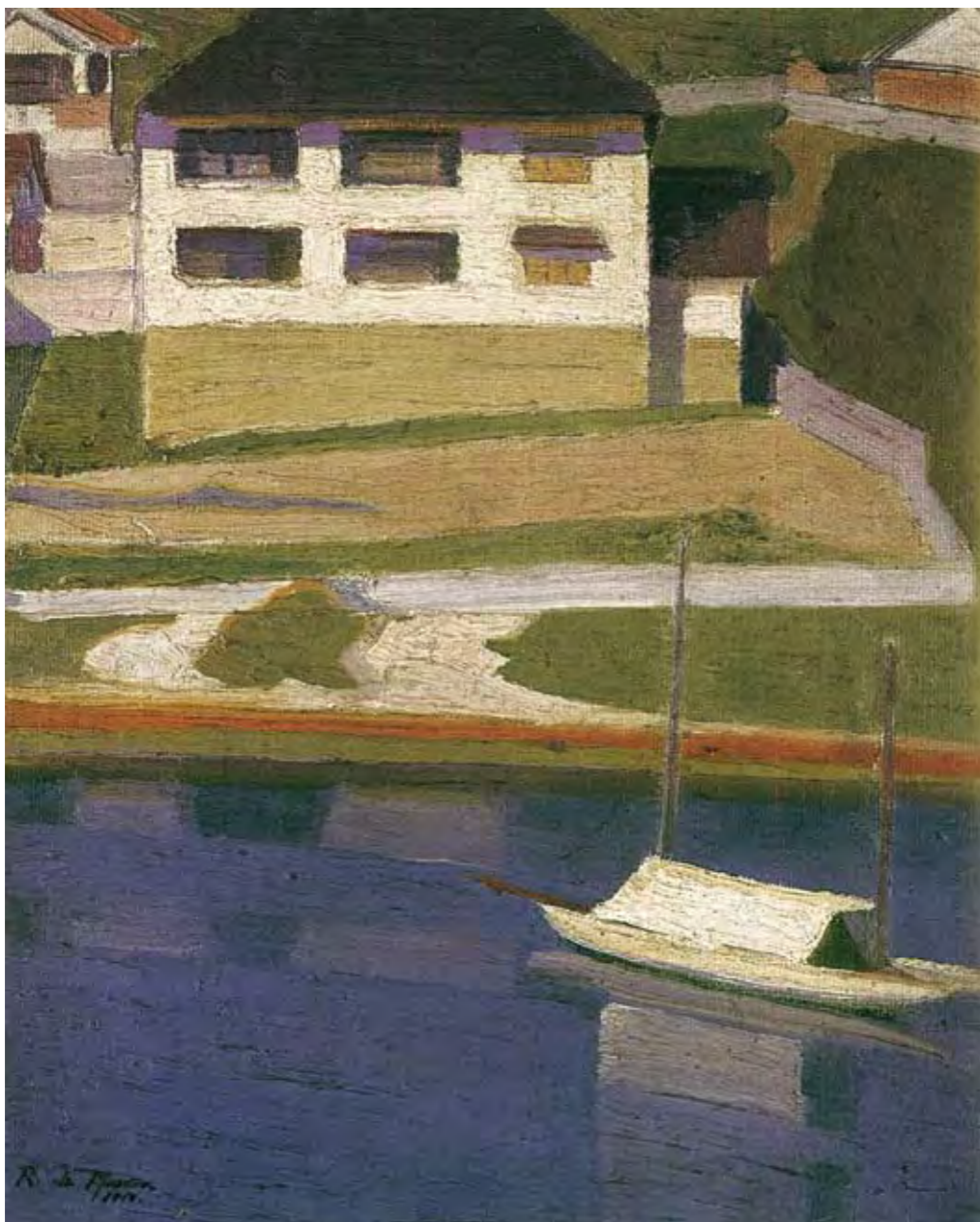
Roland Wakelin
Colour note - landscape 1918
oil on cardboard
11.4 x 17.2 cm
Collection: Ballarat Fine Art Gallery
Purchased 1978



