



**Making a Spectacle of One's Self**

by

**Barr Gilmore, RCA**

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for the degree of

**Master of Design**

in

Interdisciplinary Masters in Art, Media and Design

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**Making a Spectacle of One’s Self**

Master of Design 2011

**Duncan Barr Gilmore, RCA**

Interdisciplinary Masters in Art, Media and Design

Ontario College of Art and Design University

**The Abstract**

*The Colour Barr* is a new species of contemporary furniture—one that embeds the unleashed potential of the unconscious mind in its symbolic form, that challenges screen-based social networking in favour of an embodied social experience, and that looks spectacle straight in the eyes and says, “I understand.”

Welcome to *The Colour Barr*—a new self-portrait in the form of a sculpture-cum-functioning cocktail bar. Let me open up the bar, while you open up yourself to new intoxicating elixirs, interesting cultural mixes and stimulating symbolic exchange. What awaits is nothing less than transformation. Let’s get this party started.

Does *The Colour Barr* perform you? Or vice versa?

You decide how best to represent yourself. Value and meaning await those willing to engage at *The Colour Barr*.

**The Author’s Declaration**

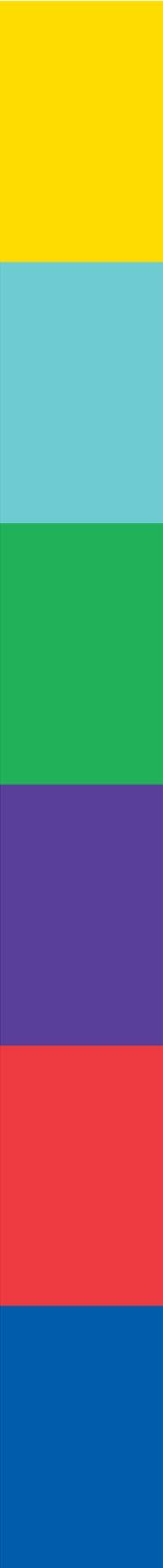
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Design is a collaborative process and *The Colour Barr* would not have been realized without the incredible 3D software skills of Chris Bahry at Tendril, David Plant and his team at King Signs, the woodworking know-how of Lucas Brancalion and Jeremy Cox at Brothers and Sons, and OCADU’s Rapid Prototyping Centre

Finally, thanks to Julie Nicholson and Shaun Moore at MADE for their continued support and for hosting my graduate installation.

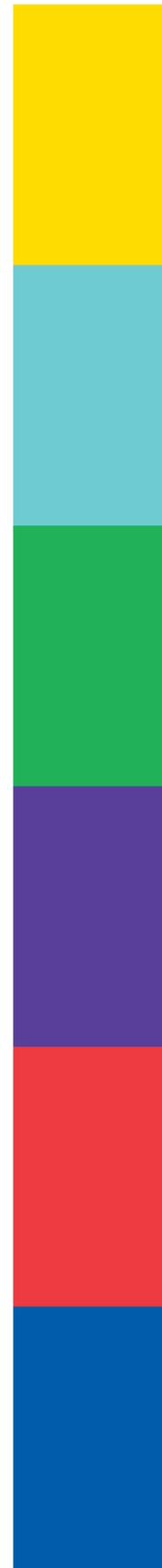
## The Table of Contents

The List of Figures	vi
The Preface	xi
The Introduction	
The Gift	1
The Literature Review	
The Exchange	5
The Spectacle	13
The Sign	21
Reflective Autoethnography Research	22
The Conclusion	
The Colour Barr	37
Reflexive and Qualitative Research	42
The Elixirs of Life	51
The Contribution and Further Research	
The Morning After	61
The Bibliography	
The Referenced	63
The Unreferenced (Further Reading)	65
The Appendix	
A. The Past	71
B. The Event	79
C. The Alchemist’s Mandala	87

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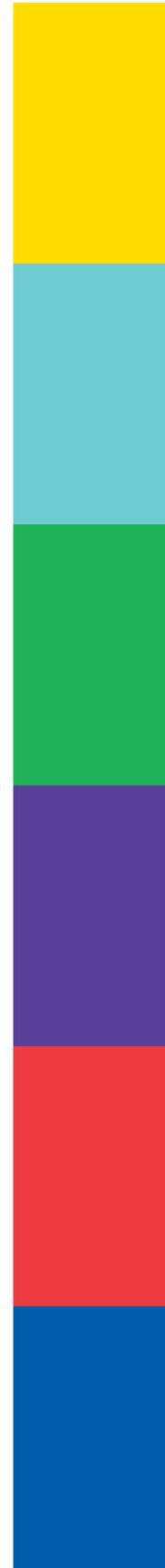
### The List of Figures

Figure	Title of Figure	page
1	Graphic for bar signage, <i>Pretty Ugly</i> exhibition, 2010	x
2	Installation view of <i>The Colour Barr</i> at MADE, 2011 Photograph © Dave Gillespie	xiii
3	Installation view of <i>The Colour Barr</i> in the front window of MADE, 2011	xiv
4	Artwork for the <i>Elixirs of Life</i> cocktail coasters, set of seven coasters, 3.5 inch diameter each, edition of 500	3
5	Artwork for the <i>Elixirs of Life</i> laser etched decanters	3
6	<i>What's Up Dad?</i> , 1986 photo silkscreen, 16 x 16 inches My father flew a Lancaster Bomber in WWII with a picture of Bugs Bunny on the side with the words, "What's Up Doc?" my grandfather is pictured giving my dad his wings	4
7	Stills from Douglas Gordon and Jonathan Monk's collaborative performance <i>Are Friends Electric?</i> at Lisson Gallery, London on June 23, 2010 Photographs © Robert Ross	7
8	Graphic identity created for <i>Friends Electric</i> collaboration	8
9	General Idea, <i>Colour Bar Lounge</i> , 1979, aluminum, glass, colour photographs and printed cards, floor unit: 40 x 150 x 10 inches, wall unit: 24 x 150 inches Collection of the Art Gallery of Ontario Photograph © General Idea, Inc./AGO	11
10	General Idea, installation view of <i>Ruins of the 1984 Miss General Idea Pavillion</i> , 1977, site-specific installation and performance, rubble, chalk and other elements Photograph © General Idea, Inc.. Used with permission.	11



11	Book cover of General Idea's <i>The Getting into the Spirit Cocktail Book from the 1984 Miss General Idea Pavillion</i> , 1980, hardcover, 64 pages, edition of 900	11
12	Video stills from General Idea's <i>Test Tube</i> , 1979, 28 minutes colour, sound. Produced by De Appel, Amsterdam © General Idea, Inc.	12
13 + 14	Book cover of Naomi Klein's international bestseller <i>No Logo</i> , 2000 culture-jammed by <i>The Economist</i> on September 8–14, 2001 just days before 9/11	19
15	<i>Benefit of the Doubt</i> , 2008, light sculpture made of 425 light bulbs, sockets, electronic light sequencer and painted aluminum, 30 x 96 x 7 inches Photograph © 2008 Patrick Dell. Used with permission	20
16	My astrological birth chart produced by Pam Younghans showing planetary positions at time, date and place of birth	23
17	<i>My Aura Photograph</i> by Chrysanne Stathacos, 1996	24
18	My Nine Totem Animal reading by Pamela Hackwell, 2010 using the Native American Medicine Card deck by Jamie Sans and David Carson with illustrations © 1988/99 Angela Werneke, St. Martin's Press, New York	24
19	Production still from Federico Fellini's film about dreams <i>City of Women</i> , 1980 Photograph © Deborah Beer	27
20	A variety of Internet images of rabbits identified in the face of the Moon from the website <a href="http://www.contodomiafecto.com">www.contodomiafecto.com</a> Sources unknown	27
21	Sample entry from my blog <i>Barr's Dream Journal</i> , 2010	31
22	General Idea, <i>Fin de siècle</i> , 1994, chromogenic print, 30 x 24 inches, edition of 12 + 3 APs and installation view of General Idea's <i>One Day of AZT</i> and <i>One Year of AZT</i> , 1991 at The Power Plant, Toronto, 1993 Photographs © General Idea, Inc.	32
23	Installation view of General Idea's <i>The Armoury from the 1984 Miss General Idea Pavillion</i> , 1985–90 at the Musée d'art contemporain de la Ville de Paris, Paris, 2011	32
24	An early 17th C. mandala from the <i>Musaeum Hermeticum</i>	35
25	The Rabbit in the Moon mixing the Elixir of Immortality embroidered on an 18th C. Chinese emperor's robe by an artist from the Qing emperors' court	35

26	Installation view of <i>Colour Barr</i> , 2009 a self-portrait in the form of a fluorescent light sculpture, July 2009 at Queen Specific (formerly Solo Exhibition), Toronto	36
27	The Wooton Desk cabinet-secretary from the Wooton Company of Indiana around 1875 © 2008 National Trust for Historic Preservation in the United States, 1785 Massachusetts Ave., NW, Washington, DC 20036, U.S.A. All rights reserved	39
28	Phrenology diagram of a symbolic head illustrating the natural language of the faculties from <i>People's Cyclopedia of Universal Knowledge</i> , 1883	39
29	Martin Baas' Shell, 2009, made of faceted stainless steel, copper welds and a walnut veneer interior for a private collector and Design Miami 2009 Photograph © 2009 James Harris	39
30	Elevation drawing for <i>The Colour Barr</i> , 2011, front view colour study	40
31	Playboy logo	40
32	Rabbit shadow puppet image by Moon Young Shin www.moon-shin.com © 2010–11 Moon Young Shin	40
33	Free peace sign stencil from www.spraypaintstencils.com	40
34	Two early 3D rapid prototypes of <i>The Colour Barr</i> , 2011 showing the open and closed profiles of each	43
35	Elevation drawings for <i>The Colour Barr</i> , 2011 with mock-ups of the <i>Elixirs of Life</i> cocktail coasters	44–45
36	Xavier Veilhan, <i>Laurent (Deutsche Grammophon)</i> , 2006, polyurethane and yellow epoxy painting, 71 x 27 x 20 inches Private collection Photo © André Morin <i>Laurent</i> , 2005. Aluminum, steel, 71 x 25 x 14 inches Collection Guillaume Houzé Photo © Marc Domage © 2008 Veilhan/Adagp, Paris	46
37	Flattened 3D pattern for <i>The Colour Barr</i> , 2011 using Pepakura software	49
38	3D paper model showing waterjet cut sections	50
39	Paint colour tests on stainless steel for <i>The Colour Barr</i>	50
40	Waterjet cutting at RCI Waterjet Cutting Services of stainless steel sections for <i>The Colour Barr</i>	50
41	Welding of <i>The Colour Barr</i> at RJS Metal Precision, Bolton	51
42	Custom ziricote wood drawers with sliders by Brothers and	52

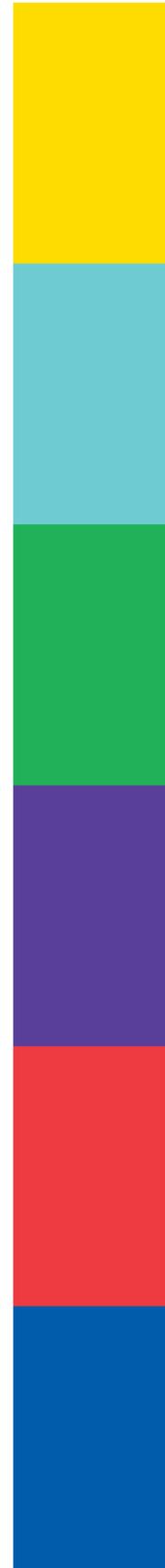


	Sons, Toronto for <i>The Colour Barr</i> Photograph © 2011 Dave Gillespie	
43	Embroidered apron by Stitchy Lizard for <i>The Colour Barr</i> Photograph © 2011 Dave Gillespie	52
44	Example of laser-etched decanter for <i>The Colour Barr</i> Photograph © 2011 Dave Gillespie	52
45	<i>The Elixirs of Life</i> cocktail coasters for <i>The Colour Barr</i> letterpressed by Lunar Caustic Press, Toronto	53
46	Bernard Rancillac, <i>Elephant</i> , 1967	64
47	<i>The Gilder</i> . graphic identity, 2010 custom fonts (The Gilder Framed/Unframed) and signage Photographs © Peter Porebski	72–73
48	<i>I am not Helvetica</i> , 2010, identity exercise	74
49	Installation view of <i>I am not trapped by my desires.</i> , 2010 Photograph © Tom McGillis	75
50	Installation view of <i>Deferred Gratification</i> , 2010 king-sized repurposed fur (coat) blanket, 96 x 96 inches in collaboration with Lisa Visser at first-year graduate exhibition <i>Pretty Ugly</i> in the Graduate Gallery, OCADU	75
51	Installation views of the exhibition design for <i>Essential Cinema</i> , September 12 to October 10, 2010 at TIFF Bell Lightbox, Toronto including a still from <i>Essential Titles</i> , 2010, motion graphic, 6 minutes on the right side of the middle image Photographs © Tom Arban	76
52	Installation views of the exhibition design for <i>Tim Burton</i> , November 26, 2010 to April 17, 2011 at TIFF Bell Lightbox Photographs © Tom Arban	77
53	Concept and schematic design drawings for <i>Fellini: Spectacular Obsessions</i> , June 29 to September 25, 2011 at TIFF Bell Lightbox	78
54	Dave Gillespie and Barr Gilmore at <i>The Colour Barr</i> on Saturday, April 30, 2011 at MADE, Toronto Photograph © 2011 Dave Gillespie	79
55-57	Invited guests at <i>The Colour Barr</i> on Thursday/Friday/Saturday, April 28/29/30, 2011 at MADE, Toronto All photographs © 2011 Dave Gillespie	80-85
58	Sara Diamond and Paulette Phillips (OCADU) and Shaun Moore (MADE) with Barr Gilmore at <i>The Colour Barr</i> on Saturday, April 30, 2011 at MADE, Toronto Photographs © 2011 Dave Gillespie	86



THE  
BARR

fig. 1. Graphic for the bar at *Pretty Ugly*, 2010



### The Preface

*All day long, we are exposed to visual messages—delivered as edicts, targets, and norms—which may affront every value we cherish, yet, short of total withdrawal, we must find our way of coping with the incessant demands of this mental environment.*

(Poyner, 2001: 13)

*Making a Spectacle of One's Self* comes out of two years of theoretical and studio-based research into personal and graphic identity viewed through the lens of relational aesthetics, the spectacle, the unconscious mind and semiotics.

I have worked as a graphic and environmental designer for the past twenty years. Much of my career has been dedicated to designing, nurturing and maintaining graphic identities for others. The OCADU Interdisciplinary Master program gave me the time and mental capacity to shift my focus inward—to get (my) self centred and to re-create my own identity. (See Appendix A for other work completed during this period.)

This thesis project documents the self-knowledge and awareness I attained through Jungian dream therapy and various forms of parapsychology—such as astrology, astrological birth chart readings, psychic readings, Native American medicine card readings, Tarot card readings and alchemical mandala meditation. Through this process a personal symbolic language emerged, which I materialized in the form of a sculpture-*cum*- functioning cocktail bar called *The Colour Barr*.

The transformative nature of *The Colour Barr*—how it physically opens and how it *opens up* those who partake in its spirited offerings—brings together ideas centred around an interdisciplinary practice where design, art and social science merge into each other. Applied art—or *functional art*—is the application of design and aesthetics to useful objects. It is my intent to use *The Colour Barr* to serve up intoxicating stimulation to those active participants who want to inhabit the spectacle with honesty and integrity, as well as to create a platform for bringing people together in an authentic (pre-Internet) social networking experience. In his recent book, *The Authenticity Hoax*, Toronto writer Andrew Potter hypothesizes,

*We live in a world increasingly dominated by the fake, the prepackaged, and the artificial. Whichever way we turn we are beset by outrageous advertising, lying politicians, and fraudulent memoirists... We eat barely nutritious fast food, watch scripted “reality” television shows, and take prepackaged vacations complete with prepackaged memories. Meanwhile, we continuously find refuge on the Internet, where we spend enormous amounts of time hanging out on Facebook messaging our “friends” or wandering around virtual environments like Second Life or World of Warcraft, interacting with the avatars of people we’ve never actually met and couldn’t recognize if we did... the demand for the honest, the natural, the real—that is the authentic—has become one of the most powerful movements in contemporary life.* (Potter, 2010: 6)

My thesis project *The Colour Barr* is a symbolic self-portrait (fig. 2). I have explored my unconscious mind, created a symbolic language, and designed/built a *functional art* object. Named in honour of the five years that I spent as Studio Assistant to my late friends and creative mentors General Idea, *The Colour Barr* reveals aspects of my *true* nature and ultimately confirms my abilities and qualifications as a reflective practitioner and an OCADU Master of Design.



fig. 2. *The Colour Barr*, 2011



fig. 3. Installation view of *The Colour Barr* at MADE, 2011

## The Introduction

### The Gift

It is a warmish spring evening in Toronto, as twenty-eight invited guests make their way past the door person at the entrance to MADE—a contemporary design store specializing in Canadian furniture—for the first of three invitation-only cocktail parties over consecutive nights. The guests are here to witness the unveiling of a newly designed cocktail bar entitled *The Colour Barr* (2011, fig. 3).

