MONDAY IS BLUE

EDITH DEKYNDT

Maison Grégoire
Brussels 2012

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In 2010, for the completion of this project

a researcher in acoustics

designed a software which aimed

at connecting sound and colour.

He brought together acoustic waves and

light waves, as Newton had once envisaged

but never succeeded to prove.

At 23, Isaac Newton wrote a diary of 344 pages.

Every odd-page was numbered manually.

The diary contained notes and diagrams

which showed significant progress

on subjects such as

optics,

precious stones,

colour,

temperature,

salts,

alchemy,

gravitation.

In between the completed pages

124 pages

were left empty.

When Newton started investigating colour

a mathematical formula had been devised

for just one of our five senses: hearing.

The length of vibrating strings had been tuned to notes,

seven in total.

Newton thought that light produced

vibrations in the eye

that excited the optic nerve

and produced harmonies

corresponding to those of sound,

seven in total.

He assumed that there was an exact

correspondence between these vibrations

and drew diagrams.

However, he was unable to prove his theory.

One century later,

Louis Bertrand Castel,

a fervent opponent of Newton,

published a treatise entitled

'Traité de la pesanteur universelle'.

In it, he distilled all the phenomena

in the universe down to two principles:

the gravity of a given body

that induces a situation of rest

and the activity of the mind

that constantly creates movement.

Throughout his life

he tried to design an optical harpsichord

that would make it possible

to translate every musical note into a specific colour.

He never did succeed.

A century later Bainbridge Bishop published

'A Souvenir of the Color Organ,

with Some Suggestions in Regard

to the Soul of the Rainbow

and the Harmony of Light'.

In January 1877 he took out a patent

on an instrument that played music

at the same time that it emitted coloured light

through a window on the instrument.

In 1909, the composer Alexander Nikolajevitsj Scriabin,

influenced by Alexander Wallace Rimington's research,

published a symphonic poem entitled

'Prometheus',

from which a section of the score

had to be projected in colour.

'Prometheus: The poem of fire'

was broadcast on Russian television

and in the cabin of Vostok I

during the first human space flight on 12 April 1961.

V1 and V2 are the principal regions

for the recognition of objects'contours.

V4 is the region of colour perception.

It appears linked with neighbouring regions,

such as V1, V2 and V5 which are centres

for the perception of movement.

In certain subjects,

a number or a letter can stimulate

both the region of shape recognition

as well as that of colour recognition.

In other subjects sound reaches,

without us knowing why,

the V4 region,

the centre of colour recognition.

Those subjects see sounds in colour.

It could well be that every person possesses

this gift up to the age of three months,

the moment at which

the various regions of the brain

start to differentiate.

Olavi Sotavalta possessed absolute pitch.

He specialised in sounds of flying insects.

The sound of an insect in flight depends

on the frequency of the fluttering of its wings.

He was able to translate these sounds into notes

and managed to measure their exact frequency.

He determined that the sound produced

by the butterfly Plusia gamma was similar

to F sharp and that its frequency was 46 Hz.

During the day, the dominant color of the Earth is blue.

In cloudless zones and with low humidity

one can distinguish individual houses and the streets.

Nikolaïev, the pilot of the Vostok 3,

could see the streets of some towns;

and Bykovsky - the trails of airplanes

and boats in the Mediterranean Sea.

Conrad, Cooper, Borman and Lovell

were asked to observe rectangles

made on the ground

in Texas and Australia

when their positions were changed

at each passage of the vessels.

The Soviets were subjected to colour tests.

A reduction of the intensity

of colour perception was noticed.

The biggest loss was

in the spectrum of purple, blue and green.