Roland Wakelin
(Landscape) 1918
oil on canvas on board
12.5 x 18.4 cm
Collection: Orange Regional Gallery



Roland Wakelin
(Untitled landscape with red shed) 1918
oil on board
11.5 x 17 cm
Private Collection
Courtesy Sotheby's



Roy De Maistre
Waterfront, Sydney Harbour 1918-1919
oil on board
48.5 x 41.0 cm
Alan Boxer Collection, Canberra
Photograph: David Reid



Roland Wakelin
Houses at Hunters Hill c1919
oil on canvas on composition board
24.0 x 20.0 cm
Collection: National Gallery of Australia, Canberra



Roy de Maistre
Barns at Berrima 1918
oil on board
34.5 x 24.5 cm
Private Collection
Photography: Sam McAdam



Roy de Maistre
(Untitled landscape) 1918
oil on canvas on mountboard
32.5 x 20.5 cm
Collection: Rivendell – Thomas Walker Hospital
Photography: Sue Blackburn



Roland Wakelin
On Ball's Head 1919
oil on board
22.9 x 28.5 cm

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
The Joseph Brown Collection

Presented through the NGV Foundation by Dr Joseph Brown AO OBE, Honorary Life Benefactor, 2004



Roland Wakelin
Barn near Tuggerah 1919
oil on composition board
17.7 x 22.0 cm

National Gallery of Australia, Canberra
Gift of Daniel Thomas 1981



Roy de Maistre
Rhythmic composition in yellow green minor 1919
oil on paperboard
85.3 x 115.3 cm
Collection: Art Gallery of New South Wales
Purchased 1960
© Caroline de Mestre Walker
Photograph: Jenni Carter



Roy de Maistre
The boat sheds, in violet red key 1919
oil on wood
32.5 x 20.5 cm
Private Collection



Roy de Maistre
Syncromy, Berry's Bay 1919
oil on plywood
25.4 x 34.9 cm
National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
The Joseph Brown Collection
Presented through the NGV Foundation by Dr Joseph Brown AO OBE, Honorary Life Benefactor, 2004



Roland Wakelin
Syncromy in orange major 1919
oil on cardboard
30.0 x 40.0 cm
Collection: Art Gallery of New South Wales
Bequest of Mervyn Horton 1983
© Reproduced with permission
Photograph: Jenni Carter