An object shaped like an abstracted rabbit head (or is it a peace sign?) mounted on foot-high, long black plinth in the store's front window. A faceted and painted stainless steel shell encases finely crafted ziricote drawers in the back of the object. The object reflects light and colour throughout the room and onto the street from its glossy, triangulated facets.

Upon entering *Making a Spectacle of One's Self* at MADE, guests are given three *The Elixirs of Life* cocktail coasters (fig. 4) that they select from a bag presented to them by the coat checker.

The bag contains 112 coasters in total, of which there are seven different types. Each of the seven coasters describes the seven designed cocktails that are served at *The Colour Barr*: *The Albino Squirrel*; *The Dying Sparrow*; *The Spawning Salmon*; *The Frog Prince*; *The Queen Bee*; *The Gentle Moose*; and *The Rabbit Hole*. On each coaster is a graphic symbol for the animal represented by the cocktail, the cocktail recipe and a brief description of what each animal and/or colour signifies.

Once everyone has arrived, the host mounts the platform to address his invited guests. He welcomes them and demonstrates how to open *The Colour Barr*. By folding back the top half of the object, he reveals two sunken stainless steel troughs that act as a large hinge for the piece.

The deepest trough holds seven laser-etched decanters (fig. 5) containing the colourful cocktails. The host fills the other trough with ice. Opening the ziricote drawers, he reveals twenty-eight glasses, seven cocktail shakers and shot glasses, stir sticks and other bar equipment needed for mixing. He invites the guests to the bar to place their first cocktail order with one of their chosen *The Elixirs of Life* coasters. Guests are encouraged to talk and to trade coasters.

The lounge music evident at the beginning of the evening begins to fade as the din of conversation increases and people begin to *open up*. The cocktails are flowing and because they turned off their phones at the beginning of the evening, the guests are talking instead of texting. Some guests have decided to gift their extra cocktail coasters to other, more exuberant, guests wishing to try all seven cocktails. As one might expect, some guests are starting to make spectacles of themselves.

As the last coasters are exchanged and the bar runs dry, the host thanks everyone for coming, reminds them to pick up their take-home set of *The Elixirs of Life* cocktail coasters and reminds them not to drink and drive. (See Appendix B for images from the three cocktail parties over consecutive nights.)

*Making a Spectacle of One's Self* asks the following questions:

Does the gifting of a cocktail party have any social/cultural/symbolic value?

Can one create and/or inhabit spectacle with honesty and integrity?

Are the signs and symbols that come to us in our dreams—and through various forms of parapsychology—part of an historic universal language of the unconscious?

And can we make use of this (self) knowledge in the conscious realm to create objects of value and meaning?

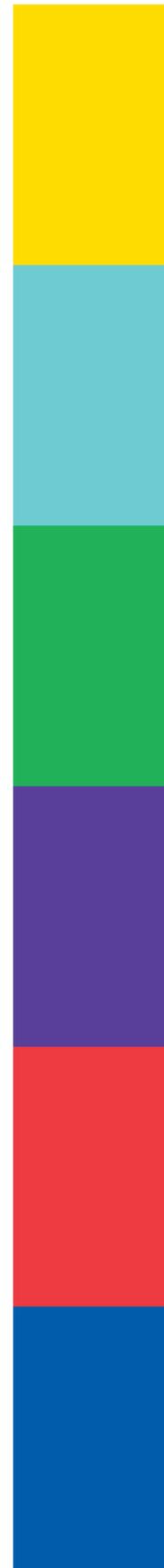
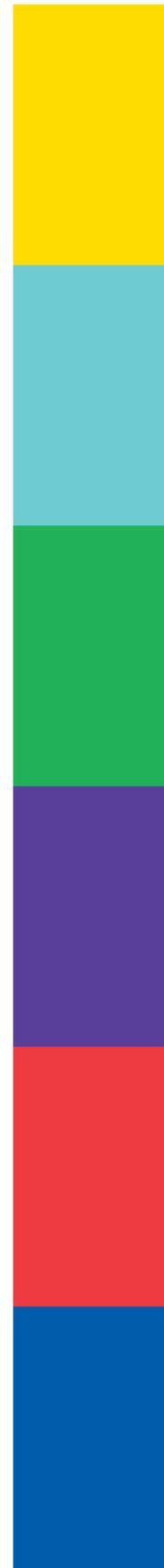


fig. 4. *The Elixirs of Life* cocktail coasters, 2011 and fig. 5. *The Elixirs of Life* decanters, 2011



fig. 6. *What's Up Dad?*, 1986



## The Literature Review

### The Exchange

After leaving San Francisco in the late 60s, our family moved into a middle-class bungalow in south Vancouver, where my parents would often entertain guests with fancy cocktail parties from the bar in the basement off our backyard. Dressed in our best flannel pajamas, my sister (age five) would dance a jig while I (age three) would mix martinis for the guests before taking our bows and running off to bed. We repeated this routine on numerous occasions. The performance was our gift to our parents and their invited guests. All that we expected in return was the applause for a job well done and their admiration and encouragement.

The social occasion comprised several forms of symbolic exchange—our performance, but also our parents' gifting of drinks and hors d'œuvres to their friends and business associates. For my sister and I, the reciprocity was immediate in the form of applause. For our parents, the reciprocity would come later in the form of invitations to other social functions, dinners or cocktail parties, or a promotion at work for my father (a former WWII Lancaster bomber pilot, fig. 6), or new friends for my mother, and higher social standing for both of them. The exchange value in both cases was based on a positive outcome for both the givers and receivers involved in this symbolic exchange, even though reciprocation was never stated explicitly or implicitly.

French sociologist and anthropologist Marcel Mauss (1872–1950) explores gift-exchange in various premodern cultures and highlights the reciprocal nature of gifts

in his book *The Gift: The Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies* (1924). The object or service that is given carries the identity of the giver, and hence the recipient receives both the gift and the association of that object or service with the identity of the giver. Gift-giving is thus a critical mechanism for creating social bonds. Mauss describes three obligations: giving—the first step in building social relationships; receiving—accepting the social bond; and reciprocating—demonstrating social integrity.

*The obligation to give is no less important. If we understood this, we should also know how men came to exchange things with each other... To refuse to give, or fail to invite, is—like refusing to accept—the equivalent of a declaration of war; it is a refusal of friendship and intercourse.* (Mauss, 1924: 13)

Elaborating on Mauss' theories around gift-giving in premodern societies, Jean Baudrillard (1929–2007) in *The Mirror of Production* (1975) and *Symbolic Exchange and Death* (1976) champions the notion of symbolic exchange, which resists capitalist values of utility and monetary profit in favour of cultural values. Baudrillard celebrated the anti-productivism of symbolic exchange both for its subversion of capitalist forms and for providing a ground for an alternative social practice—a new form of creative cultural activity and a more poetic exchange.

*The symbolic social relation is the uninterrupted cycle of giving and receiving, which, in primitive exchange, includes the consumption of the 'surplus' and deliberate anti-production.* (Baudrillard, 1975: 143)

French sociologist, anthropologist and philosopher Pierre Bourdieu (1930–2002) would later refer to these cultural values in *Forms of Capital* (1986) as social, cultural and symbolic capital. These values are distinguishable from economic capital in that

one did not necessarily have to have command over economic resources (cash and assets) in order to be socially mobile beyond their economic class. Resources based on such things as group membership, relationships, networks of influence and support, knowledge, skills, education, honour, prestige and recognition are—in their own right—meaningful cultural values.

In the last decade of the 20th century, the idea of symbolic social relation found a home in contemporary art in what French curator and art critic Nicholas Bourriaud (born 1965) termed Relational Art:

*A set of artistic practices which take as their theoretical and practical point of departure the whole of human relations and their social context, rather than an independent and private space.* (Bourriaud, 2002: 113)

Taking Marcel Duchamp's notion of the "art coefficient"—the difference between the artist's intention and the audience's perception—and the idea of spectator participation theorized by Fluxus happenings and performances a step further, Bourriaud suggests that artists such as Rirkrit Tiravanija, Philippe Parreno, Carsten Höller, Henry Bond, Douglas Gordon and Vanessa Beecroft, amongst others, envisage their audience as a community. Rather than their artwork being an encounter between a viewer and an object, relational art produces intersubjective encounters. Through these encounters, meaning is elaborated collectively, rather than in the space of individual consumption.

In the summer of 2010, while working as an intern in the *lost but found* Berlin studio of Scottish artist Douglas Gordon, I experienced this concept/practice firsthand when I helped to create the graphic identity for Gordon's collaboration with British conceptual artist Jonathan Monk (fig. 8). Entitled *Friends Electric Bar* (2009, fig. 7), their performative collaboration consisted of the two artists dressed as bartenders, serving up gin and tonics atop an upright piano while the pianist played Gary Numan's *Are Friends Electric?* (1979) and a few other tunes, over and over again until the bar



fig. 7. Douglas Gordon and Jonathan Monk, *Friends Electric* performance at Lisson Gallery, London, June 2010



artwork pictured above (measuring 12.7 cm in diameter) embroidered on ten long black bar aprons using gold thread  
drawn by Barr Gilmore... lost but found, Berlin... May 26, 2010



fig. 8. *Friends Electric* graphic identity including apron and coaster design

ran dry—signaling that the *official* performance was over. Attendees were welcome to consume the drinks and to take the custom-designed coasters away with them as a memento of the evening. Gordon and Monk have performed this piece four times. Each time, the piece changed according to the venue, the piano, the piano player, the audience, the alcohol served and the spontaneity of the artists. In Basel, for instance, they served beer while naked, except for their aprons.

The idea of the bar or the lounge, the gifting of drinks and the social relations that ensue is certainly not a new concept in contemporary art—especially not in Canada. Artists such as Vera Frenkel (... *from the Transit Bar*, 1992 ongoing), Theo Sims (*The Candahar*, 2006 ongoing), Jess Dobkin (*The Lactation Station*, OCAD, 2006), Rirkrit Tiravanija (*The Tequila Bar*, OCAD, 2007), Dean Baldwin (*Mini Bar*, 2007 ongoing; *Dork Porch*, 2009; *Tiki Hut*, 2010), and Instant Coffee (*Light Bar*, 2010 for the Vancouver Olympics) have all put their symbolic exchange credibility to the test and have garnered social, cultural and symbolic capital as a result of their generosity.

Among the artist bar/lounge creations I am aware of, the Canadian art collective General Idea's mythical *Colour Bar Lounge* (1979) from the *1984 Miss General Idea Pavilion* (first conceived in 1973, planned in 1975, and in conceptual flames by 1977, fig. 10) is distinct because it existed in concept only. A sculptural version of it—a prop, if you will—exists in the collection of the Art Gallery of Ontario (fig. 9) along with mounted photographs representing each cocktail, *The Getting Into the Spirits Cocktail Book from the 1984 Miss General Idea Pavilion* (1980, fig. 11) describing each conceptual cocktail, and artist multiples like the *Nazi Milk Glass*, *Liquid Assets* and *Magic Palette* (all 1980), which act as *commodity fetish* artefacts that have survived from the burnt ruins of the lounge and pavilion.

The *Colour Bar Lounge* was a conceptual—symbolic—representation of what the artist's role could be in a society fixated on the commodification of everyday life. Thirty years later, *The Colour Barr* shares these concerns, but takes on a different form—one inspired, in part, by the separation felt in an increasingly digital world.

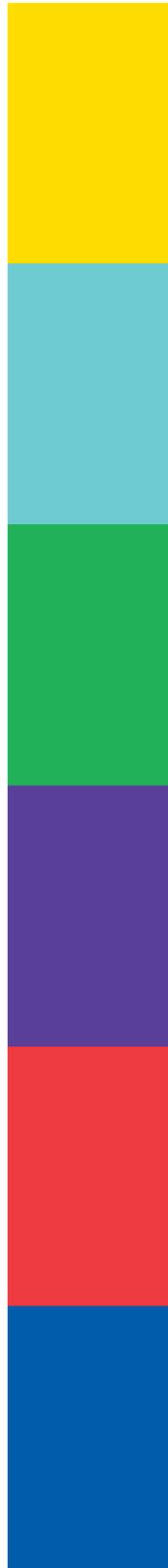


fig. 9. General Idea, *Colour Bar Lounge*, 1979



fig. 10. General Idea, *The Ruins of the 1984 Miss General Idea Pavillion*, 1977

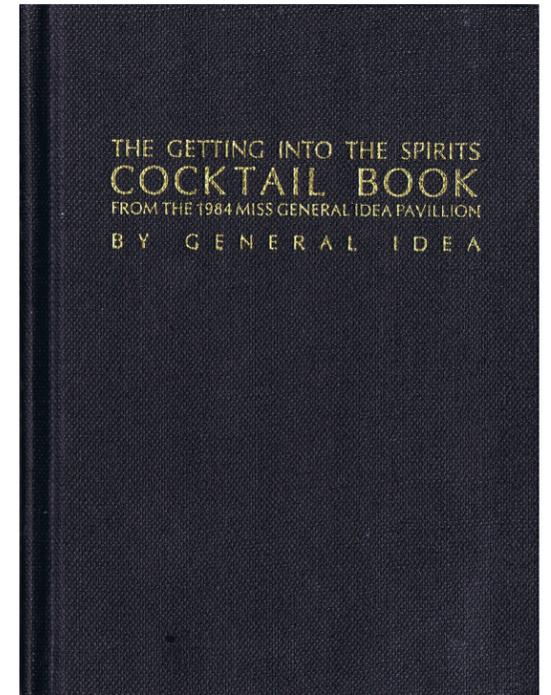
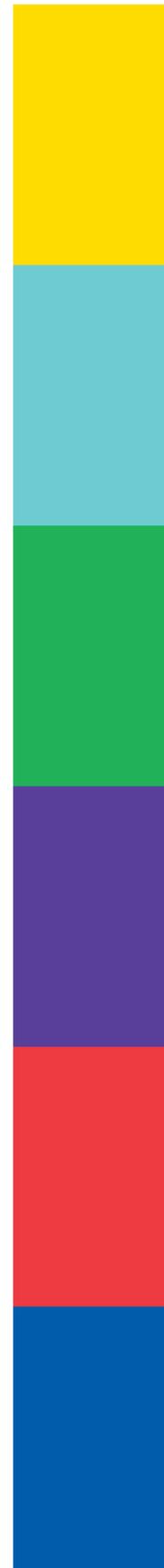


fig. 11. General Idea, *The Getting Into the Spirits Cocktail Book from the 1984 Miss General Idea Pavillion*, 1980



fig. 12. Video stills from General Idea's *Test Tube*, 1979



## The Spectacle

In 1979, while artists-in-residence at De Appel, a centre for contemporary art in Amsterdam, General Idea produced their 28-minute video classic *Test Tube* (fig. 12) for broadcast television. *Test Tube* explored the artist's precarious position in the era of (pre-Internet) mass media and urged artists to become more aware of their media environment. Various appropriating the forms of a television current affairs program, a commercial and a soap opera, General Idea asked which would best help artists be effective in a culture saturated with mass media images and values. General Idea believed that only by seeing through the mechanisms of the mass media can artists then deflate these mechanisms and adapt them to their own needs. They presented their conceptual cocktails—ideas rather than actual drinks—*Youth*, *Pot O' Gold*, *The Ad-Hoc-tail*, *Nazi Milk*, *Liquid Assets* and *The Solution* in their research laboratory known as the *Colour Bar Lounge*.

*Welcome to the Colour Bar Lounge at the 1984 Miss General Idea Pavilion... We think of the Colour Bar Lounge as a sort of cultural laboratory where we can experiment with new cultural mixes and serve them up to you, our friends... an establishment dedicated to the eradication of abstract depressionism and the encouragement of artful research. Although the mass media, like a vast pharmaceutical complex, continue to develop new cultural elixirs of an unprecedented intoxication and manufacture them in consumable form, art remains a curious and elitist drink. Despite its unique flavour and heady cultural properties, it has never been effectively injected into the mainstream. Now General Idea is taking the necessary risks to isolate this potent mixture and introduce the infectious mutations into your home. These cocktails are the medium in which a culture is grown and introduced to the host... and everyone is a host at the Colour Bar Lounge! (General Idea, 1980: 9)*

It is no surprise that General Idea were “well aware of the International Situationists and *The Society of the Spectacle* on one hand, and of Marshall McLuhan, drug culture, digger houses, underground papers and free schools on the other.” (Bronson, 1997:

18) They used their cunning, wit and artistry to infiltrate and infect the museum and mass media systems in an attempt to bring artistic thinking to the masses. They knew as artists that they had to infiltrate the spectacle in order to change it and to give it new meaning.

Guy Debord (1931–94) was a prolific French Marxist theorist, writer and filmmaker. He is best known as one of the founding members of both the Lettrist International (1953–57)—“a motley assortment of novelists, sound poets, painters, filmmakers, revolutionaries, bohemians, alcoholics, petty criminals, lunatics, under-age girls and self-proclaimed failures” (Debord, 1958: 17)—and the Situationist International (1957–72), which was formed out of the surviving members of the Lettrist International and a group of avant-garde artists known as the Movement for an Imaginist Bauhaus. They were a truly interdisciplinary group. The Situationist International group was influenced mainly by the Dada and Surrealist movements and they published the magazine *Internationale situationniste* to get their theories out, to publicize their situations and to influence political and social change.

Debord’s seminal text *The Society of the Spectacle* (1967) is a rail against an alienating capitalist and consumerist society predicated on the spectacle. Its content is said to have been somewhat responsible for the May 1968 strikes and subsequent riots in Paris by disgruntled students and government workers.