Green noise

is supposedly

the background noise

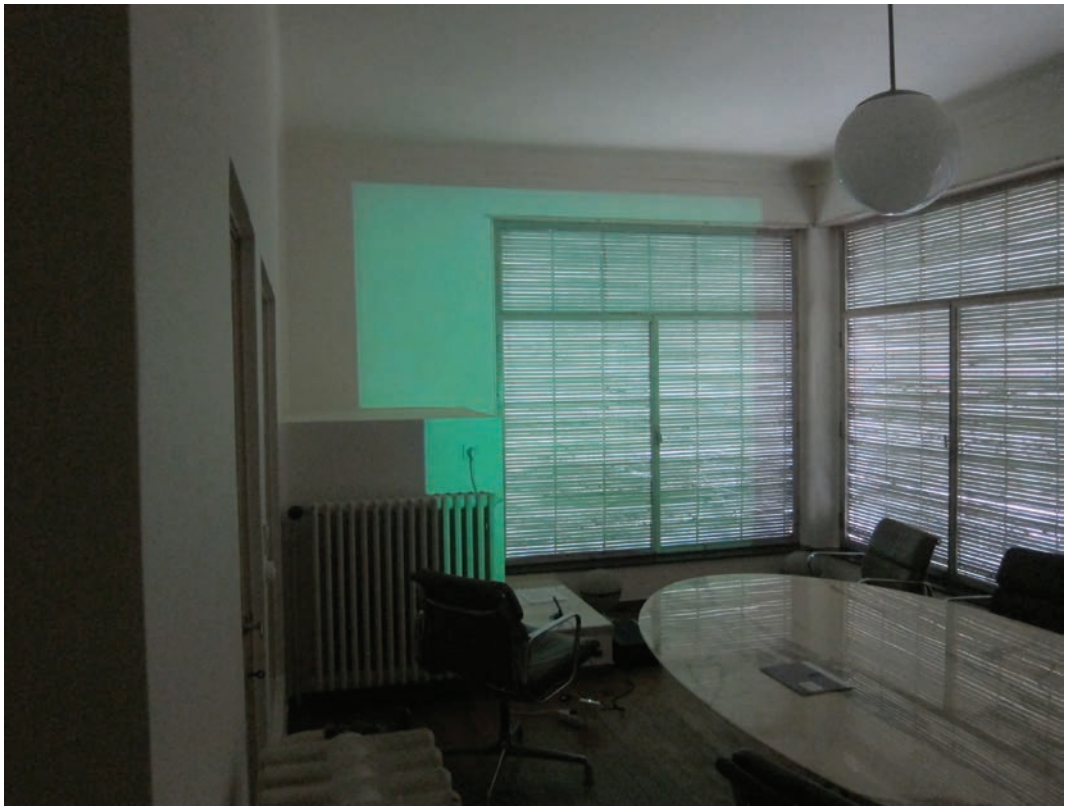
of the Earth.

Maison Grégoire
Brussels 2012

The very title of **Monday is Blue** *might evoke for some of our English-speaking readers the creative world of a* **W. Shelley**, *or more recently and in a different genre, the likes of* **Fat Dominos**, **New Order** *or* **The Cure**. *The French speakers will more immediately associate the expression to the spirit pervading the universe of a* **Rimbaud** *or a* **Paul Eluard**.

Beyond, the very principle of the metaphor raises some issues such as the relativity of our sensorial perceptions and of their translated representations, whilst also suggesting secret relationships from the one sense to the other. There we come on the vast ground of synaesthesiae, dear to many a symbolist poet, but also continuously investigated by science, from **Newton** *to contemporary neuroscience, whose investigations seem to comfort the idea of possible neurological connections between the relevant specialized cortical areas*