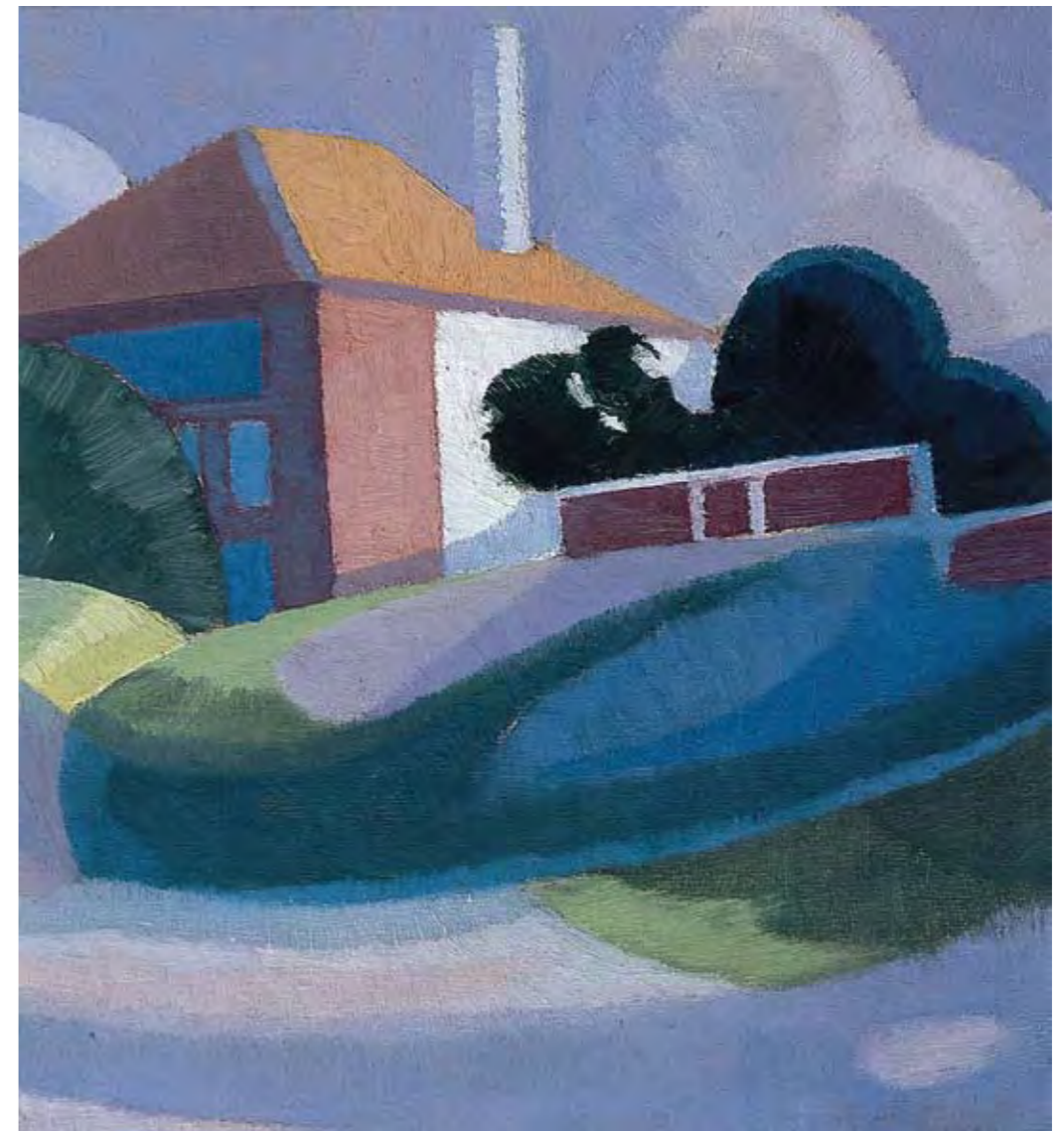
Roland Wakelin
Causeway, Tuggerah 1919
oil on paper on paperboard
14.0 x 17.5 cm
Collection: Art Gallery of New South Wales
Purchased 1967
© Reproduced with permission



Roland Wakelin
Berry's Bay 1919
oil on paperboard
18.5 x 24.7 cm
Collection: Art Gallery of New South Wales
Purchased 1957
© Reproduced with permission
Photograph: Brendan McGeachie



Roy de Maistre
Berry's Bay, Sydney Harbour 1920
oil on board
24.0 x 33.0 cm
Gift of Diana Ramsay AO through the Art Gallery of South Australia Foundation 2003
Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide



Roy de Maistre
Colour sketch 1920
oil on card
20.0 x 18.0 cm
Private Collection, Melbourne. Courtesy Bonhams & Goodman.



Roy de Maistre
Colour sketch 1920
oil on card
21.0 x 26.0 cm
Private Collection, Melbourne. Courtesy Bonhams & Goodman.



Roy de Maistre
Old houses, Sydney c1918
oil on paper on cardboard
28.4 x 22.7 cm
Collection: National Gallery of Australia, Canberra



Roland Wakelin
Hillside houses, Berry's Bay c1919
oil on cardboard
19.5 x 23.0 cm
Collection: National Gallery of Australia, Canberra
Bequest of Dorothy and Douglas Dundas 1988



Roland Wakelin
Boathouses 1920
oil on cardboard
26.1 x 30.9 cm
State Art Collection Art Gallery of Western Australia
Purchased with funds from the Geoffrey William Robinson Bequest Fund 1991



Roy de Maistre
Colour study 1920
oil on cardboard
26.5 x 34.5 cm
Private Collection, Melbourne. Courtesy Bonhams & Goodman.