Forty-four years later, are his theories on the spectacle still relevant?

Accomplished creative director and design educator Greg Van Alstyne thinks so. In his *Cyberspace and the Lonely Crowd* (1994) he re-examines Debord’s *The Society of the Spectacle* in light of contemporary man’s relationship to a growing digital and image economy:

*The relative poverty of any artificially generated experience seems quite evident when compared to a day spent in the country, our attention cast toward the infinity of events surrounding us. It is the desire for immortality and for control, the kind of control and self-empowerment which we are denied in everyday life, which drives*

*us. Virtual reality is not an antidote to the anaesthetizing built environment. It is simply a different formulation of the same drug.* (Van Alstyne, 1994: 3)

I concur, yet my impression of *The Society of the Spectacle* is that Debord’s call to arms is a call for self-emancipation. He wants us to take control of our lives. He wants us to think and act for ourselves, not through the false consciousness that is fed to us daily through television and advertising, but through a genuine self-knowledge and a determination to establish *truth* in this world—our perceived world.

As Debord states:

*Whereas the logic of false consciousness cannot accede to any genuine self-knowledge, the quest for the critical truth of the spectacle must also be a true critique... Self-emancipation in our time is emancipation from the material bases of an inverted truth. This “historic mission to establish truth in the world” can be carried out neither by isolated individuals nor by atomized and manipulated masses... It cannot be carried out, in other words, until individuals are “directly bound to universal history”; until dialogue has taken up arms to impose its own condition upon the world.* (Debord, 1967/1994:154)

Knowledge—particularly “genuine self-knowledge”—and an understanding of the history of humankind are key in our individual pursuit for self-emancipation.

French philosopher Jacques Rancière (born 1940) suggests in *The Emancipated Spectator* (2008, English translation 2009), that emancipation starts from the principle of equality—between the spectacle and the spectator.

*Emancipation begins when we challenge the opposition between viewing and acting; when we understand that the self-evident facts that structure the relations between saying, seeing and doing themselves belong to the structure of domination and subjection. It begins when we understand that viewing is also an action that confirms or transforms this distribution of positions... Being a spectator is not some passive condition that we should transform into activity. It is our normal situation. We also learn and teach, act and know, as spectators who all the time link what we see to what*

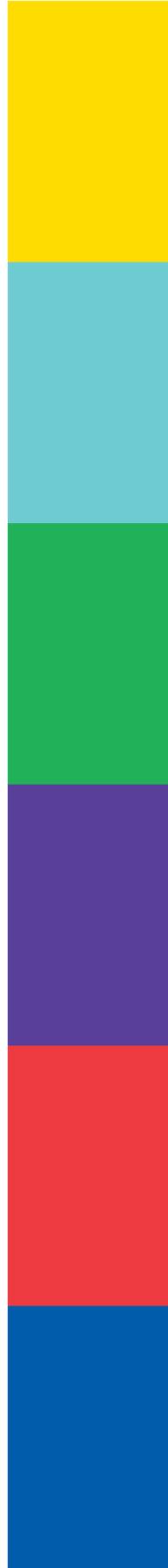
*we have seen and said, done and dreamed... It calls for spectators who are active as interpreters, who try to invent their own translation in order to appropriate the story for themselves and make their own story out of it. An emancipated community is in fact a community of storytellers and translators.* (Rancière, 2009: 13, 17, 22)

To this end, it is my hope that *The Colour Barr*—and its ability to bring people together through the experience of social, face-to-face mixing—will become a vehicle for dialogue, interpretation, storytelling, reflection and translation.

The conference *Rethinking Spectacle* took place on March 31, 2007 at the Tate Modern in London. Organized by London-based art historians and critics Claire Bishop and Mark Godfrey, the conference featured an array of speakers: Tate curator Francis Morris, art historian Ina Blom and performance artist Andrea Fraser. What emerged from the conference was a consensus that spectacle was alive and well—thriving as a matter of fact—both inside and outside the gallery and museum systems. Museums are hungrier than ever to draw in as much of the ticket-buying public as they can and are under greater and greater pressure to give people (and sponsors) a real *bang for their buck*—value in exchange for money or effort. Consider the spectacular installations by Olafur Eliasson, Carston Höller, Rachel Whiteread and Anish Kapoor in recent years in Turbine Hall at the Tate Modern or exhibitions by the Young British Artists, and others, that purposefully shock and amaze their audiences with powerful and immersive environments.

Visual art is not alone at staking claims to the spectacle. Film, architecture and design are all purveyors of this phenomenon—consider the advent of 3D film, star-architecture (Will Alsop's OCADU), and late 20th century shock advertising (Oliviero Toscani's Benetton ads).

Designers such as David Rockwell and Bruce Mau (*Spectacle*, 2000), take a lighter, brighter, more optimistic view of spectacle. They praise spectacle as being larger-than-life events that transform the way we see the world, and as forums for connecting



people and raising awareness of the power of shared live (not virtual) experience. This is contrary to the majority of theoretical discussion around the spectacle which take an opposing point of view. As *Spectacular Times* publisher Larry Law writes:

*We live in a spectacular society, that is, our whole life is surrounded by an immense accumulation of spectacles. Things that were once directly lived are now lived by proxy... The spectacle offers the image and never the reality. It is form without substance. Like the good entertainer it is, it leaves you wanting more. It does not satisfy. It cannot satisfy. It does not aim to satisfy. It offers only the dream of satisfaction.* (Law, n.d.: 3, 8)

No one believed this more than Guy Debord. In his *Comments on The Society of Spectacle* (1988), he wrote:

*In all that has happened in the last twenty years, the most important change lies in the very continuity of the spectacle. Quite simply, the spectacle's domination has succeeded in raising a whole generation moulded to its laws. The extraordinary new conditions in which this entire generation has lived constitute a comprehensive summary of all that, henceforth, the spectacle will forbid; and also all that it will permit.* (Debord, 1988)

And later in the preface to the English translation published by Zone Books (1994), Debord elaborated on the dominance of Western society and the techniques of the spectacle leading up to the end of the Cold War in 1989:

*All that needed recording was the fact that a sort of geological tremor had apparently taken place. The phenomenon was duly noted, dated and deemed sufficiently well understood; a very simple sign, "the fall of the Berlin Wall," repeated over and over again, immediately attained the incontestability of all the other signs of democracy. In 1991 the first effects of the spectacular modernization were felt in the complete disintegration of Russia.* (Debord, 1992, Zone Books, 1994: 10)

Activities like *détournement* (derailment), psychogeography and *dérive* (urban drifting), which sprung from Debord's early writings, were intended to be used as a form of resistance to the spectacle. They are still being used by designers and artists today. *Détournement* is a method of critique through which artists and designers appropriate materials, styles, or techniques (signs) used by dominant culture to re-create a new work that contains a meaning that is oppositional to the intent of the original—for example *Adbusters* (1989 to present), General Idea's *AIDS* (1986), Gran Fury's *RIOT* (1988) or more recently the work of British artist Banksy.

I used *détournement* when I designed the book and generic logo for Naomi Klein's international bestseller *No Logo: Taking Aim at the Brand Bullies* (2000, fig. 13). The colours and the stark imageless cover symbolize the anti-commodity fetish revolution that was at hand. *The Economist* culture-jammed our *No Logo* logo to read "Pro Logo" (2001, fig. 14). This signalled that corporate America was hip to the *détournement* cultural terrorist game and announced an all-out war for the hearts, minds and pocketbooks of the nation. That same week, unfortunately, Islamic terrorists hijacked planes and flew them into the icons of corporate America—the twin towers of the World Trade Center in New York.

In 2008, I used *détournement* again when I created a light sculpture (sign) entitled *Benefit of the Doubt* (2008, fig. 15) for Toronto's annual one-night spectacle, *Scotiabank's Nuit Blanche*. I recreated the word "HONEST" from one of Toronto's most recognizable store signs, Honest Ed's, and placed it on an historic site of spectacle, Court Square behind the old York County Courthouse—where the last public hanging in Canada took place. By placing the word "HONEST" in a new context, the original meaning is derailed in favour of one that is more contemplative to the viewer. In this instance, the spectators are no longer being enticed into a store. Rather, they are being asked to consider its new context, question their own integrity and possibly the integrity of the legal system in Canada.

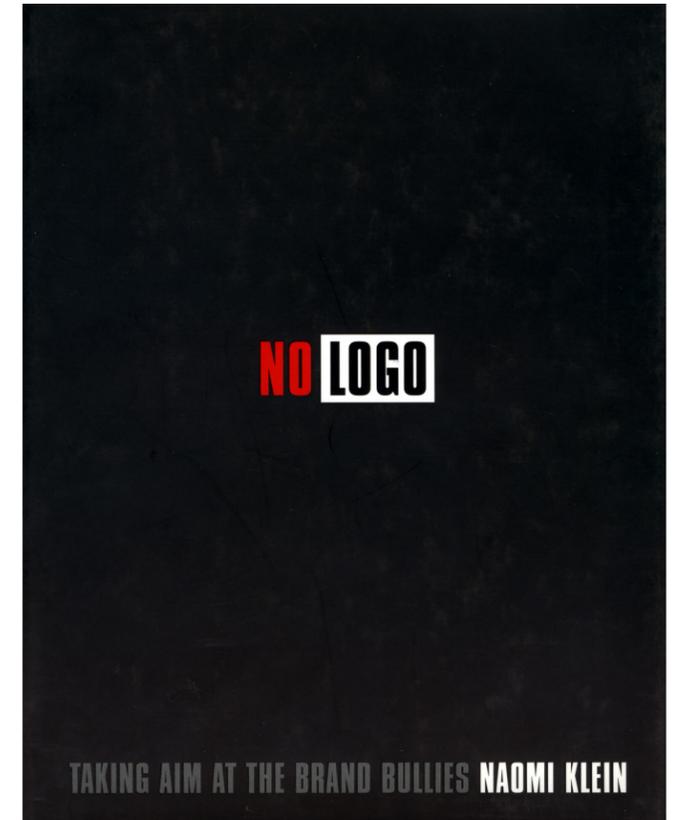
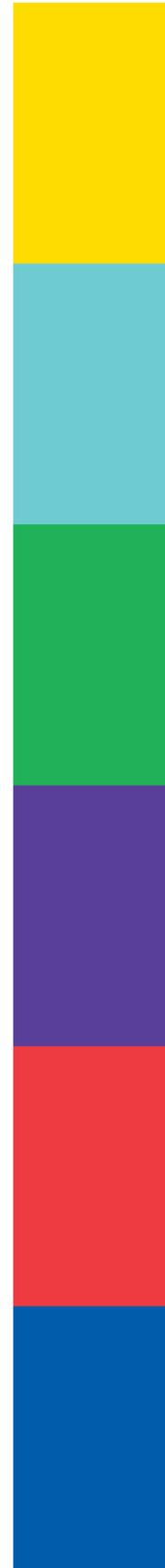


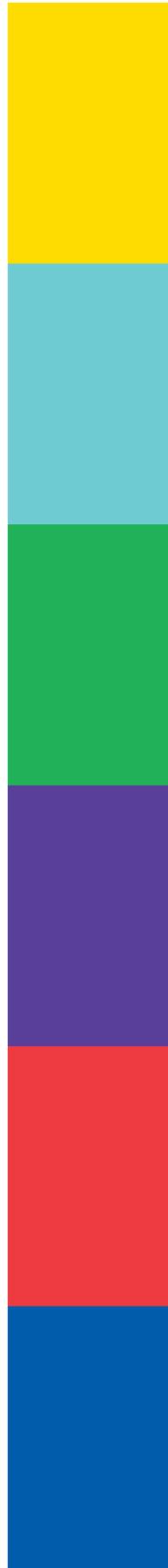
fig. 13. Naomi Klein's *No Logo* book cover



fig. 14. Cover of *The Economist*, September 8–14, 2001



fig. 15. *Benefit of the Doubt*, 2008



## The Sign

Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure (1857–1913) proposed a definition of the sign that relates the signifier—physical gestures, sounds and letters—to the signified—the image or concept to which the signifier refers. The sign, according to Saussure then, is the relationship that holds the signifier and signified together.

French semiotician Roland Barthes (1915–80) took Saussure’s definition of the sign a step further when he introduced the concept of secondary signification or myth—form plus meaning—as a second-order semiological system of identifying underlying meanings encoded into images, artefacts and practices.

*That which is a sign (namely the associative total of a concept and an image) in the first system, becomes a mere signifier in the second. We must here recall that the materials of mythical speech (the language itself, photography, painting, posters, rituals, objects, etc.) however different at the start, are reduced to a pure signifying function as soon as they are caught by myth. (Barthes, 1972: 696)*

This is the postmodern condition in which we all find ourselves living—especially in the current age of the Internet, globalization and weapons of mass destruction. The myth is the significance that we place on these signs. The significance is what gives these signs their value—and context is everything.

Saussure also formulated the idea that signs derive their meaning and significance from their relationship—their difference—to other signs within a network of signs.

French psychoanalyst and philosopher Jacques Lacan (1901–81) suggests that this theory also applies to people and their interaction with others. In “The Mirror-Phase as Formative of the Function of the *I*” (1949), he discusses the development of the ego and the Imaginary order when an infant first sees its reflection in a mirror:

*This jubilant assumption of his mirror-image by the little man... the symbolic matrix in which the I is precipitated in a primordial form, before it is objectified in the dialectic of identification with the other.* (Lacan, 1949: 621)

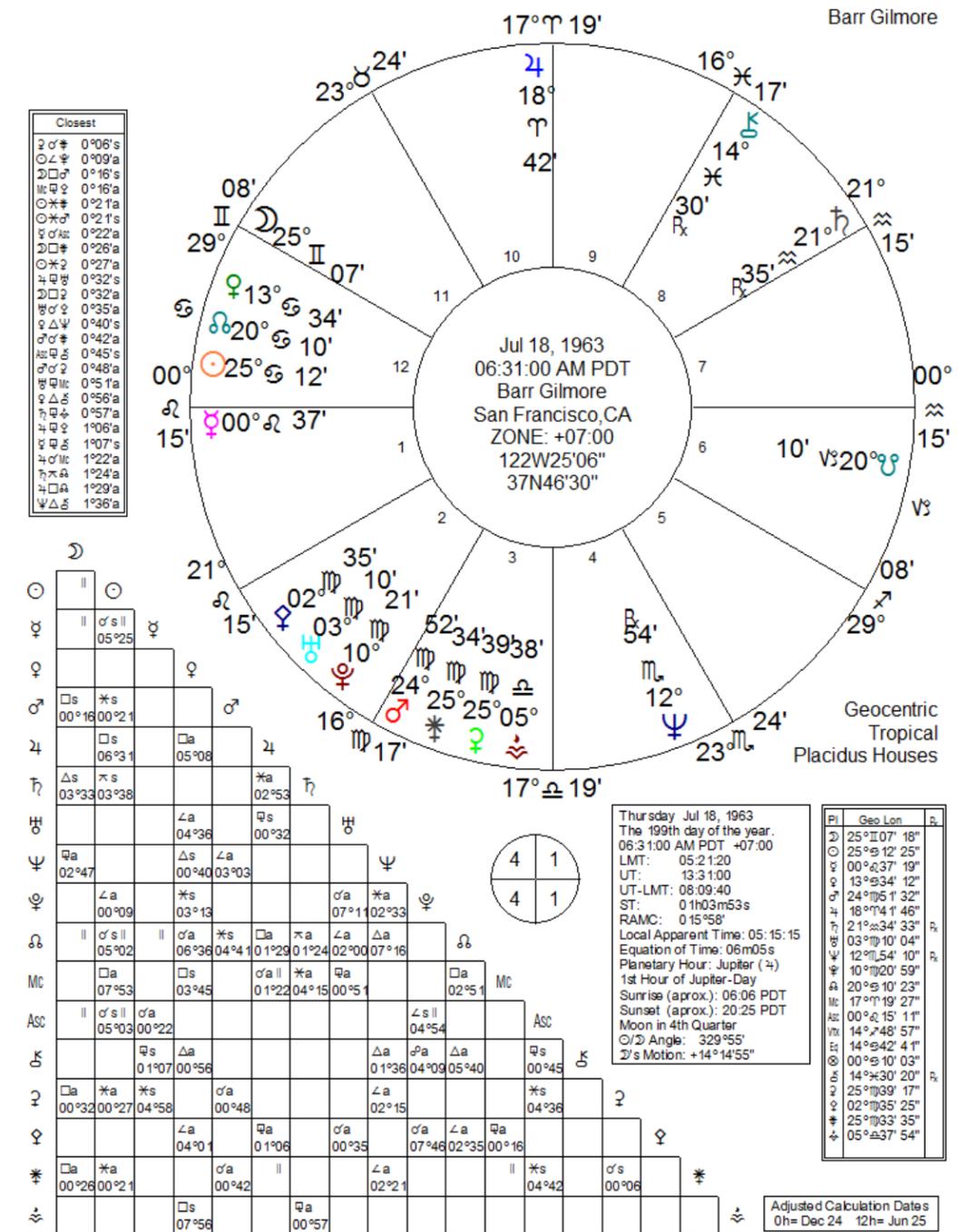
It is when the infant recognizes its image as differing from that of the Other—usually its mother—that Lacan’s idea of the Symbolic order is introduced into the human psyche. The Symbolic is the domain of the Other and the language of the unconscious mind, according to Lacan. He believed that our individual personalities are developed from a projection of our unconscious mind within a system of difference, or what he calls a socialization of the unconscious—the unconscious being a chain of signifiers.