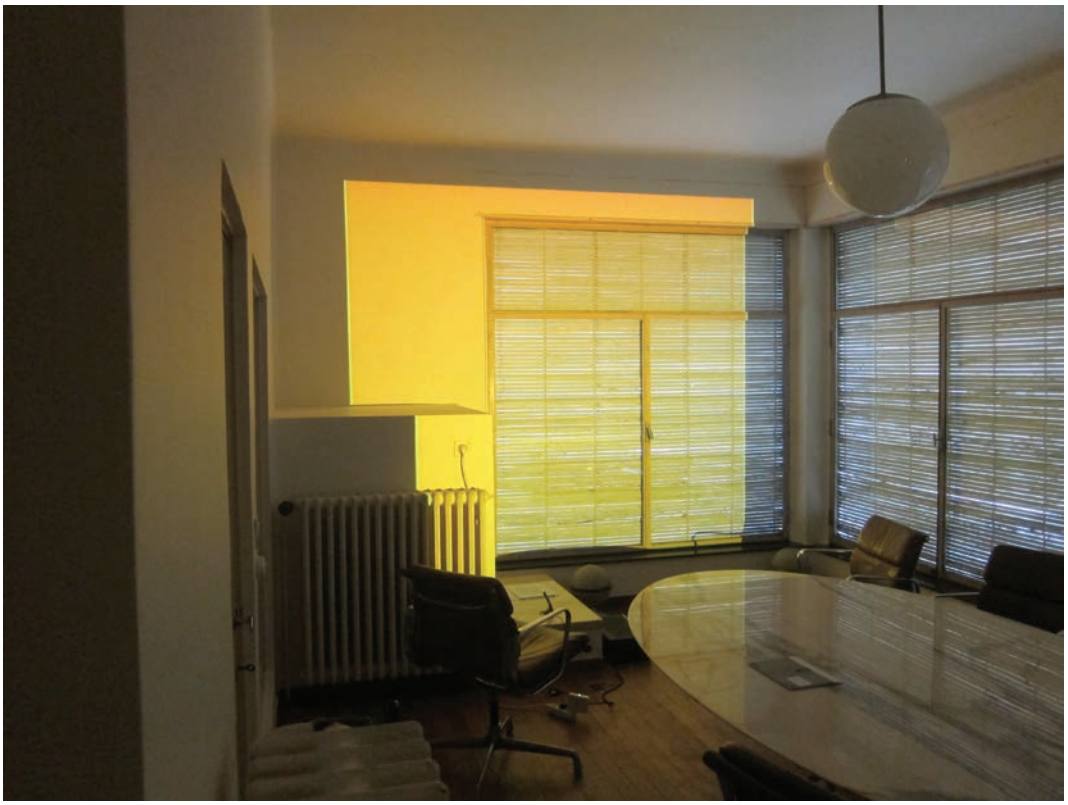
It is in a way quite logical that Edith Dekyndt, whose liminal oeuvre, oscillating between visible and invisible, between subjective and objective, often stems from—and relies on—scientific knowledge and discourse, thereby infiltrating an intangible world where science and knowledge indirectly address issues that concern us all, directed her latest research in this direction.



Monday is Blue, *Installation view, Maison Grégoire, Brussels, April- May 2012*.

For **Maison Grégoire**, *(and beyond any restrictive limitation to the musical field), Edith Dekyndt's investigations explore the existing correspondances between colours and sounds. These relationships, revealed by correspondences in terminology (does not one naturally speak of chromatism in the musical field ?) was inter alios pioneered by* **Isaac Newton**. **Newton**, *driven by a concern for the unification of the different areas of human knowledge and representations of the physical world, tried to establish a correspondence between the wave lengths of the seven notes of our musical language with the vibrations exerted on our « optical nerve » by light, which he arbitrarily decomposed into 7 « primary » colours. Although he ultimately failed to scientifically prove his point, his intuition, constantly re-elaborated and precised, kept influencing the subsequent investigations in the field, whilst also producing the odd by-products such as the « colour organ » of a* **Bainbridge Bishop**.
The very object and distinctive site-specific articulations of Edith Dekyndt's project (consisting of prints, book, projection) will be in a sharp contrast with the domestic, homely character of **Maison Grégoire**, *located in a residential suburb of the Belgian capital, as much as it will address in a subvertive way the specific character of this pearl of modernist archictecture by Van de velde, naturally devoted to the circulation of light.*

Emmanuel Lambion, *curator, 2012.*



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Laboratory Notebook by Isaac Newton, c. 1669-c.1693.

At 23, Isaac Newton wrote a diary of 344 pages. Every odd-page was numbered manually. The diary contained notes and diagrams, which showed significant progress on subjects such as optics, precious stones, colour, temperature, salts, alchemy, gravitation. In between the completed pages 124 pages were left empty. These 124 empty pages are reproduced in facsimile in this book in accordance with their layout in the notebook.

Cambridge University Library, art of the Newton Papers Collection.

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