Roland Wakelin
Old Balmoral 1920
oil on board
26.5 x 31.3 cm
Private Collection. Courtesy Philip Bacon Galleries.



Roy de Maistre
(Colour chart) c1919
 oil on cardboard
 30.5 x 40.5 cm
 Collection: Art Gallery of New South Wales
 Gift of the Executors of the artist's Estate 1968
 © Caroline de Mestre Walker
 Photograph: Diana Pannucio



Roy de Maistre
(A set of colour discs, scales, wheels) c1919
 oil on paperboard
 90.5 x 105.5 cm
 Collection: Art Gallery of New South Wales
 Gift of Sir John Rothenstein in memory of Roy de Maistre 1969



Roy de Maistre
Colour keyboard c1919
oil, pencil on cardboard
13.3 x 122.0 cm
Collection: Art Gallery of New South Wales
Gift of Sir John Rothenstein in memory of Roy de Maistre 1969
© Caroline de Mestre Walker
Photograph: Brendan McGeachie



Roy de Maistre
Colour music c1934
gouache, music roll
28.6 x 518.0 cm
Collection: Art Gallery of New South Wales
Gift of Sir John Rothenstein in memory of the artist 1969



Roy de Maistre
Arrested phrase from Haydn Trio in orange-red minor 1919-1935
oil on paperboard
72.2 x 98.5 cm
Collection: National Gallery of Australia, Canberra
Purchased 1972



Roy de Maistre
Arrested phrase from Beethoven's Ninth Symphony in red major 1919-1935
oil on cardboard on composition board
72.1 x 98.8 cm
Collection: National Gallery of Australia, Canberra



Roy de Maistre
Green D
watercolour, gouache, pencil
image 28.6 x 23.2 cm
Collection: Art Gallery of New South Wales
Gift of the Executors of the artist's Estate 1968
© Caroline de Mestre Walker
Photograph: Mim Stirling

Roy de Maistre
Violet blue F#
watercolour, pencil
image 28.8 x 23.0 cm
Collection: Art Gallery of New South Wales
Gift of the Executors of the artist's Estate 1968
© Caroline de Mestre Walker
Photograph: Mim Stirling

Roy de Maistre
Yellow green (C# Minor)
oil and pencil on paper
28.3 x 22.7 cm
Collection: Art Gallery of New South Wales
Gift of the Executors of the artist's Estate 1968
© Caroline de Mestre Walker
Photograph: Mim Stirling

Roy de Maistre
Indigo F
gouache, pencil
image 28.3 x 23.2 cm
Collection: Art Gallery of New South Wales
Gift of the Executor's of the artist's Estate 1968
© Caroline de Mestre Walker
Photograph: Mim Stirling



(TOP TO BOTTOM LEFT)
 Roy de Maistre
Rainbow scale (Exhibit II)
 coloured crayon, pencil
 27.2 x 37.1 cm
 Collection: Art Gallery of New South Wales
 Gift of Sir John Rothenstein in memory of the artist 1969
 © Caroline de Mestre Walker
 Photograph: Mim Stirling



(TOP TO BOTTOM RIGHT)
 Roy de Maistre
Rainbow scale E-G#
 coloured crayon, pencil
 25.4 x 35.5 cm
 Collection: Art Gallery of New South Wales
 Gift of Sir John Rothenstein in memory of the artist 1969
 © Caroline de Mestre Walker
 Photograph: Mim Stirling



Roy de Maistre
Rainbow scale (Exhibit I)
 coloured crayon, pencil on cream card
 18.8 x 27.2 cm
 Collection: Art Gallery of New South Wales
 Gift of Sir John Rothenstein in memory of the artist 1969
 © Caroline de Mestre Walker
 Photograph: Mim Stirling