It would stand to reason, therefore, that to become the ultimate version of one’s self and project a personality of self awareness, it is imperative that one get in touch—on a conscious level—with one’s unconscious mind. So, how does one do this?

### Reflective Autoethnography Research

I decided that I would use reflective autoethnographic research methods to develop my symbolic language. This meant getting in touch, on a conscious level, with my unconscious mind—the creative right side of my brain that often lies hidden in my dream life.

I kept a dream journal and enlisted the assistance of: a Jungian dream therapist (Camilla Burgess, MA, DCTP, OSP, CAPT) who I worked with for one hour every week for two months; an astrologer (Pam Youngmans of North Point Astrology in Portland, Oregon) who read my astrological birth chart (fig. 16); a psychic and clairvoyant (Diana Wiseman in Toronto/Ottawa) who read my aura, my past and foretold my future; a Tarot card reader (artist and aura photographer Chrysanne Stathacos, Toronto/New York, fig. 17); and a Medicine card reader (Pamela Hackwell, Toronto, fig. 18) who revealed my nine animal totems.



Pam Youngmans • NorthPoint Astrology • Voicemail: 425-445-3775 • E-mail: pam@northpointastrology.com

fig. 16. Astrological birth chart



fig. 17. Chrysanne Stathacos, *Aura Photograph*, 1996



fig. 18. Nine card animal totem Medicine card reading, 2010

According to Camilla Burgess' website,

*Swiss psychiatrist Carl Gustav Jung (1875–1961) believed that dreams are a useful means of discovering how we are experiencing our world. They can reveal the unconscious assumptions and intuitions that shape our understanding of our lives. Jung believed that the psyche, like the body, when provided with the right conditions, naturally gravitates toward health. He observed that it has the capacity to reach a solution to a problem through imaginative rather than rational means... Insight and understanding is without value, however, if one is not prepared to respond to and act on what one has learned. (Burgess)*

Astrology has been around since the third millennium B.C.. Western astrologers believe, for the most part, that astrology is a symbolic language, an art form, and a form of divination. Despite differences in definition, a common assumption of astrologers is that celestial placements at your time and place of birth can aid in the interpretation of past and present events, and in the prediction of the future. According to Pam Youghans' website,

*Astrological chart readings can offer perspectives and insights that will assist us in utilizing current planetary energies for their greatest benefit and for the highest good. (Youghans)*

Parapsychology is the study of mental phenomena outside the sphere of ordinary psychology and includes psychic readings, astrology and other divinatory techniques such as tarot and Native American medicine card readings.

According to Dr. Douglas H. Frayn,

*The tarot was thought to be a tool of mystics from the Renaissance period, although it was also known to be made use of by Kabbalah dream scholars as well as spiritualists from Mecca. Tarot is the study of card symbolisms and is interpreted by some clairvoyants as having fixed symbolic meanings similar to those found in dreams. It can be used in conjunction with astrology and dream work... it is a presentation*

of universal ideas by means of universal types. Carl Jung would call these universal ideas “archetypes of the unconscious mind,” especially when represented within dreams but also seen as an extension of the dreamer’s personality manifested through the cards. (Frayn, 2005: 68)

Having put myself through this analysis and having maintained a discipline of recording my dreams, pulling animal medicine cards, reading about their significance and focussing on what the planets are trying to tell me through astrology, I have begun to see patterns forming in my environment and my psyche that seem to extend beyond the realm of mere coincidence. I am not saying that I am psychic, but I am certainly more aware and self-aware.

The reflective autoethnographic research methods that I have drawn on to develop my own identity—a significant symbolic (graphic) language that represents me—may seem esoteric to some, but designers, filmmakers and artists—Philippe Starck, Tim Burton, Federico Fellini (fig. 19), Salvador Dali, the members of General Idea, to name but a few—have been using similar techniques in order to find the inspiration that lies hidden in their unconscious minds.

I will begin the development of my symbolic language with a discussion of Astrology. I am a Moonchild and a Water Rabbit. For many eastern cultures, the Moon Rabbit is a *pareidolia*—a significant vision or sign—seen on the face of the Moon (fig. 20).

Astrologers for the last thirty centuries have believed that the place and time we are born and the position of the planets predetermine the make-up of our individual psyches. As astrologer Pam Youngmans of North Point Astrology suggests,

*Your astrological chart, being drawn for the exact moment and location of your first breath, is unique to you. It shows your primary traits, potentials and challenges, path of growth and greater purpose. The information revealed by your personal astrology chart can be used in many ways: to enhance personal and spiritual growth work, to help you align with your purpose, to shed light on patterns and challenges, and to find meaning and resolution in current events. Astrology opens doorways to new perspectives and awareness, but perhaps its most valuable gifts are greater*

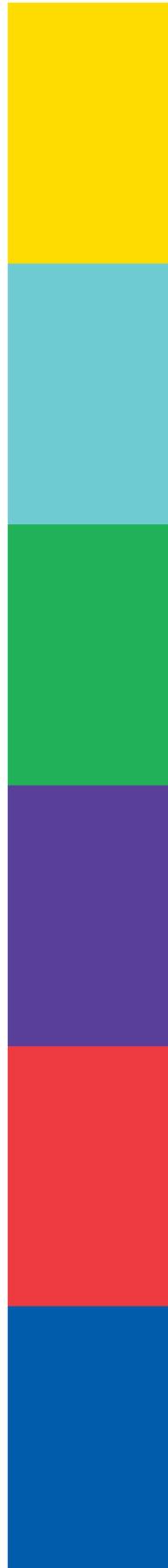


fig. 19. Still from Federico Fellini's *City of Women*, 1980

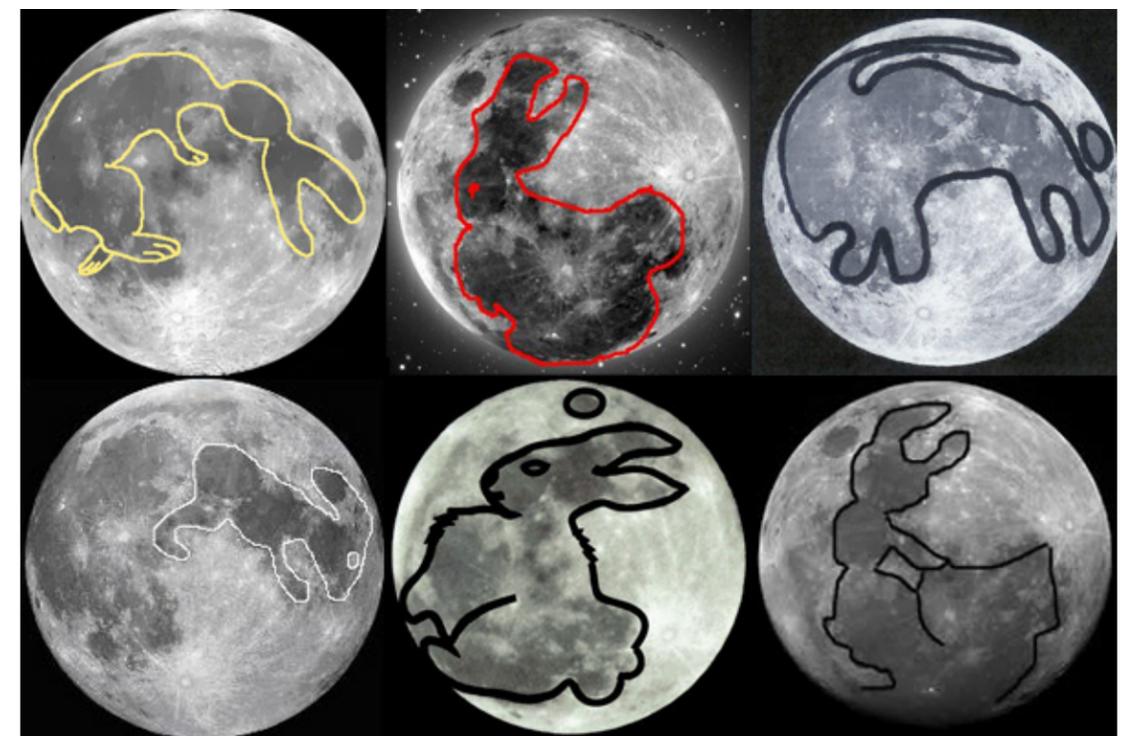


fig. 20. Various sitings of the Moon Rabbit

*self-acceptance and self-appreciation. The understanding of oneself gained through astrology can be an important step on the road to greater growth, joy and fulfillment.*

Astrology is a symbolic language of the stars and planets that surround us in the universe and if we pay close attention to what these signs and are trying to tell us, it can help to inform us when making major life decisions, according to Youghans.

In February 2010, I enlisted the services of Pam Younghans to read my birth chart and to give me some insight into my potential and how the planets might affect it over the coming years. From my point of view, most of what she revealed to me through the reading of my birth chart has been a pretty accurate account of recent emotional and physical events—both in an abstract and in a real sense—but it also confirmed a few things that I already knew about myself.

In essence, what astrology helps us to do is to *know thyself*, or at the very least, to give us some clues. Selfknowledge—if we think back to our discussions on the spectacle—is the key to navigating the false consciousness and emptiness of modern life.

In addition to my astrological readings, I also became interested in the writings of Carl Jung. His theories around the undiscovered self trapped within the unconscious mind, the analysis of dreams as a means of bringing the repressed unconscious—or the *shadow* self—into the conscious realm, and the development of a personal symbolic language within a system of collective unconscious archetypes were key, for me, in unlocking the imaginative and intuitive creativity that lie at the heart of my search for self knowledge.

As Jung states in the introduction of *The Undiscovered Self* (1957):

*Most people confuse “self-knowledge” with knowledge of their conscious ego personalities. Anyone who has ego-consciousness at all takes it for granted that he knows himself. But the ego knows only its own contents, not the unconscious and its contents. People measure their self-knowledge by what the average person in their social environment knows of himself, but not by the real psychic facts which are for the most part hidden from them.* (Jung, 1957: 6)

Here Jung is insisting that we get in touch with our unconscious minds if life is to have any *real* meaning. He believed that the analysis of dreams and dream imagery was one way of bringing the unconscious into the conscious realm as a path to self-knowledge and creativity. Unlike his colleague Sigmund Freud, who Jung argued believed that the unconscious mind was a “trash can that collects all the refuse of the conscious mind” (Jung, 1964: 32), Jung believed that dreams images were more than just archaic remnants and that they linked the rational, material world of consciousness and the abstract immaterial world of instinct and intuition.

*The general function of dreams is to try to restore the psychological balance by producing dream material that re-establishes, in a subtle way, the total psychic equilibrium. This is what I call the complementary (or compensatory) role of dreams in our psychic make-up... The dream compensates for the deficiencies of their personalities, and at the same time it warns them of the dangers in their present course.* (Jung, 1964: 34)

Jung’s suggestion is that if we disregard the warnings presented to us through dreams and dream analysis we can—and likely will—fall victim to our conscious conceits.

This makes me wonder if the *shadow* self is the conscious mind—the one that wears the public mask—and not the unconscious mind.

I have been keeping a dream journal (fig. 21). It is not every morning that I can remember my dreams from the night before—in fact, it is a rare occasion. Quite often I will awaken in the middle of the night from an amazing dream, thinking that I should write it down. If I do not write it down immediately, I will inevitably forget the details upon awakening the following morning. I am now in the habit of keeping my iPhone next to the bed and silently typing what I can remember upon awakening from a dream—whether it is the middle of the night or when the alarm goes off first thing in the morning.

As mentioned previously, instead of attempting my own amateur interpretations of my dreams, I enlisted the services of Toronto-based Jungian dream therapist and

psychoanalyst, Camilla Burgess. We have noticed a lot of reoccurring themes in my dreams that are worth noting.

Hills and large bodies of water factor prominently in my dreams, as do charred and blackened ruins and my own public nakedness—or semi-nakedness. Quite often I am on a hilltop (coincidentally, Barr in Celtic/Gaelic means hilltop) looking down at a body of water (remember, I am astrologically a water sign and a Chinese Water Rabbit) or diving into it. According to Burgess, bodies of water are often thought of in Jungian dream analysis as the unconscious mind. The symbolism is particularly fitting given my current obsession with looking at and delving deeper into my unconscious mind. Charred and blackened ruins often symbolize change and rebirth, and public nakedness or semi-nakedness also can suggest a change or desired change in one's public persona. This does not necessarily mean how others (or the Other) perceive me, but more importantly how I perceive myself and how I want or desire to re-enter the world as my ultimate self. These dreams are quite common for those, like myself, who are attempting to pursue a new vocation or career, or who are involved in academic pursuits where the fear and possibility of public and personal failure are quite real. The fact that I am aware of my nakedness and only want to get dressed out of public decency—not embarrassment—suggests that I have not quite reached my potential, but that I am getting there, according to Burgess. Care-free public nakedness (in dreams, at least) equals personal freedom.

As the studio assistant to the Canadian art collective General Idea from 1991 to 1995 (a year after the death of members Felix Partz and Jorge Zontal), I helped to produce and install their last travelling retrospective *General Idea's Fin de siècle* (fig. 22) as well as other installations in museums and galleries throughout Europe and North America. In the early years with this artistic trio, I worked with Felix Partz in Toronto while AA Bronson and Jorge Zontal operated out of a studio in New York.

Mornings with Felix would consist mainly of him recounting his dreams to me from the night before. I would take notes voraciously and we would discuss how some of

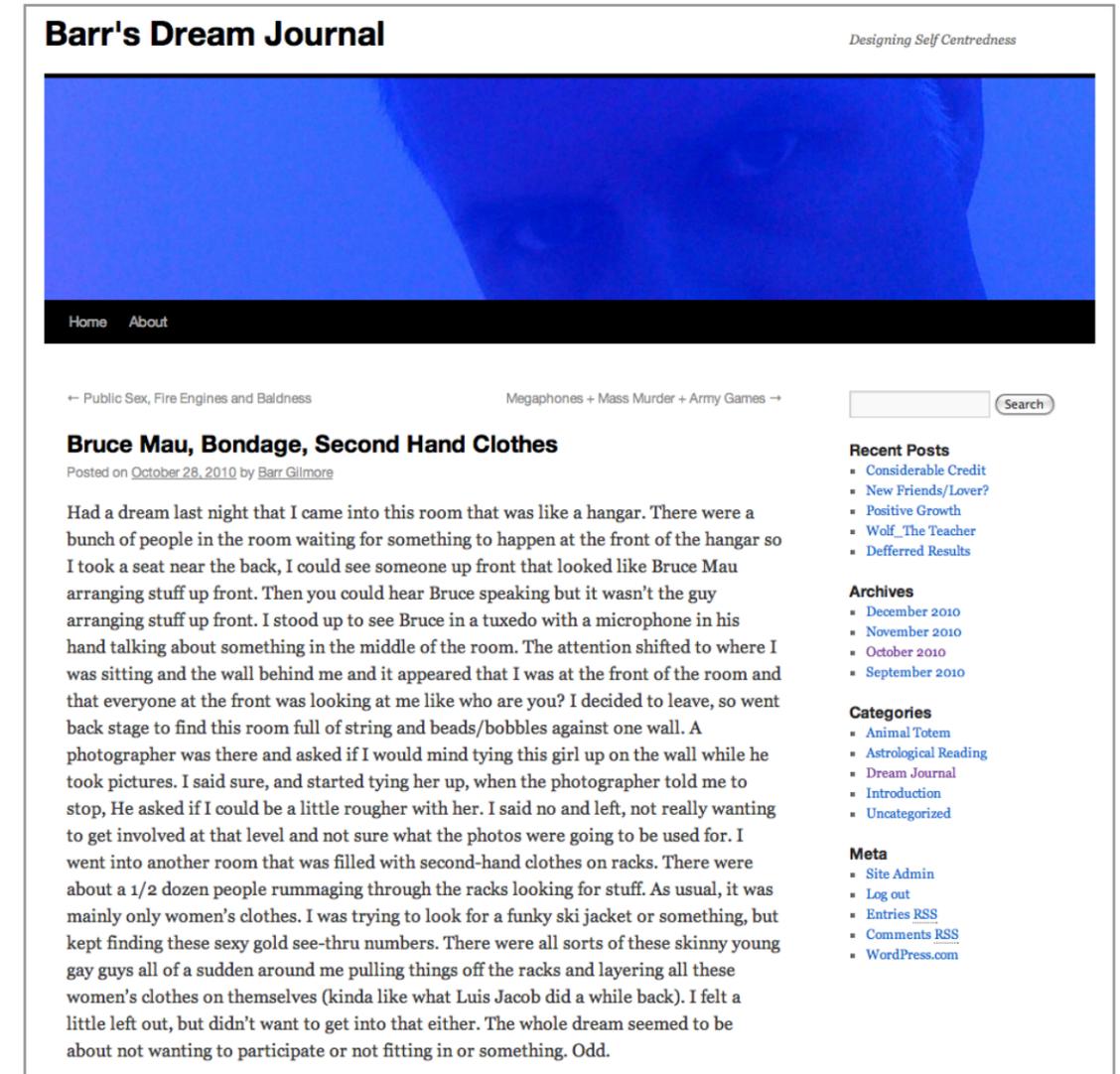
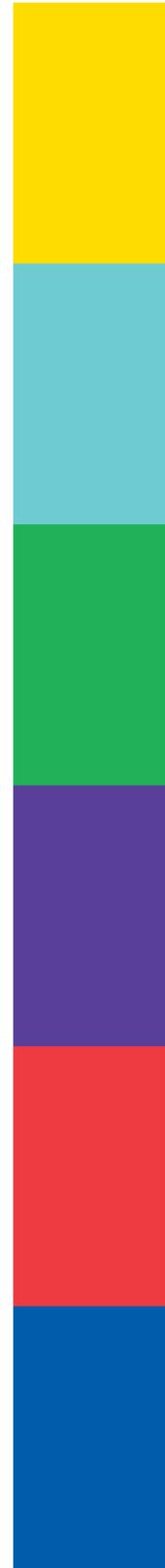


fig. 21. My dream journal, 2010–11



fig. 22. General Idea, *Fin de siècle*, 1994 and installation view of General Idea's *One Year/One Day of AZT*, 1991



fig. 23. Installation view of General Idea's *The Armoury of the 1984 Miss General Idea Pavillion*, 1986

these dreams and the symbols contained within them could manifest themselves into their artwork. I also know that AA and Jorge were also documenting and discussing their dreams in a similar fashion. They used this dreamwork to develop their (collective) symbolic language. General Idea's heraldic hall *The Armoury of the 1984 Miss General Idea Pavilion* (1986, fig. 23) is, in fact, a record of their re-occurring signs and symbols—ziggurats, poodles, test tubes, TV test pattern, pill capsules, skulls, Yen and dollar signs, amongst others.

