

A colour field's embrace.

Andréanne Godin

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An Immersion in Colour

Andréanne Godin arrived at the Josef and Anni Albers Foundation in June of 2016. Immersing herself in the work of the Alberses and adopting a daily swimming practice in the nearby pond while also spending long quiet hours in her studio, she produced an exquisite group of dry pigment drawings, evincing a sympatico view of the Alberses' devotion to process and materials. It is interesting to see this behavior resurface ten years later at the Guido Molinari Foundation, where again, water and colour seem to occupy the artist's mind. Channeling both the Alberses' and Molinari's reductive practices, Godin removes everything that isn't essential, allowing her paper and pigments to simultaneously be totally apparent and to dissolve into the experience of the viewer.

In her exhibition marking the conclusion of her residency at the Guido Molinari Foundation, she has paired objects and artworks created during the residency with immersive colour field paintings by Molinari. Also present are replicas of the tools she used to extract the clay that became her pigment. The tools are made from the clay itself, glazed with different formulations of the same clay. Her materials, process, and research circle back on one another endlessly.

Godin's facility with paper and pigments made those materials a natural choice as she began making work related to her experiences as a free diver in Quebec's freshwater lakes. Deep below the surface she observed sunlight, caught by countless miniscule, suspended particles.

It acted like headlights in dense fog, creating a somewhat opaque volume of coloured light. Unlike viewing colour in a painting or in the landscape, this colour filled Godin's vision completely. Like being suspended in a block of coloured glass, she was *in* the colour. Godin learned that different lakes had different minerals, chemical elements, and organic matter suspended in their waters, due to both natural causes and human pollution. Lake water containing zinc, for example, would cause the sunlight she saw below the surface to appear milky. A high iron content might produce an orange volume of light.

Seeking a way to capture some of the tranquility and wonder she'd experienced swimming through and within these colours, Godin focused on yellow. She mixed pigments with clay that she pulled from the bottom of the lake to make her own soft pastels. Working in layers of rubbed pastels and stippled marks, she achieved a result that is much more than the sum of those parts. It is transcendent. It vibrates. There is no figure in the image, no ground. The entire paper has been worked, nearly uniformly, creating a cloudy, atmospheric effect, in which gray and yellow are alternately dominant. To behold these drawings is to lose oneself in colour.

The *Homage to the Square*, Josef Albers's long-running series of paintings, utilizes a deceptively simple composition of nested squares in which colours push and pull at one another, jostling for dominance, forming alliances, shouting, whispering, brooding, and singing, always in relation to one another. The viewer is simultaneously aware that they are looking at flat areas of paint on board, and that something far more complicated is happening in their perception. Godin's pastels are similarly minimal at first glance, but in even a moment's looking, mists of colour appear to swirl and shift. Forms may emerge or emotions may be conjured.

We are caught between our awareness of the physicality of the paper and pigment and the evocative sensations of colour.

Guido Molinari began making large, nearly monochromatic paintings in the 1970s. *Sans Titre*, from 1975, is evenly divided into two vertical rectangles, each painted a solid russet colour. The primary difference is that the left rectangle is slightly milkier in appearance than its counterpart. The subtle contrast of saturation between the two creates a deep spatial experience. We feel like a veil is being pulled aside and we are enveloped by pure colour, like the effect of Godin's drawings. Molinari and Albers were both included in MoMA's seminal 1965 exhibition *The Responsive Eye*, though whether they ever met one another is unknown. In a way, Godin is introducing them to one another through her own colour experiments.

Godin considers colour to be a "third place" — an abstract idea that two people can both access and compare to their personal experiences. Everyone has looked at and thought about yellow. We have our own associations, biases, and memories connected to colours. Though Godin's experience of being underwater and suspended in yellow light is one that few others will have shared. Being enveloped in yellow light, she had the feeling of being connected to a universal experience of the colour. She was unusually close to that third place. Godin's exhibition brings us equally close, exemplifying the simultaneously personal and universal that exists within colour.

— Fritz Horstman