Roy de Maistre
Rainbow scale E-D# c1930s
 coloured crayon, pencil
 25.4 x 35.4 cm
 Collection: Art Gallery of New South Wales
 Gift of Sir John Rothenstein in memory of the artist 1969
 © Caroline de Mestre Walker
 Photograph: Mim Stirling

Roy de Maistre
Rainbow scale (Exhibit III)
 coloured crayon, pencil on cream card
 18.6 x 27.2 cm
 Collection: Art Gallery of New South Wales
 Gift of Sir John Rothenstein in memory of the artist 1969
 © Caroline de Mestre Walker
 Photograph: Mim Stirling

Roy de Maistre
Rainbow scale A-C Majors
 coloured crayon, pencil
 25.6 x 35.6 cm
 Collection: Art Gallery of New South Wales
 Gift of Sir John Rothenstein in memory of the artist 1969
 © Caroline de Mestre Walker
 Photograph: Mim Stirling



Roy de Maistre
Country church c1919
 oil on board
 35.7 x 44 cm
 Private Collection
 Courtesy Christie's Images Limited

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Roy de Maistre
Rainbow scale (Rainbow again)
 coloured crayon, pencil on cream card
 18.6 x 27.2 cm
 Collection: Art Gallery of New South Wales
 Gift of Sir John Rothenstein in memory of the artist 1969
 © Caroline de Mestre Walker
 Photograph: Mim Stirling

LIST OF WORKS IN THE EXHIBITION

ROY DE MAISTRE

Barns at Berrima 1918
oil on board
34.5 x 24.5 cm
signed and dated lower left
R de Mestre 1918
Private Collection

(Untitled landscape) 1918
oil on canvas on mountboard
32.5 x 20.5 cm
signed and dated lower right
R de Mestre 1918
Collection: Rivendell – Thomas Walker Hospital

Old houses, Sydney c1918
oil on paper on cardboard
28.4 x 22.7 cm
signed lower left R de Mestre
Collection: National Gallery of Australia, Canberra

Waterfront, Sydney Harbour 1918-1919
oil on board
48.5 x 41.0 cm
signed and dated lower left
R de Mestre 1918/19
Alan Boxer Collection, Canberra

Rhythmic composition in yellow green minor 1919
oil on paperboard
85.3 x 115.3 cm
not signed not dated
Collection: Art Gallery of New South Wales
Purchased 1960

Synchromy, Berry's Bay 1919
oil on plyboard
25.4 x 34.9 cm
signed and dated lower left
R de Maistre / 1919
National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
The Joseph Brown Collection
Presented through the NGV
Foundation by Dr Joseph Brown AO
OBE, Honorary Life Benefactor, 2004

The boat sheds, in violet red key 1919
oil on wood
32.5 x 20.5 cm
signed and dated lower left R de Mestre 1919
Private Collection

Country church c1919
oil on board
35.7 x 44 cm
Private Collection
not exhibited

(A set of colour discs, scales, wheels) c1919
oil on paperboard
90.5 x 105.5 cm
not signed not dated
Collection: Art Gallery of New South Wales
Gift of Sir John Rothenstein in memory of Roy de Maistre 1969

(Study for painting 'Arrested phrase from Beethoven's Ninth Symphony in red major') c1919
pastel, watercolour, pencil, crayon
35.8 x 45.5 cm
signed lower right R de M
Collection: National Gallery of Australia, Canberra

Colour keyboard c1919
oil, pencil on cardboard
13.3 x 122.0 cm
not signed not dated
Collection: Art Gallery of New South Wales
Gift of Sir John Rothenstein in memory of Roy de Maistre 1969

(Colour chart) c1919
oil on cardboard
30.5 x 40.5 cm
not signed not dated
Collection: Art Gallery of New South Wales
Gift of the Executors of the artist's Estate 1968

Arrested phrase from Beethoven's Ninth Symphony in red major 1919-1935
oil on cardboard on composition board
72.1 x 98.8 cm
not signed not dated
Collection: National Gallery of Australia, Canberra