Jung observed a link between the symbolic material arising spontaneously in the dreams of people going through inner crises, and the strange symbols found in alchemical writings and emblems from the 13th to 18th centuries. He came to realize that the psyche is structured around certain “archetypes” or a universal symbolic language that he referred to as the ‘collective unconscious’ of mankind.

*This collective unconscious does not develop individually but is inherited. It consists of pre-existent forms, the archetypes, which can only become conscious secondarily and which give definite form to certain psychic contents.* (Jung, 1996: 43)

From 1914 to 1930, Jung kept his own dream journal which later became known as *The Red Book* or the *Liber Novus* (2009). The book is written in calligraphic text and contains many illuminations that look like alchemical mandalas consisting of certain archetypal signs, symbols and colours. Alchemists believed that by meditating on each colour and symbol in these mandalas, “we should try to see ourselves as alchemists working upon our inner soul substance, purifying, distilling and transmuting it into a more noble state.” (McLean, 1989: 24). Jung made use of both eastern and western traditions of alchemy in his analytical psychology and found a commonality between them that led to his understanding of archetypes.

Camilla Burgess suggested that I begin by meditating on the mandala from the *Musaeum Hermeticum* (fig. 24. See Appendix C for an in depth analysis of this mandala

by Adam McLean), an early 17th century book which was used as an aid to the first stage of meditation on the first seven mystical numbers (McLean, 1989: 28). This may take some time—indeed, longer than the graduate program allows. I am giving it a try, but so far no results to speak of. The idea is that by meditating on this mandala for one half hour a day—looking at it carefully and trying to understand the symbols, numbers and geometric forms that underlie it—I will begin to unlock the symbols within my being, my thinking will become spiritualized and open to working with symbolic material, and my symbolic language will emerge.

What did come out of our discussions around the alchemists, however, was this notion surrounding their pursuit of the Elixir of Immortality. Up until then, I was only aware of their interest in mandala meditation and turning base metals into gold. It was only when I started to talk about my thesis and the idea that I had for the cocktail bar or lounge with Burgess that she made the connection with the alchemist’s elixir.

The Elixir of Immortality—also known as the Elixir of Life—is a legendary potion, or drink, that grants its consumer eternal youth and life. Strangely enough, in Chinese folklore, the image or symbol for the elixir is the Moon Rabbit, seen mulling the Elixir of Immortality for the moon goddess Chang’e with a mortar and pestle in the moon light—like this embroidery from an 18th century imperial robe (fig. 25).

I am a Water Rabbit and a Moonchild mixing seven cocktails at a sculpture-*cum*-functioning bar known as *The Colour Barr*. Coincidence or part of a universal pattern?

*It is Goethe who writes best about what it feels like to be an idealist in modern time. He writes about feeling the real presence of living interconnections with the natural world and living connections with other people, even though such connections may not be measurable or visible. And, crucially, he writes about the great universal spirits that hold everything together.* (Booth, 2008: 272–273)

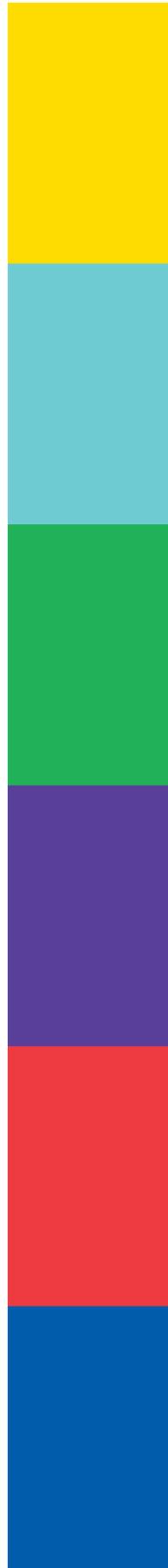


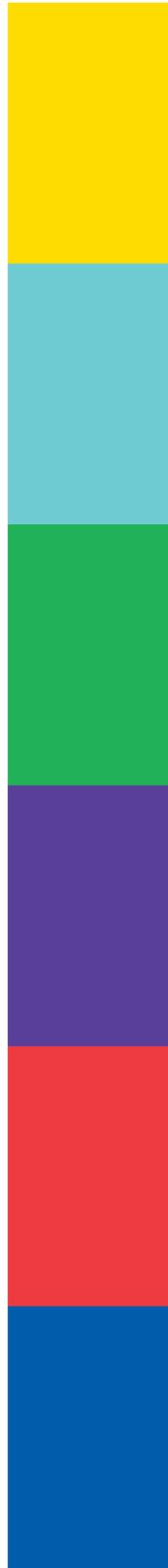
fig. 24. *Musaeum Hermeticum* mandala, 17th century



fig. 25. 18th century imperial China robe depicting the Moon Rabbit making the Elixir of Immortality



fig. 26. Installation view of *Colour Barr* at Queen Specific (formerly Solo Exhibition), July 2009



## The Conclusion

### The Colour Barr

Since I was a child, I have been called everything under the Sun (and the Moon): Chocolate Barr, Barbie Doll, Barr BQ, Barr Mitzvah, Barrfly, Barrf, Gay Barr, you name it. If it has the word “bar” in it, chances are that I have heard it or been called it.

I have been playing with the moniker of Colour Barr for the past 16 years—since the deaths of Jorge and Felix and the end of General Idea. Because of my close relationship with General Idea—they treated me like a member of their family—the name has always been a comfortable fit for me. I also grew up watching lots of television, so the test pattern was a familiar and easily identifiable motif. I felt as if it were my (birth) right to assume and consume its already potent energy.

I have produced graphic design works (Colour Barr Design, 1994–96), short Super 8 films with Heather MacKenzie (*Violet*, 2000; *Green*, 2001, *Sunshine*, 2002; and *Aegeo*, 2003) and a light sculpture (*Colour Barr*, 2009, fig. 26) under the Colour Barr name.

You would think that all this work that I have been doing over the past two years to find my own symbolic language would make me want to burn my past to the ground, so that I could rise-up like a phoenix from the ashes to live again in a different, younger form, with a new, fresher outlook on life. After all, who watches television anymore? And aren’t computer monitors already calibrated when you take them out of the box? These colours are so pre-Internet. Shouldn’t I be using Pantone’s new forecast colours for 2011? Or 2012? Do we even know those yet?



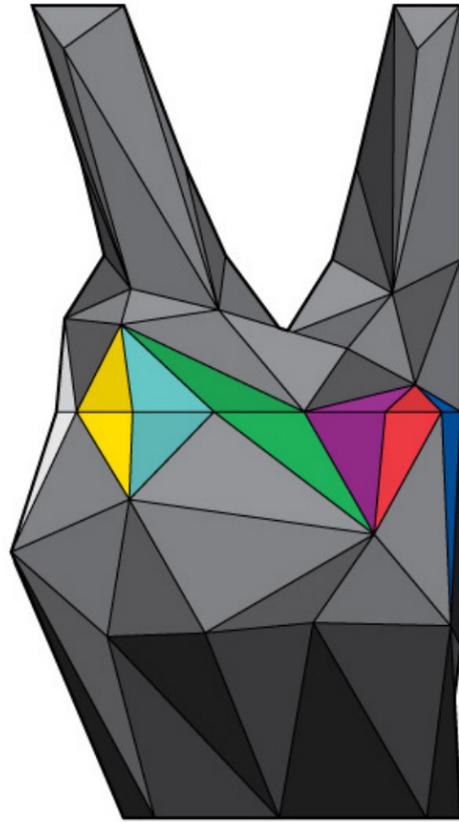


fig. 30. *The Colour Barr*, 2011, front view

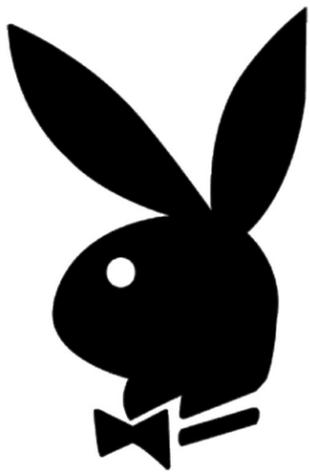


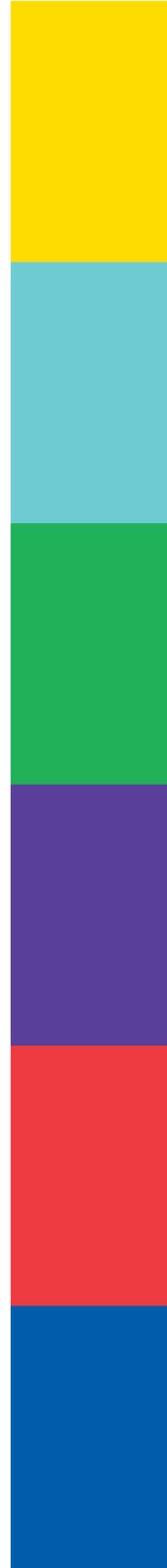
fig. 31. Playboy logo



fig. 32. Rabbit shadow puppet



fig. 33. Peace sign



I discovered that what I was looking to design and build was actually a piece of *functional art*—a work of decorative art for home furnishing.

From my reservoir of self-portraits—signs and symbols developed through dream therapy and parapsychology—I began to design, in earnest, my interpretation of a cocktail bar. Inspired initially by the idea of re-imagining General Idea’s conceptual *Colour Bar Lounge* from the 1984 *Miss General Idea Pavilion*, I also thought of my parent’s cocktail parties in the late 60s, my father’s membership in the Playboy club (fig. 31), and the picture of Bugs Bunny that adorned his Lancaster bomber in WWII.

*The Colour Barr* (fig. 30) is a *functional art* object as self portrait. It transforms from an abstract sculpture—in the form of a *shadow* puppet of a rabbit head formed from making a peace sign with one’s right hand (figs. 32–33)—into a functioning cocktail bar for a small cocktail party of twenty-eight people.

The number 28 is significant as it is the cycle of the Moon within a 13 Moon calendar. Equally significant is the number 7, as there are seven days in the week, seven deadly sins, seven notes on a musical scale, seven points to the Alchemist star which represents the seven mystical numbers, and seven colours in television test pattern (including white). 7 is made up of 3 plus 4. The three-sided triangle is a male symbol and is connected with the Moon. The four-sided square is a female symbol and is connected with the Earth.

There are twenty-eight faceted triangles that make up the face of the base of *The Colour Barr* and thirty-five (a multiple of seven) faceted triangles that make up the top face. I chose the triangle instead of the square because I am a male—a gay male, mind you—but also to represent the male trinity that was General Idea. Everything within the cocktail bar has been researched, considered and designed—right down to the cocktail menu, the ingredients, mixing instructions and the apparatus for each of the seven cocktails. Every decanter, glass, shaker, coaster and stir stick has its place within the bar and every effort has been made to economize on space in order to get the maximum effect within the sculptural object when the bar is closed.

## Reflexive and Qualitative Research

*The Colour Barr* is an interdisciplinary and collaborative effort on many levels. Both reflexive and qualitative decisions were derived from the symbolic language that emerged in my reflective autoethnographic research. I also have had to make qualitative decisions throughout the process of working with various materials, technologies and expert craftspeople, so that the integrity of my initial concept is maintained.

I worked with Chris Bahry at Tendril to develop the 3D model in Cinema 4D and Rhino. We first worked with an Illustrator profile that I had developed based on the silhouette of my right hand making a shadow puppet of a rabbit—my *shadow self*.

Because *The Colour Barr* was always meant to be a self-portrait, of sorts, I thought it important that the piece resemble my height (6 feet, 2 inches), but that it also be ergonomically correct for a countertop when the top half is flipped down to become a cocktail bar top (36–37 inches). I also wanted the bar top to be circular like the Moon, so there had to be a seven-sided half circle designed into the middle of the piece. I also wanted the bar top to accommodate the seven liquor decanters and an ice bucket or trough, so I developed a design for the two halves that could accommodate the decanters I had chosen.

The first 3D model that we developed, I took to OCADU's Rapid Prototyping Centre and had a 3D print made of the model at 1:10 scale (fig. 34, left). I felt that the fingers/ears were too straight—and that the piece had balance issues—so we bent them to look more rabbit ear-like and fixed some of the facets that didn't seem distinct enough. We output a second prototype (fig. 34, right), but it too had flaws, so we revised the model yet again. We did not output any more prototypes, but we altered the 3D model and elevation drawings a couple of times in order to get the look and balance correct. Happy with the final model and elevations, I sent the drawings (fig. 35), 3D model and flattened pattern (fig. 37)—using Pepakura software—for the *The Colour Barr* off to WSI Sign Systems in Bolton to begin fabrication on the piece.

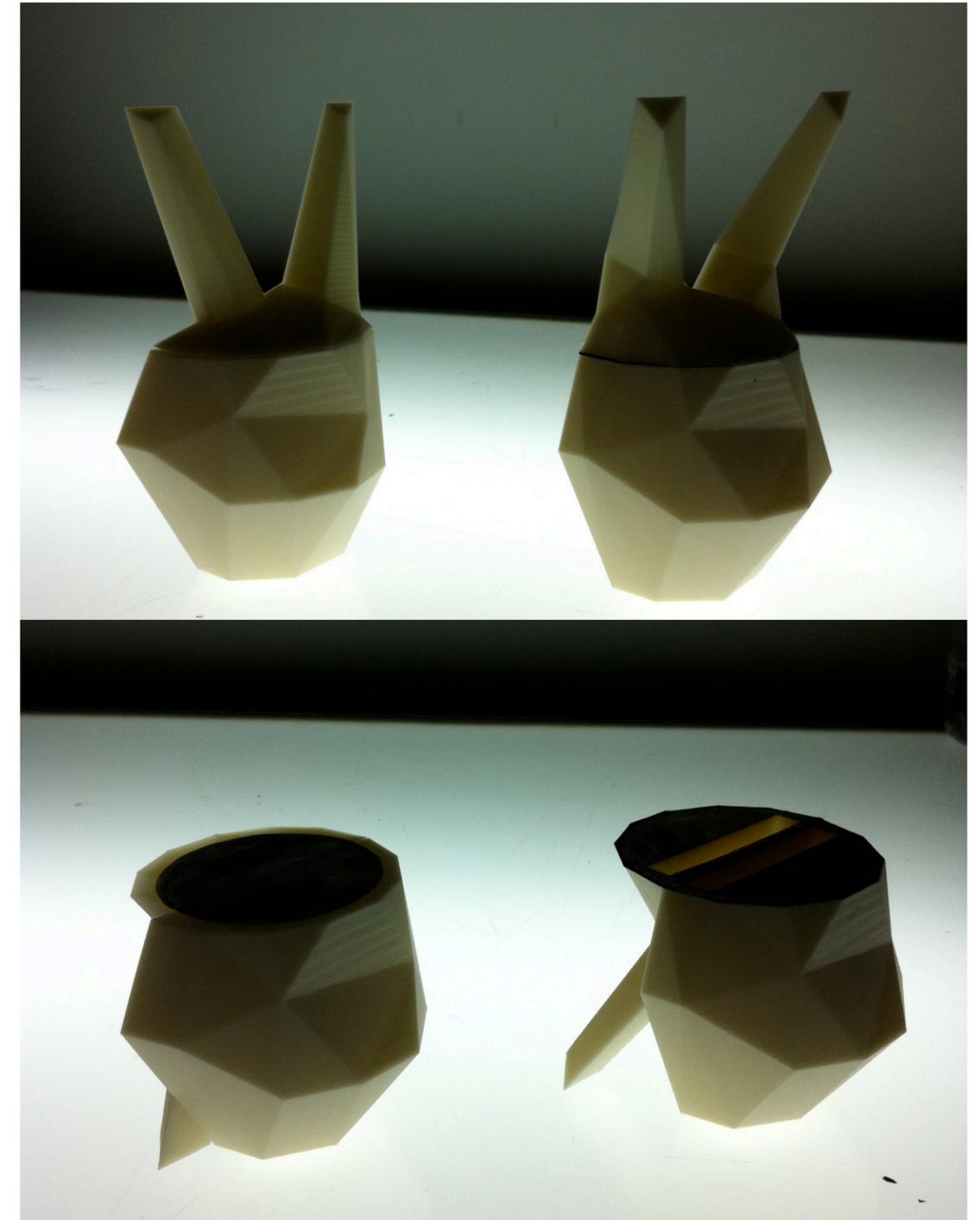
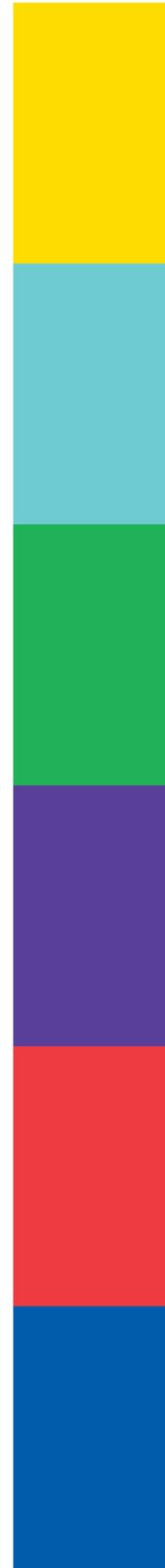


