

# MODERN ART OXFORD

## KINO CLUB

### Colour Field Frames

22 July 2010

***A Colour Box* Len Lye** (1935, 35mm on DVD, 4 mins)  
***Plasmatic Blatz* Jeff Keen** (1991, Video, 9 mins)  
***Threshold* Malcolm Le Grice** (1972-2007, 3 screen simulation, DVD, 17 mins)  
***The Space Between* Karen Mirza and Brad Butler** (2005, 16mm on DVD, 12 mins)  
***Under the Water Lilies* Helga Fanderl** (2005, Super 8mm on DVD, 3 mins, silent)  
***Iris Out* Simon Payne** (2008, Video, 10 mins)  
***Mystery Solved* LoVid** (2006, Video, 4 mins)  
***Red Squares* Neil Henderson** (2010, Standard 8mm multi-projection)

All of the work in this programme involves striking colour combinations across the surface of the screen, at any given moment, and from one moment to the next, sometimes at a rate of 25 frames per second. Certain characteristics of the films and videos in *Colour Field Frames* - hand-painted colour, all-over fields, and optical flicker - invariably call to mind the use of colour in artworks in other media, but time-based sequencing (the essence of film and video) makes for quite a different phenomenon. Another concern regarding colour in film and video, is the question of where it appears to inhere. Colour is a matter of perceptual psychology, a sensation produced somewhere between the eye and the brain, but it does also seem as if attached to things out there: the hue of a red apple, for example, or a daub of green or yellow on the surface of a painting hung on a grey wall.\* In contrast, the nature of the films and videos in this programme produce colours that are less easy to point to. They are unfixed, itinerant and alive.

In Len Lye's joyous *A Colour Box* (1935), which is often referred to as one of the first 'direct films' the colour was painted straight onto the filmstock - if you hold a print of the film to the light you can see it's all there - but the dancing shapes, patterns and texture of the film makes for an extraordinary animation of colour.

Jeff Keen has been making high-octane, agitated films since the early 1960s. The collage of material in *Plasmatic Blatz* (1991), which includes found footage of fighter jets, glamour models and natural disasters, as well as older Super 8 material, is heightened by pushing the chrominance values of analogue video layering.

Malcolm Le Grice's *Threshold* (1972-2007) was originally, and is still performed as, a remarkable three-screen projection performance. The digital version screened here is not so much a 'simulation' (Le Grice's own word) as a radically new work, which adopts a modified compositional strategy and an intense new colour palette.

Karen Mirza and Brad Butler's *The Space Between* (2005) began as a short filmic sketch, shot from a high-rise block, and edited in-camera. Through the process of optical printing the original footage has been stretched and, in turn, intensified to produce an optically charged representation of architectural space, which is mirrored by David Cunningham's soundtrack.

Helga Fanderl's film *Unter Den Seerosen* (Under the Water Lilies), made in 2005, is the most simple and lyrical film in the programme. Shot on Super 8, the film captures the interplay of colours, and light and dark, as carp appear from beneath the water lilies floating on the surface of a pond. The film was wholly made in-camera, showing great dexterity and deftness in its orchestration of movement and different colours combinations.

The interaction of primary and secondary colours in *Iris Out* (2008), by Simon Payne, is mirrored by the interaction of circles, or ellipses, and the different rectangles that constitute standard and wide-screen projection ratios. The work is based on a limited digital colour palette and a coherent structure, but there is no accounting for the number of colours that one might actually perceive.

*Mystery Solved* (2006) by LoVid, the duo Tali Hinkis and Kyle Lapidus, is in the tradition of video works made by artists who have built their own synthesizers. In tampering with the video signal, and weaving patterns in vivid colours, LoVid have honed their own language, producing abstract videos that are intense and euphoric.

With *Red Squares* (2010) Neil Henderson has returned to the multiple projection pieces that he was previously making with upwards of 50 projectors. In this piece each projector is threaded with red leader that has been intercut with black leader. Superimposed frames make for squares within squares, and fluctuating levels of light, which is red to begin with, ending on the 'white' of the bare projector bulbs.

- Simon Payne

\* See Howard Hodgkin's work on show at Modern Art until the 5<sup>th</sup> of September.