Arrested phrase from Haydn Trio in orange-red minor 1919-1935
oil on paperboard
72.2 x 98.5 cm
not signed not dated
Collection: National Gallery of Australia, Canberra
Purchased 1972

A painted picture of the universe 1920
oil on board
49.6 x 39.2 cm
signed and dated lower left R de Maistre / JW 1920-34, and oversigned lower right R de Maistre / 1920-34 JW
inscribed on reverse: A painted picture of the Universe from R de M to J.W. 1934. / I cannot give you the metropolitan town / Nor can I give you / Heaven / Or the seven golden stars from the Crown / But I can give / / you a very small Locket / Made out of ... at skin / With a painted picture of the Universe / And seven blue tears therein. / I cannot give you / Happiness / Nor can I give you Beauty / Or a cherry-pie baked with Love & Duty, / But I can give you a tiny purse / Made out of field-mouse hide / Put it in your left-hand pocket / and never look inside.
National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Purchased 1976

Berry's Bay, Sydney Harbour 1920
oil on board
24.0 x 33.0 cm
signed and dated lower right R de Maistre / 1920
Gift of Diana Ramsay AO though the Art Gallery of South Australia Foundation 2003
Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide

Colour sketch 1920
oil on card
21.0 x 26.0 cm
signed and dated lower right
Private Collection, Melbourne. Courtesy Bonhams & Goodman.

Colour sketch 1920
oil on card
20.0 x 18.0 cm
signed and dated lower right
Private Collection, Melbourne. Courtesy Bonhams & Goodman.

Colour study 1920
oil on cardboard
26.5 x 34.5 cm
signed and dated lower right
Private Collection, Melbourne. Courtesy Bonhams & Goodman.

Green D
watercolour, gouache, pencil
image 28.6 x 23.2 cm
not signed not dated
Collection: Art Gallery of New South Wales
Gift of the Executors of the artist's Estate 1968

Indigo F
gouache, pencil
image 28.3 x 23.2 cm
not signed not dated
Collection: Art Gallery of New South Wales
Gift of the Executor's of the artist's Estate 1968

Violet blue F#
watercolour, pencil
image 28.8 x 23.0 cm
not signed not dated
Collection: Art Gallery of New South Wales
Gift of the Executors of the artist's Estate 1968

Yellow green (C# Minor)
oil and pencil on paper
28.3 x 22.7 cm
not signed not dated
Collection: Art Gallery of New South Wales
Gift of the Executors of the artist's Estate 1968

Rainbow scale (Exhibit I)
coloured crayon, pencil on cream card
18.8 x 27.2 cm
not signed not dated
Collection: Art Gallery of New South Wales
Gift of Sir John Rothenstein in memory of the artist 1969

Rainbow scale (Exhibit II)
coloured crayon, pencil
27.2 x 37.1 cm
not signed not dated
Collection: Art Gallery of New South Wales
Gift of Sir John Rothenstein in memory of the artist 1969

Rainbow scale (Exhibit III)
coloured crayon, pencil on cream card
18.6 x 27.2 cm
not signed not dated
Collection: Art Gallery of New South Wales
Gift of Sir John Rothenstein in memory of the artist 1969

Rainbow scale (Rainbow again)
coloured crayon, pencil on cream card
18.6 x 27.2 cm
not signed not dated
Collection: Art Gallery of New South Wales
Gift of Sir John Rothenstein in memory of the artist 1969

Rainbow scale A-C Majors
coloured crayon, pencil
25.6 x 35.6 cm
not signed not dated
Collection: Art Gallery of New South Wales
Gift of Sir John Rothenstein in memory of the artist 1969

Rainbow scale E-D# c1930s
coloured crayon, pencil
25.4 x 35.4 cm
not signed not dated
Collection: Art Gallery of New South Wales
Gift of Sir John Rothenstein in memory of the artist 1969