fig. 34. Early 3D prints of *The Colour Barr*, 2011

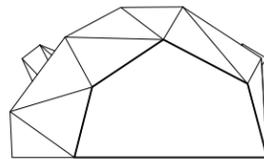
# THE COLOUR BARR

MAKING A SPECTACLE OF ONE'S SELF

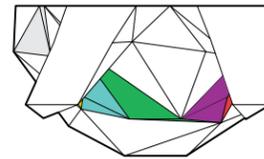
BARR GILMORE, RCA

MASTER OF DESIGN  
INTERDISCIPLINARY MASTER IN ART, MEDIA AND DESIGN  
OCAD UNIVERSITY

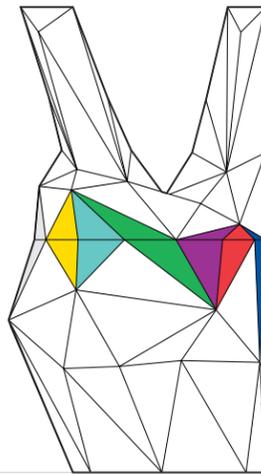
MADE  
867 DUNDAS STREET WEST, TORONTO  
APRIL 28 TO MAY 15, 2011



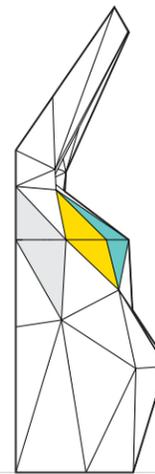
BOTTOM VIEW



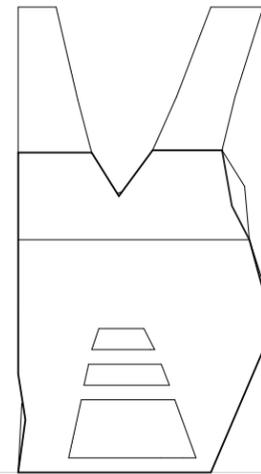
TOP VIEW



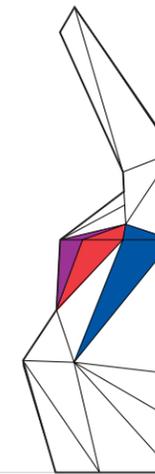
FRONT VIEW\_BAR CLOSED



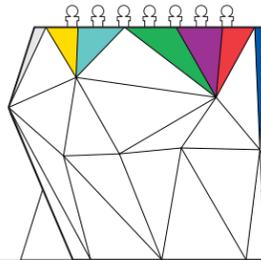
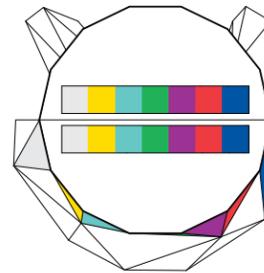
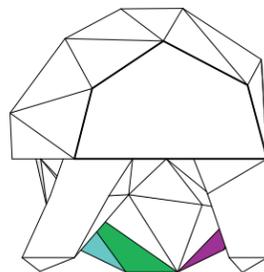
LEFT SIDE VIEW



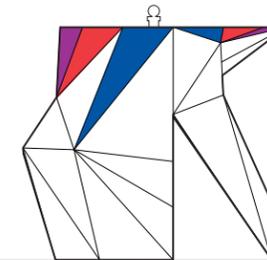
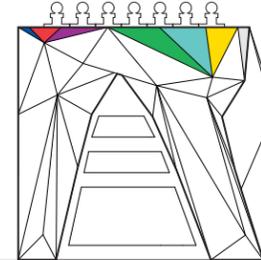
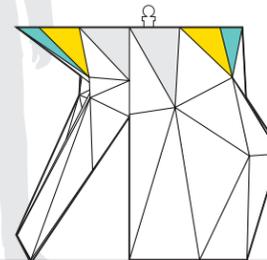
BACK VIEW



RIGHT SIDE VIEW



FRONT VIEW\_BAR OPEN



SCALE 1:10

## THE COLOUR BARR 'THE ELIXIRS OF LIFE' COASTERS

SCALE 1:1

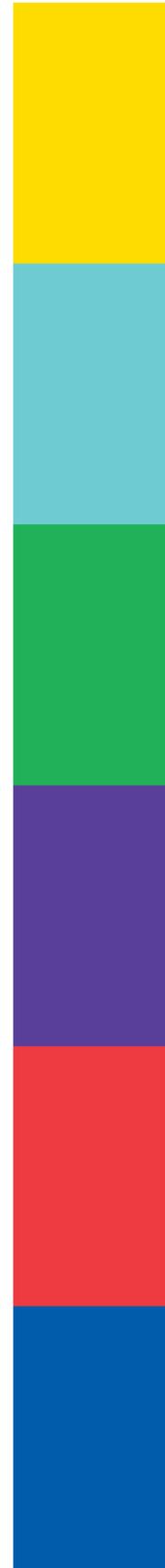


© 2011 BARR GILMORE

fig. 35. Elevation drawings of *The Colour Barr* and designs for *The Elixirs of Life* cocktail coasters, 2011



fig. 36. Xavier Veilhan, *Laurent*, 2005/06



The materiality of this piece was a huge concern from the start. Originally, I had imagined that I could make this out of wood. However, after talking with cabinet makers Lucas Brancalion and Jeremy Cox of Brothers and Sons, I realized this would be difficult to do without finding a tree trunk that big or gluing wood together and taking a chainsaw to it. Cutting out facets out of wood at precise angles, let alone gluing and clamping them, was not something that these seasoned craftsmen would even consider.

They initially suggested that I make the outside shell out of fiberglass and that they would fit the interior cabinetry into the shell, glue and finish the edges like a boat. It sounded great until I met with a few fiberglass companies and got quotes back for just the fiberglass mold of the outside shell—ridiculously expensive

That is when I met with a colleague from UBC in Vancouver, industrial designer and artist Dan Planko, who had experience with fiberglass. When I showed him the model of my piece, he suggested that I look at the work of Xavier Veilhan, a Parisian artist who he had assisted a few years back when the artist was working in New York. Veilhan makes these beautiful faceted portraits out of aluminum (or dense polyurethane) and then lacquers them in bright colours (fig. 36). The results are stunning and exactly what I was thinking of when I first imagined *The Colour Barr*.

2011 being the Year of the Metal Rabbit, I now thought that it was essential that this piece be made out of aluminum or stainless steel.

It was then that I contacted WSI Sign Systems in Bolton—who had fabricated my HONEST sign (*Benefit of the Doubt*, 2008) a few years back out of lacquered aluminum to see if they would be interested in taking on this project. They were and the piece is now in full-scale production.

We talked at length about the pros and cons of working with aluminum versus stainless steel. In the end, we decided to go with painted stainless steel for several reasons. Given the quick turn around time—6 weeks production in order to meet the exhibition dates at the end of April 2011—we had to ensure that the material could be

welded quickly, that the material would maintain its shape and that finishing (sanding down welds, for instance) would be kept to a minimum. Aluminum—though less expensive than stainless steel—requires a higher welding temperature and tends to distort at these high temperatures, plus more welding compound is needed in order to ensure a secure weld. Thus, more finishing is required in order to maintain the crisp edges of the faceted figure.

Working with the flattened 3D model that we created in Pepakura software (fig. 37), WSI Signs Systems’ engineers proceeded to shop drawings, a paper 3D model (fig. 38) and paint colour samples (fig. 39) which were signed off on, so that water jet cutting of the stainless steel and welding could commence. RCI Waterjet Cutting Services in Mississauga were subcontracted by WSI to waterjet cut the stainless steel (fig. 40) and RJS Metal Precision in Bolton was subcontracted to weld it (fig. 41). Once this was complete, finishing—polishing and painting—was completed at WSI and *The Colour Barr* was sent to Lucas Brancalion and Jeremy Cox at Brothers and Sons to have the ziricote wood drawers with sliders fitted (fig. 42).

Timing the production perfectly, *The Colour Barr* was delivered to MADE for final installation on Wednesday, April 27th—the day before the thesis defense and the first of three cocktail parties over consecutive nights. Brothers and Sons were also able to retro-fit the platform used for Tim Burton’s *Balloon Boy* (fig. 52) to fit the front window of MADE and give *The Colour Barr* some presence in the space.

Vinyl signage for the window was produced by Arrow Graphics (fig. 3), my bar apron was embroidered by Stitchy Lizard (fig. 43) the decanters were laser-etched by the OCADU’s Rapid Prototyping Centre (fig. 44), and *The Elixirs of Life* cocktail coasters were printed by DT Print Solutions and letterpressed, duplexed and die-cut by Lunar Caustic Press (fig. 45).

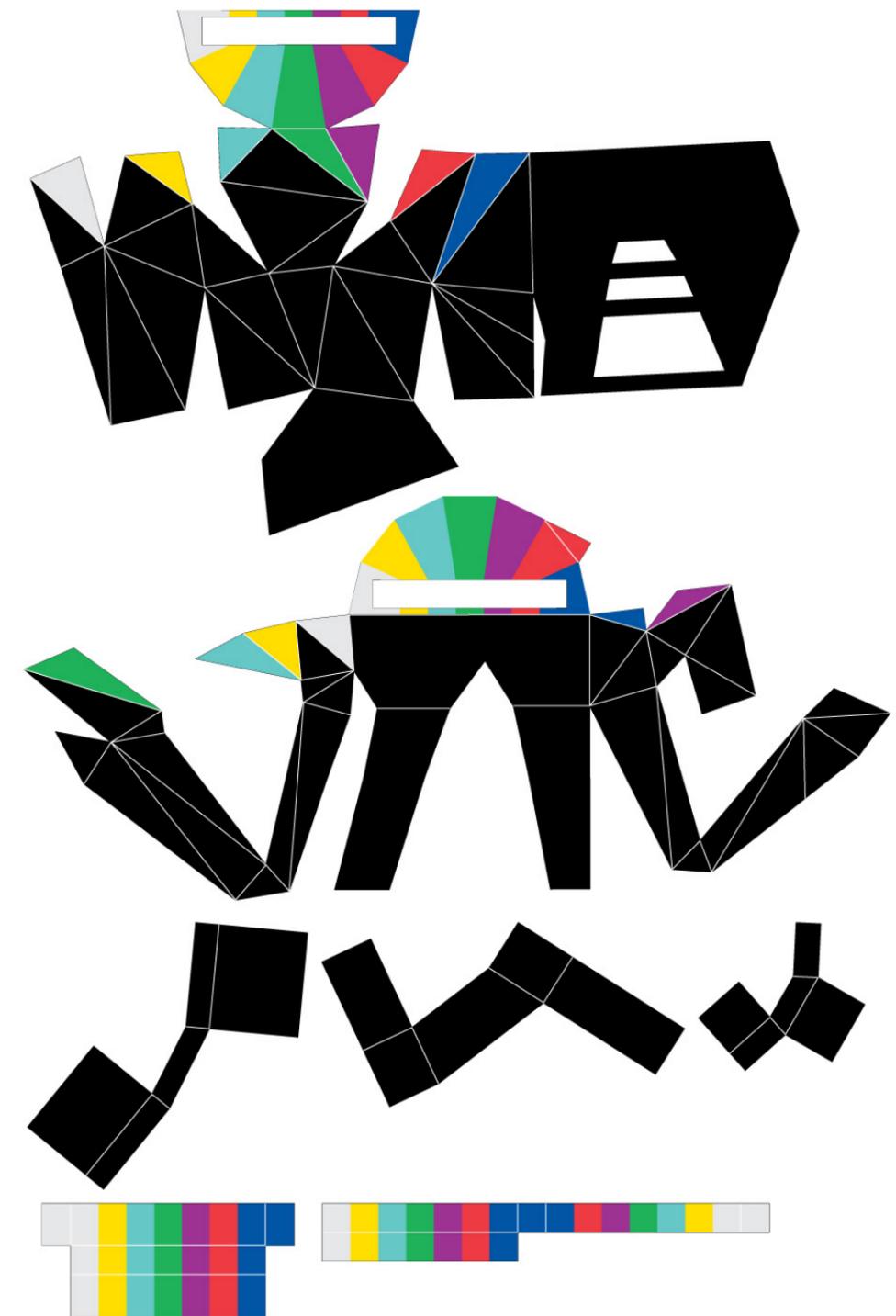
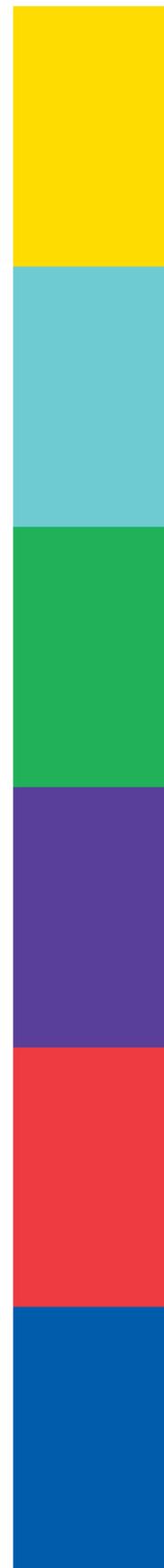


fig. 37. Flattened 3D pattern for *The Colour Barr*, 2011

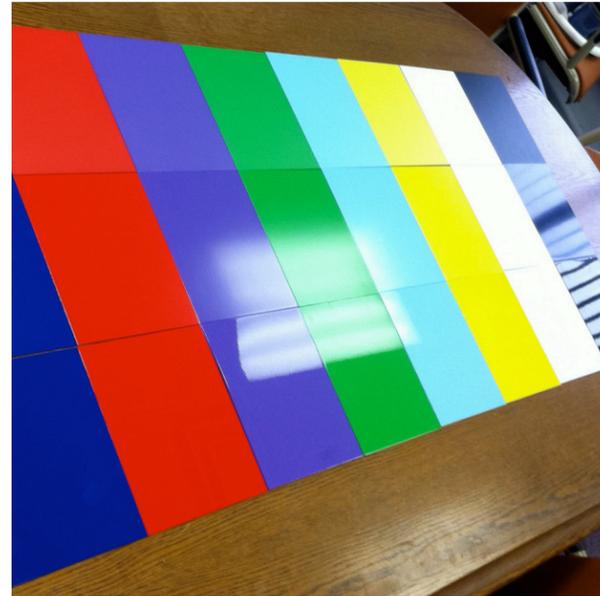


fig. 38 and 39. 3D model showing waterjet cut sections and paint colour tests for *The Colour Barr*, 2011



fig. 40. Waterjet cutting at RCI Waterjet Cutting Services of stainless steel sections for *The Colour Barr*, 2011

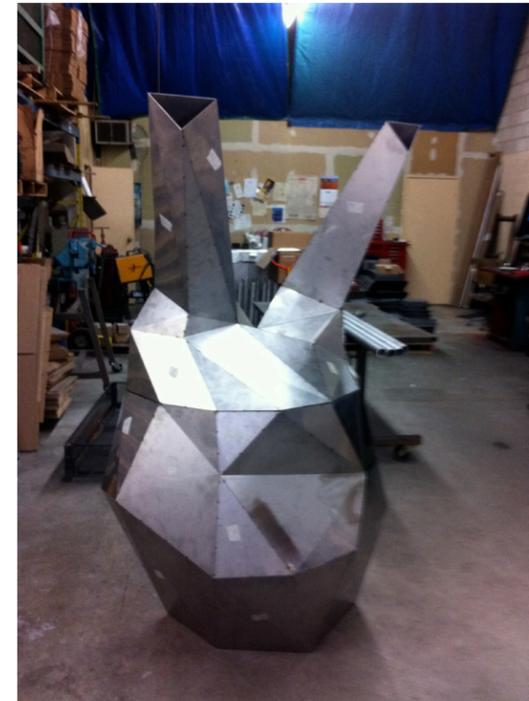
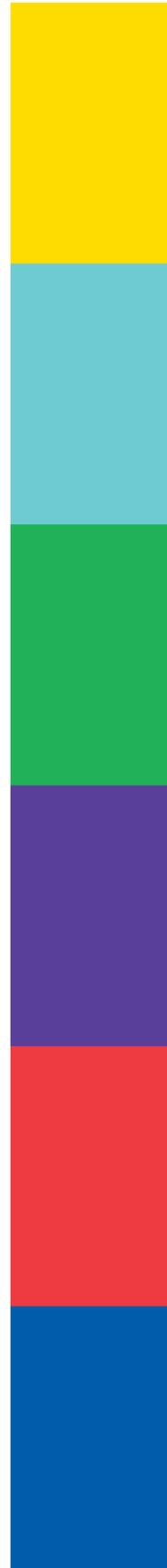


fig. 41. Welding of *The Colour Barr* at RJS Metal Precision, 2011



fig. 42 and 43. Wood drawers by Brothers and Sons and embroidered apron for *The Colour Barr*, 2011



fig. 44. Example of laser-etched decanters—*The Frog Prince*—for *The Colour Barr*, 2011