Rainbow scale E-G#
coloured crayon, pencil
25.4 x 35.5 cm
not signed not dated
Collection: Art Gallery of New South Wales
Gift of Sir John Rothenstein in memory of the artist 1969

Rainbow scale E-B
coloured crayon, pencil
25.6 x 35.6 cm
not signed not dated
Collection: Art Gallery of New South Wales
Gift of Sir John Rothenstein in memory of the artist 1969

Rainbow scale E & C
coloured crayon, pencil
25.4 x 35.4 cm
not signed not dated
Collection: Art Gallery of New South Wales
Gift of Sir John Rothenstein in memory of the artist 1969

Rainbow scale E & A#
coloured crayon, pencil
25.4 x 35.4 cm
not signed not dated
Collection: Art Gallery of New South Wales
Gift of Sir John Rothenstein in memory of the artist 1969

Colour music c1934
gouache, music roll
28.6 x 518.0 cm
not signed not dated
Collection: Art Gallery of New South Wales
Gift of Sir John Rothenstein in memory of the artist 1969

ROLAND WAKELIN

Study for boat sheds 1917
oil on cardboard
15.4 x 23.1 cm
signed and dated lower left R W '17
Collection: National Gallery of Australia, Canberra

Beach and houses 1918
oil on board
11.5 x 17.2 cm
signed and dated lower right R Wakelin 1918
P H & R A Glow Fund 1992
Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide

Colour note – landscape 1918
oil on cardboard
11.4 x 17.2 cm
signed and dated lower right R S Wakelin / 1918
Collection: Ballarat Fine Art Gallery
Purchased 1978

(Landscape) 1918
oil on canvas on board
12.5 x 18.4 cm
signed and dated lower right R H S Wakelin 1918
Collection: Orange Regional Gallery

(Untitled landscape with red shed) 1918
oil on board
11.5 x 17 cm
signed and dated lower right R S Wakelin 1918
Private Collection
not exhibited

Barn near Tuggerah 1919
oil on composition board
17.7 x 22.0 cm
signed and dated lower left R S Wakelin 1919
Collection: National Gallery of Australia, Canberra

Berry's Bay 1919
oil on paperboard
18.5 x 24.7 cm
signed and dated lower left R S Wakelin 1919
Collection: Art Gallery of New South Wales
Purchased 1957

Berry's Bay 1919
oil on paperboard
18.5 x 24.7 cm
signed and dated lower left R S Wakelin 1919
Collection: Art Gallery of New South Wales
Purchased 1957

Causeway, Tuggerah 1919
oil on paper on paperboard
14.0 x 17.5 cm
signed and dated lower left R Wakelin 1919
Collection: Art Gallery of New South Wales
Purchased 1967

On Ball's Head 1919
oil on board
22.9 x 28.5 cm
signed and dated lower right R S Wakelin 1919
National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
The Joseph Brown Collection
Presented through the NGV Foundation by Dr Joseph Brown AO OBE, Honorary Life Benefactor, 2004

Synchromy in orange major 1919
oil on cardboard
30.0 x 40.0 cm
signed and dated lower left R S Wakelin 1919
Collection: Art Gallery of New South Wales
Bequest of Mervyn Horton 1983

Hillside houses, Berry's Bay c1919
oil on cardboard
19.5 x 23.0 cm
not signed not dated
Collection: National Gallery of Australia, Canberra
Bequest of Dorothy and Douglas Dundas 1988

Houses at Hunters Hill c1919
oil on canvas on composition board
24.0 x 20.0 cm
not signed not dated
Collection: National Gallery of Australia, Canberra

Boathouses 1920
oil on cardboard
26.1 x 30.9 cm
signed lower left R S Wakelin 1920
State Art Collection Art Gallery of Western Australia
Purchased with funds from the Geoffrey William Robinson Bequest Fund 1991

Old Balmoral 1920
oil on board
26.5 x 31.3 cm
signed and dated lower right R S Wakelin 1920
Private Collection. Courtesy Philip Bacon Galleries.