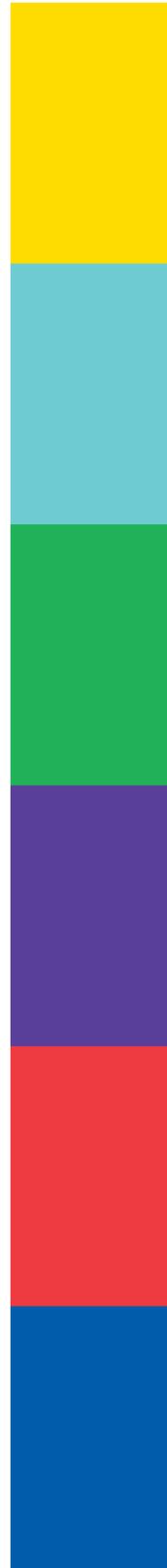
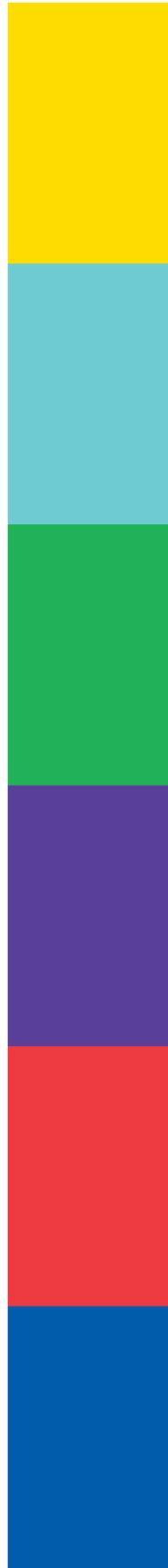


fig. 45. *The Elixirs of Life* cocktail coasters for *The Colour Barr*, 2011



## The Elixirs of Life

In addition to the design and fabrication of *The Colour Barr*, I also considered the design of the cocktails that would be served from it. I decided that each of the seven cocktails would be represented by a colour and an animal that appeared to me through my dreams, parapsychological readings and real life encounters. The following is an explanation for each cocktail—its symbolic meaning and how it came to be named and ultimately concocted.

### The Albino Squirrel

I pulled the squirrel card from the Native American medicine card deck on several occasions. It is a card that signals change and a warning to prepare yourself and to plan ahead. Like the squirrel that gathers nuts and stores them before the winter frost, we too have a tendency to gather too many *things* that no longer serve us. Instead of hoarding, we need to lighten our load and only keep those things around us that are important to us. Once we are able to do this, our hearts and minds will be set free according to the deck.

I am admittedly a bit of a hoarder and have felt the need lately to purge the *things* from my life that I no longer find wanted, necessary or useful. Over the period of a week last fall, I had pulled the squirrel card three times. As I was walking to a friend's place near Trinity Bellwoods Park that week, I saw not one but three different white (albino?) squirrels in the park. I had been to the park on many occasions but had never seen these squirrels before. A little Google-ing revealed that these friendly rodents were actually part of the neighbourhood folklore.

My white cocktail had to be *The Albino Squirrel*. Made with two parts white rum, one part almond liqueur and one part white chocolate liqueur, this nutty concoction is shaken with ice, strained into a glass and garnished with grated nutmeg.

White is clarity and encourages us to clear clutter both mentally and physically.

### The Dying Sparrow

Back in mid-October of 2010, I pulled the Wren card from the Druid animal oracle deck in the contrary position, two days in a row. The message that this card in this position gives us is to keep our egos in check and to not come across as a cheeky and dishonest upstart who does not honour those who came before or worked to get us where we are.

In my work at the time, I was being praised both privately and in the press for the design work that I had done on the *Essential Cinema* exhibition at the new TIFF Bell Lightbox and was also getting a lot of attention for the work that I was doing on the upcoming *Tim Burton* exhibition. I was flattered by the attention, but admittedly a little uncomfortable with the spotlight—especially knowing how much of a team effort both exhibitions were.

The morning after I pulled the Wren card twice in the contrary position, I was taking the garbage out. I heard something hit the front window and looked over to see a dying sparrow lying on its back and taking its last breath. Coincidence? Or the universe sending me a warning sign?

My yellow cocktail had to be *The Dying Sparrow*. Made with two parts tequila, and one part Pernod, this concoction is shaken with ice, strained into a glass over ice and garnished with a yellow licorice All-Sorts.

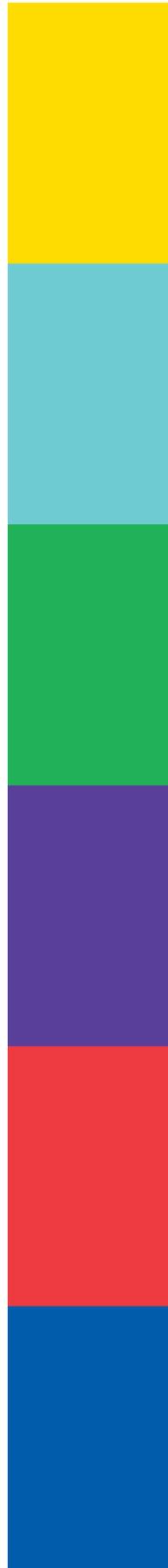
Yellow shines with optimism and energy and promises a positive future. It encourages communication and stimulates the nervous system and mental processes.

### The Spawning Salmon

According to my Nine Totem Animal medicine card reading by Pamela Hackwell, the salmon is my North animal and reminds me when to speak and when to listen. It also tells me to trust my gut-feeling and the wisdom of instinct and inner-knowing.

Salmon are renowned for their ability to return to their place of birth to lay their eggs—fighting uphill rapids and often dying in the process, in order to create new life. This is known as spawning.





My aqua cocktail had to be *The Spawning Salmon*. Made with two parts vodka and one Blue Curacao, this concoction is shaken with ice, strained into a glass over ice and garnished with a little (salt water) black caviar.

Aqua or turquoise is the colour of the oceans and, as discussed earlier, water and bodies of water in Jungian dream therapy represent the unconscious mind.

I dedicate this drink to the memory of my uncle John Lechkobit—a West Coast salmon fisherman who showed me that symbolic exchange was as valuable as any financial exchange.

### The Frog Prince

The frog represents transformation and cleansing on both a mental and physical level and is often associated with rain. Rain is transformative by nature, replenishing the dry Earth with water. The frog itself is transformative, starting as a water-breathing tadpole and growing into a four-legged, air-breathing form.

We have all heard the fairy tale of *The Frog Prince*—how a fair maiden’s kiss turns a frog back into a prince. It seemed serendipitous that the weekend of my defence is also the weekend wedding of Prince William to Kate Middleton.

It was natural then, that my green cocktail was named *The Frog Prince*. Made with two parts scotch and one part Creme de Menthe, this concoction is shaken with ice, strained into a glass over ice and garnished with mint leaves. Scotch and mint do not seem like an obvious mix, but when you try it, you will be surprised by its fresh, cleansing and transformative qualities.

Green is the colour of the heart chakra. It bridges the gap between the physical and spiritual worlds. Opening up the heart chakra allows a person to love more, empathize with others less fortunate and to feel compassion.

When I met with clairvoyant and psychic Diana Wiseman earlier this year, she said that when she envisioned my aura, she saw a large green heart hovering above my head, outlined in gold and glowing white.

### The Queen Bee

The Bee in the Druid animal oracle deck invites us to celebrate. Bees are all about community, organization and living in harmony. And what they teach us is that as human beings, we have to remember to physically come together in order to enjoy each other's company. Social networking over the internet or texting on our cell phones is not enough of a real connection.

A few years back, an unusually high number of honey bees died in Britain. According to some reports, radiation from a growing number of mobile phone signals had been the cause. Was it nature's warning that we are sacrificing an essential human need?

The regal bee made me conjure the colour purple or violet which historically is the colour of nobility and royalty.

My violet cocktail is *The Queen Bee*. Made with two parts gin—a favourite spirit of Queen Elizabeth II and her mother—one part Campari and one part Creme de Violette, this concoction is shaken with ice and strained into a glass over ice with crushed blackberries. It is a modern take on the classic cocktail Negroni.

Opening up your purple chakra or crown chakra helps tap into a deeper spiritual consciousness.

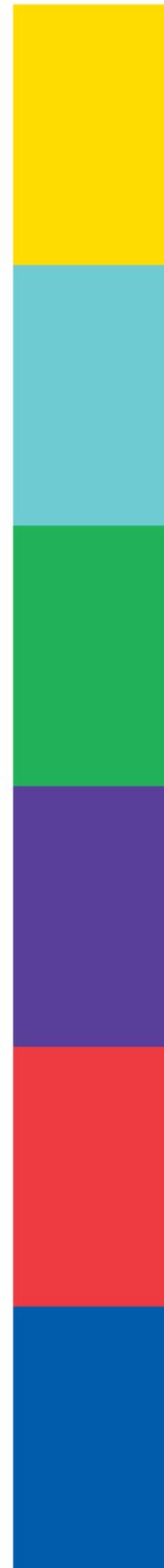
This cocktail is dedicated to my friend and collaborator Heather MacKenzie, aka Violet McFyre.

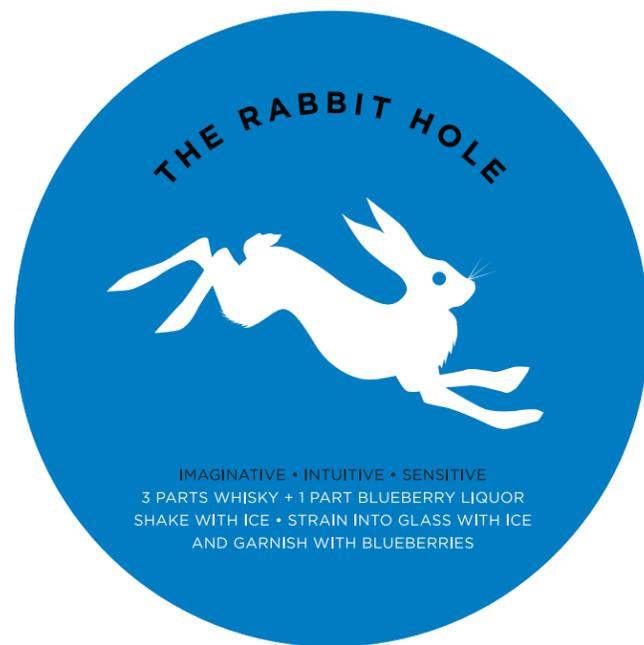
### The Gentle Moose

According to my Nine Totem Animal medicine card reading by Pamela Hackwell, the moose is my male protector and carries my courage and warrior spirit. The moose totem is a sign of wisdom and self-esteem and teaches us to know what to say, when to say it and to whom.

The moose has dignity, grace and power.

It is also a Canadian symbol. The moose—more than the hardworking beaver—symbolizes our nation the best.





My red cocktail became *The Gentle Moose*. Made with two parts Red Stag bourbon—a black cherry infused bourbon—and one part Canadian Framboise, this concoction is shaken with ice, strained into a glass over ice and garnished with a raspberry.

The colour red has many associations but my favourite would have to be its ability to stimulate energy, increase enthusiasm and to encourage action.

This cocktail is dedicated to my country. *O Canada!*

### The Rabbit Hole

Rabbit years in the Chinese zodiac represent peace. I am a Water Rabbit (1963). 2011 is the Year of the Metal Rabbit. The Metal Rabbit symbolizes sensitivity, prudence and wealth earned by hard work. You may not be able to express your feelings in words during this period, but you can by your deeds.

In the Druid animal oracle deck, the rabbit (or hare) is a shapeshifter that pays homage to the Moon and the water. Rebirth, intuition and balance are its characteristics.

As previously mentioned, the rabbit, the Moon and the colour blue are inextricably linked. Blue signifies intuition and encourages spiritual communication.

My favourite colour is blue.

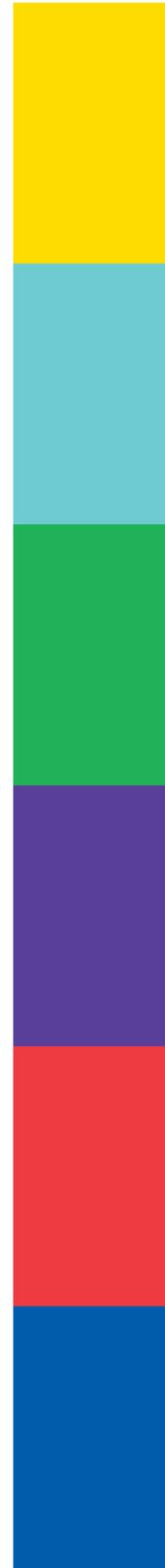
My blue cocktail had to be *The Rabbit Hole*. Made with four parts whiskey, one part Blue Curacao and one part Cassis, this concoction is shaken with ice, strained into a glass over ice and garnished with blueberries.

The rabbit hole features prominently in Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland* (1865) as the portal—a metaphor—to adventures into the unknown—the imagination.

*Drink me!*



fig. 46. Bernard Rancillac, *Elephant chair*, 1967.



## The Contribution to the Field and Future Research

### The Morning After

On a recent trip to Paris, I happened upon an exhibition entitled *Animal* at Les Arts Decoratifs (fig. 46). The exhibition compared the styles, forms and periods in which animals have been used in furniture, tableware, fashion, textiles, toys, posters and jewelry—illustrating the countless ways in which we have integrated the animal into our daily lives. Seven themes were explored in the exhibition—the animal as: material; finery; form; decoration; mirror of mankind (or the symbolic); hero; and mythical creature or monster. I was most interested in the themes of form and symbolism as they pertained to my work, and how *The Colour Barr* could add to this conversation.

Ultimately, *The Colour Barr* is the product of and a guideline to a process of self-examination and exploration. It is a promise of what can happen when one allows one's self to explore the deeper inner workings of one's unconscious mind and combines what is learned with a knowledge of how ideas mix conceptually and how design can help bring them to life using 21st century techniques and technology.

*The Colour Barr* is an example of how a reflective autoethnographic practice can become a gift of symbolic exchange to share amongst many—or a small community.

*The Colour Barr* argues that experiential design is not just about the object.

*The Colour Barr's* success can be measured by answering three simple questions:

Is *The Colour Barr* aesthetically pleasing as a sculptural form when closed?

Does *The Colour Barr* function as an ergonomically-friendly cocktail bar when open?

And did the invited guests enjoy themselves at *The Colour Barr*?

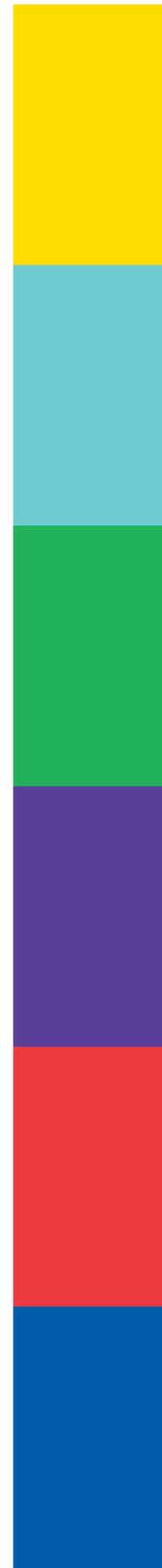
As a 'contribution to the field', *The Colour Barr* operates in an interdisciplinary field which encompasses both art and design—not to mention psychology, sociology and computer science. *The Colour Barr* is charting a new interdisciplinary terrain—bravely going where others may be too fearful or skeptical to go.

It is my hope that I have moved the interdisciplinary needle a bit further in terms of my reading and understanding of the importance of symbolic exchange, the negative and positive aspects of spectacle, and the inner workings of the human unconscious. Through my reflective autoethnographic and reflexive qualitative research, I have gained greater self-knowledge and awareness. I believe that what I have learned could and should help others to better understand their own creative potential.

This is my first attempt at designing and creating a complex piece of *functional art*. This is a prototype—and an idea—that will be developed and refined in form, function and materiality.

Perhaps the next frontier is the integration of theories around commodity fetish and objects of desire (and design) into my research and to push the field of material culture further.

I will continue to read voraciously, to explore my unconscious mind, and to meditate on the Alchemist's mandala.



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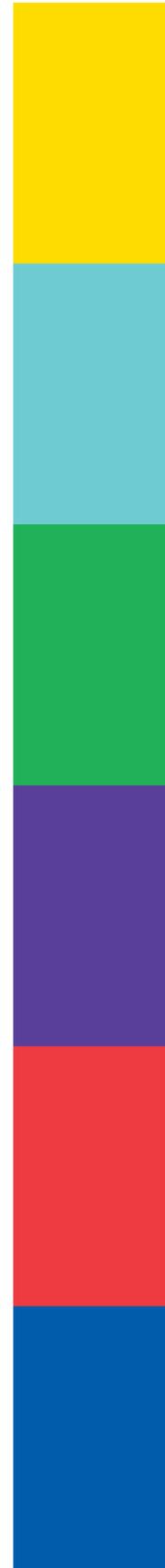
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## Appendix A

### The Past

In the first year of my graduate program, I focused my studies on issues of identity—both commercial (fig. 47, a graphic identity and custom font for The Gilder. framers, 2009) and personal (fig. 48, *I am not Helvetica* and fig. 49, *I am not trapped by my desires.*, both 2010)—and contemplated the idea of creating a graphic identity for myself.

During this period, I collaborated with my colleague Lisa Visser on a 'commodity fetish', quilted, king-sized, repurposed fur (coat) blanket (fig. 50, *Deferred Gratification*, 2010) and taught myself new skills (Flash, Sketch-up, amongst others) which I used to design two major exhibitions (fig. 51, *Essential Cinema* and fig. 52, *Tim Burton*, both 2010) and a featured motion graphic artwork (*Essential Titles*, 2010) for *Essential Cinema*, the inaugural exhibition at the HSBC Gallery in the new TIFF Bell Lightbox, Toronto. I am currently working on a third exhibition *Fellini: Spectacular Obsessions* which is now in Design Development (fig. 53). The exhibition opens in late June 2011.



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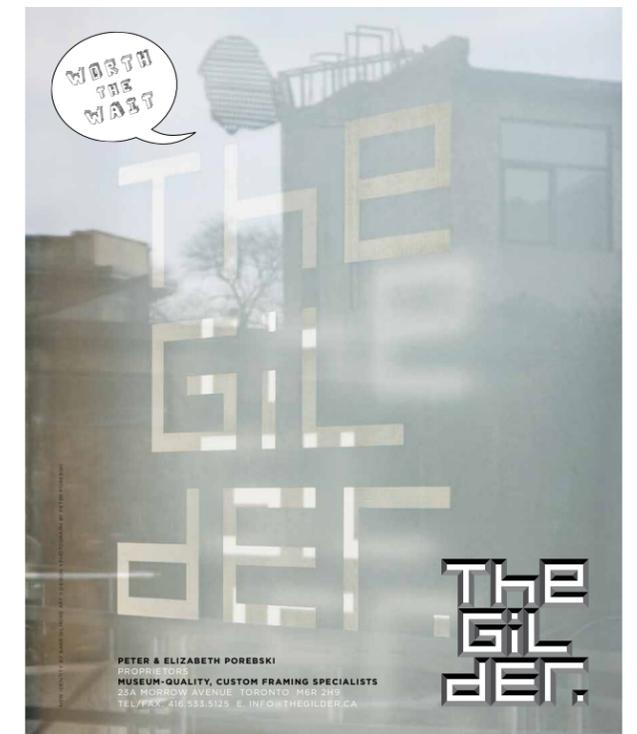


fig. 47. The Gilder. framers graphic identity, 2009

**I am not abject.  
 I am not blasé.  
 I am not cheap.  
 I am not disinterested.  
 I am not exotic.  
 I am not fearful.  
 I am not guiltless.  
 I am not homeless.  
 I am not incompetent.  
 I am not Jewish.  
 I am not kept.  
 I am not legitimate.  
 I am not married.  
 I am not narrow-minded.  
 I am not obsequious.  
 I am not phobic.  
 I am not quixotic.  
 I am not religious.  
 I am not straight.  
 I am not tasteless.  
 I am not Utopian.  
 I am not vegetarian.  
 I am not wooden.  
 I am not Xeroxed.  
 I am not you.  
 I am not zealous.**

The Anti-Barr or I am not Helvetica. © Barr Gilmore 2010  
based on Greg Curnoe's *Blue Book 8*, Art Metropole, 1969

fig. 48. *I am not Helvetica*, 2010

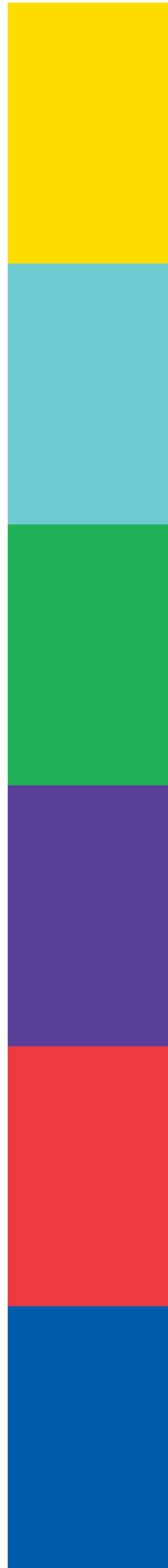


fig. 49. *I am not trapped by my desires.*, neon chandelier, 2010



fig. 50. *Deferred Gratification*, repurposed fur blanket, 2010, made in collaboration with Lisa Visser



fig. 51. Installation views of *Essential Cinema* and Guy Maddin's *The Hauntings*, 2010

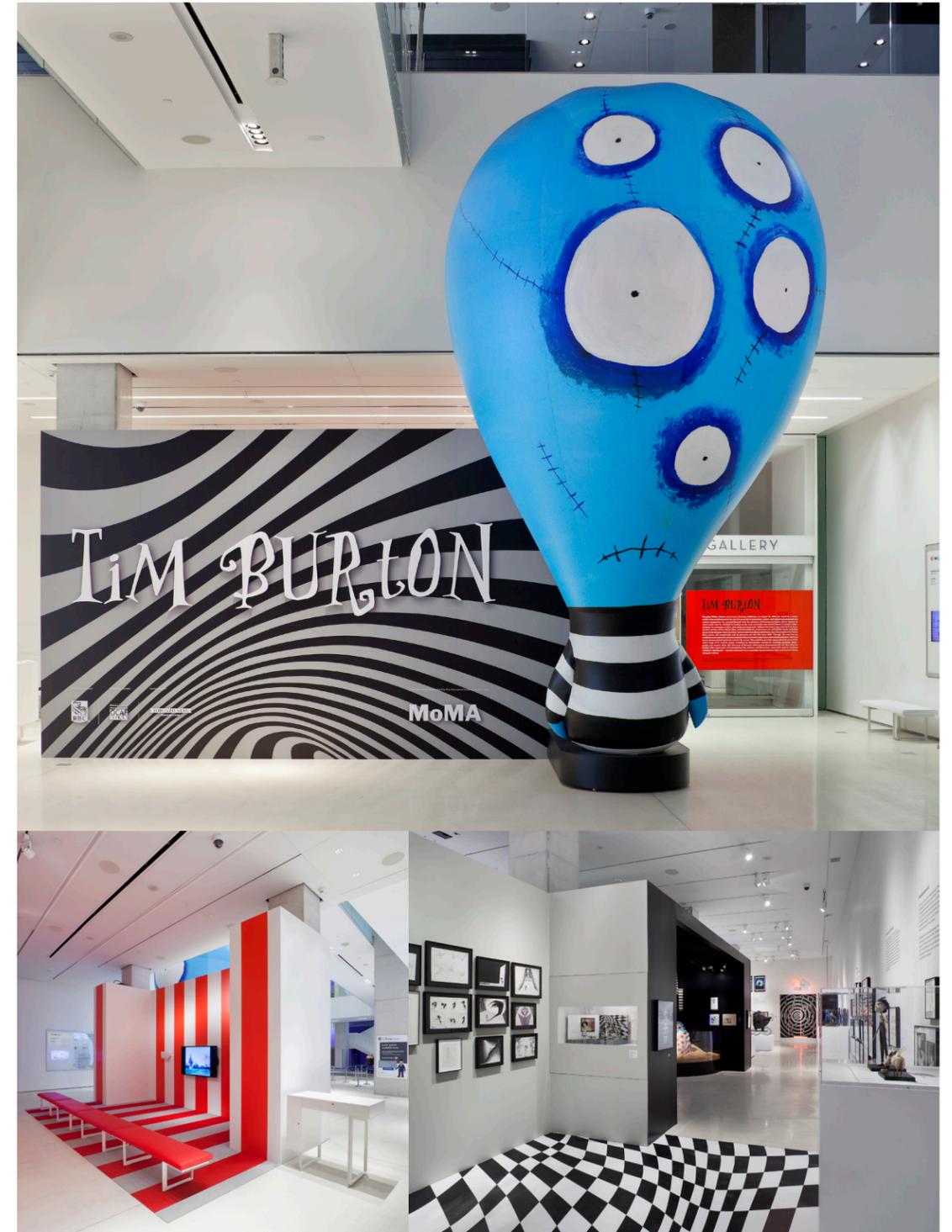
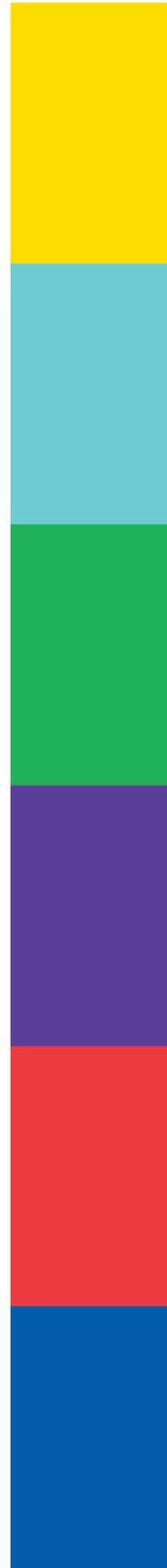


fig. 52. Installation views of *Tim Burton*, 2010

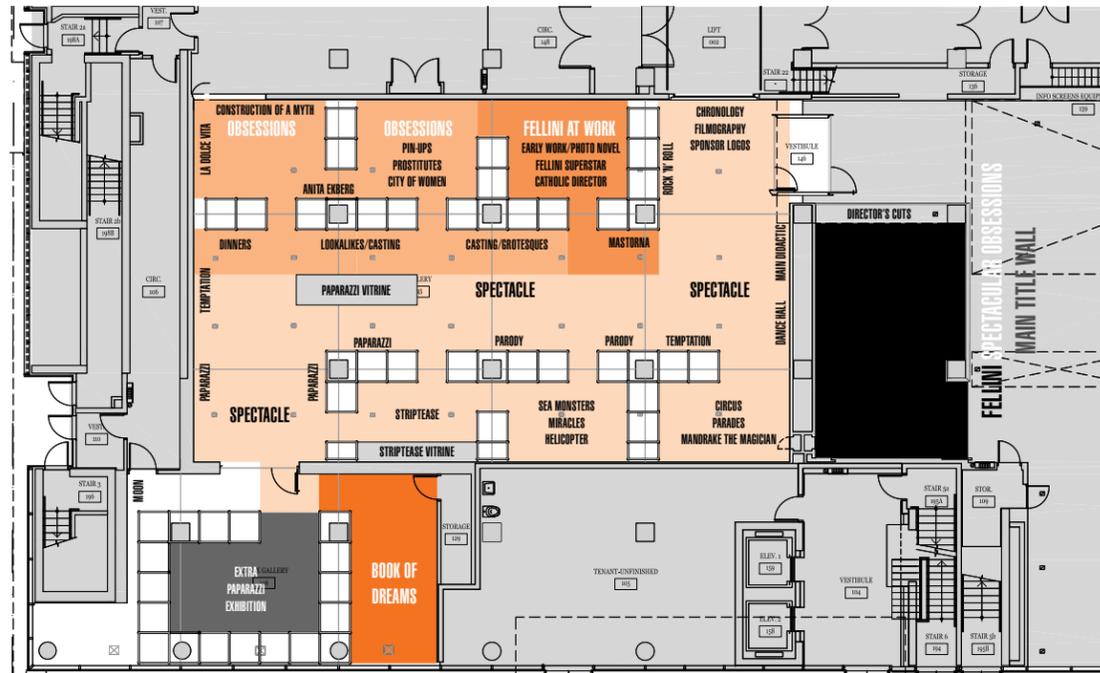
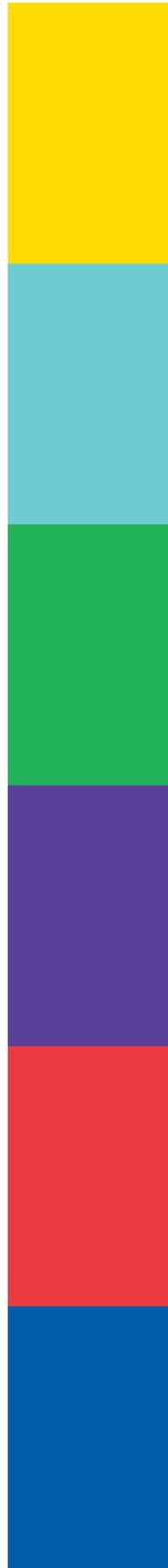


fig. 53. Schematic design for *Fellini: Spectacular Obsessions*, 2011



## Appendix B

### The Event

Three cocktail parties took place over consecutive nights—May 28th to 30th—at MADE to celebrate and christen *The Colour Barr*. Here is a sampling of photographs taken by Toronto photographer Dave Gillespie ([www.davegillespie.com](http://www.davegillespie.com)).



fig. 54. Dave Gillespie and Barr Gilmore at *The Colour Barr* on Saturday, April 30, 2011 at MADE, Toronto



fig. 55. Invited guests at *The Colour Barr* on Thursday, April 28, 2011 at MADE, Toronto



A SPECTACLE OF ONE'S'S

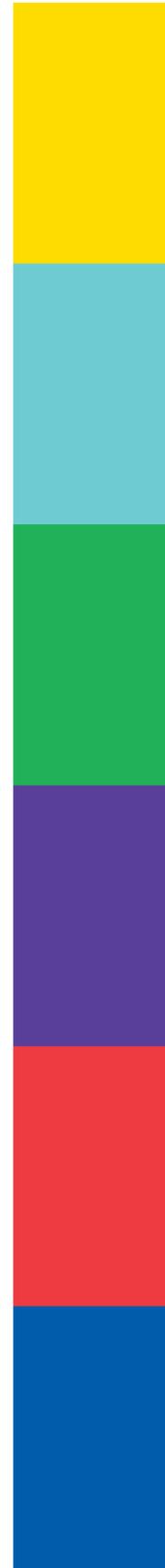
fig. 56. Invited guests at *The Colour Barr* on Friday, April 29, 2011 at MADE, Toronto



fig. 57. Invited guests at *The Colour Barr* on Saturday, April 30, 2011 at MADE, Toronto



fig. 58. Sara Diamond and Paulette Phillips from OCADU (top) and Shaun Moore from MADE (bottom) with Barr Gilmore at *The Colour Barr* on Saturday, April 30, 2011 at MADE, Toronto



## Appendix C

### The Alchemist's Mandala

At the center of all true mandalas is a space into which we can place our consciousness and integrate the symbolism arrayed around the center. The mandala shown is from the *Musaeum Hermeticum*, an early 17th century book, and was used as an aid to meditation on the first seven mystical numbers.

The number one is found in the totality, the wholeness of the symbol which arises out of the alchemist consciously placing himself at the center.

The number two is found in the figures of the King and Queen. The Sun King is mounted upon a lion which stands on a small hillock. He carries a scepter and shield. The Moon Queen is mounted on a whale or dolphin swimming upon the sea. Here we have the male and female archetypes.

The number three appears as the large triangle of Spiritus, Anima, Corpus. The Spirit is connected to the Moon, the Soul with the Solar forces and the Body with the cube of the Earth surrounded by the five other planets, i.e. Saturn, Jupiter, Mars, Venus and Mercury.

The number four forms the corners of the diagram, with, at the top, the salamander of the Fire element, the bird of the Air element, and at the lower corners of the square the Water and Earth elements.

The number five forms the pentangle of the alchemist's body. His right foot is on the earth, his left is in the water; his left hand holds a feather symbolizing air, his right a

torch or candle of fire, and above his head the two wings indicate the quintessence, the fifth element, or the spirit.

The number six arises out of the outer triangle of the number three in combination with the inner triangle of Sulphur, Mercury, and Salt. Salt corresponds to the cube of the earth, Sulphur to the solar forces of the soul, and Mercury to the lunar spirit.

The number seven, the final number in this series, is indicated in three ways in the structure of this mandala: by the sevenfold star of the planets; by the VITRIOL acrostic of seven words: *Visita Interiora Terrae Rectifando Invenies Occultum Lapidem*, ie. visit the interior of the earth, in purifying you discover the hidden stone; by the series of seven circles within the angles of the heptagram, which contain a representation of the alchemical process as a cycle from a death stage through a metamorphosis to a final resurrection.

As alchemists working through meditation upon this symbol, we begin to structure our inner being so that these seven mystical numbers and their interrelationships stand before our soul simultaneously. We therefore create within the ground of our being and independence from a rigid system, an ability to structure our thought and awareness through all systems. (McLean, 1989: 28–30)