Still life 1920
oil on cardboard
21.8 x 30.5 cm
signed and dated lower left R S WAKELIN / 1920
Collection: National Gallery of Australia, Canberra

Still life 1920
oil on board
27.9 x 15.9 cm
signed and dated upper left R S Wakelin 1920
Collection unknown
not exhibited

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The curators of the exhibition would like to sincerely thank The Gordon Darling Foundation, in particular Gordon and Marilyn Darling and Aileen Ellis, for the generous grant that assisted in the realisation of this catalogue and the exhibition. Special thanks to the staff of Ivan Dougherty Gallery, Adrian Davies, Yvonne Donaldson, Sarah Hetherington, Felicity Fenner, Rilka Oakley and William Sturrock for their assistance. Special thanks also to the institutions that have lent many important works to this exhibition, in particular Alan Sisley, (Director, Orange Regional Gallery), Gordon Morrison, (Director, Ballarat Fine Art Gallery) and Anne Rowland, Gary Dufour, (Acting Director, Art Gallery of Western Australia) Ron Radford, (Director, National Gallery of Australia), Deborah Hart and Elena Taylor, Edmund Capon, (Director, Art Gallery of New South Wales) Hendrik Kolenberg and Deborah Jones, Christopher Menz, (Director, Art Gallery of South Australia) and Tracey Lock-Weir, Gerard Vaughan, (Director, National Gallery of Victoria) and to the registrars, copyright and image reproduction officers of these institutions for their assistance. Special thanks to Mary Eagle, Eric Riddler, Daniel Thomas, Dr Joseph Brown, Deborah Edwards and Elizabeth Gertsakis for their assistance in the preparation and research for this exhibition. Many thanks to Philip Bacon, Nicholas Thompson, Geoffrey Smith, Harley Young, Kristian Pithie, Rolin Sulich, Georgina Pemberton and Christina Antaw. Sincere thanks to the Roland Wakelin and Roy de Maistre copyright holders; Judith Murray, Caroline de Mestre Walker and Belinda Price. Special thanks also to Alan Boxer, Philip Hazell, Eloise Beling and all the private donors who wish to remain anonymous. Thanks also to the contributing writers Heather Johnson, Kate Bowan and Christopher Dean for your insightful essays, time and efforts. Many thanks also to the *Colour in Art – Revisiting 1919* symposium speakers Daniel Thomas, Heather Johnson, Christopher Dean, Deborah Hart, Niels Hutchison and Jenny McFarlane whose essays will be published by Ivan Dougherty Gallery after the event. Many thanks also to Ann Stephen (Powerhouse Museum) and Rodney Palmer (State Library of Queensland).

COLOUR IN ART – REVISITING 1919

Curators: Nick Waterlow OAM (Director, Ivan Dougherty Gallery) and Annabel Pegus (Curator, Ivan Dougherty Gallery)

Ivan Dougherty Gallery
College of Fine Arts
The University of New South Wales, Australia
22 August – 27 September 2008

Heide Museum of Modern Art, Victoria
23 March 2009 – 12 July 2009

State Library of Queensland
31 July 2009 – 25 October 2009

Colour in Art – Revisiting 1919 at Ivan Dougherty Gallery
is part of Sydney Design 08 which is presented by the
Powerhouse Museum



Editors: Nick Waterlow and Annabel Pegus
Authors: Kate Bowan, Christopher Dean, Heather Johnson, Annabel Pegus, and Nick Waterlow
Design: Sally Robinson

Printer: Southern Colour, Sydney
ISBN: 978 0 7334 2663 6

Published by Ivan Dougherty Gallery
© Ivan Dougherty Gallery, 2008
College of Fine Arts
Selwyn Street, Paddington NSW 2021
www.cofa.unsw.edu.au/galleries/idg
The University of New South Wales

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This publication has been generously sponsored by



(COVER IMAGE) Roy de Maistre *The boat sheds, in violet red key* 1919
oil on wood 32.5 x 20.5 cm Private Collection

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