

Colour Study of Group Behaviour and the Need to Control

Installation, 2005

Wood, metal, plants, drawings and photos



In 2004 I was taking a walk with a friend in Hampstead Heath, London by following a pre-established set of rules that dictated our direction. At one point we stumbled upon a little green house in someone's garden. Immediately I was fascinated by the symmetry in which a gardener had positioned the plants, so I decided to photograph them.



A photograph of flowers in a green house

In 2005 I came across this picture in one of the piles in my studio and was again intrigued by man's need to order, classify and control. I decided to look into this further by investigating my own need to control by studying insubordinate behaviour and chronicling the efforts to control it.

In Genesis 1, on the Sixth Day God is done with his creation and issues the unmistakable forewarning of man's need to control.

26 And God said, 'Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.' 27 So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. 28 And God blessed them, and God said unto them, 'Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.'

This dictated the first step in my execution of *the Need to Control*. Over a period of seven days I filmed the process of building a structure that would contain one hundred plants organised according to their colours.



The constructing of a structure to contain and impose an order on the plants and the support and maintenance it forces as a result.

Once this structure was established it became clear that the problem was more complex than I had initially imagined. Having imposed a structure onto the plants, they consequently required a new system of support and maintenance.

Naming and categorising has always preoccupied mankind, whether it be in biblical texts or in the field of Natural history, man has sought to reason nature by its own order. 'Naturalists tackled problems concerning diversity and regularities of life [with] catalogues listing ever-larger segments of what existed on Earth, and [by establishing] collections [that] housed the vast samples from around the world. The general public took a serious interest, as did governments—natural history held religious significance, economic importance, and aesthetic value.' *

Abiding by the rules of the Naturalists, I decided I needed to build a new structure to house the one hundred plants and so I moved them to a new location. Here I began the study of the problem by observing the plants and their surroundings on a daily basis. I noted the weather conditions, the light, water consumption and the subsequent effects these circumstances had on the plants. I kept a photographic record of each plant and made careful drawings and watercolour studies of the flowers. *Colour Study of Group Behaviour and the Need to Control* is the resulting detailed narrative record.



Observations in the narrative included the process of decay, the changes in the flowers' colours, and the subsequent repositioning of the plants. The study of their needs and the necessary adaptations made to their surroundings revealed the endlessness of pursuing unachievable order and control. The work became increasingly self-conscious and eventually turned into a full-blown investigation of the methods and representations themselves.



Pages from *Colour study of group behaviour and the need to control*

In *Colour Study of Group Behaviour and the Need to Control* it was finally *I* who tragically embodied this eternal pursuit for order—creating still more documents that eagerly attempt to establish Reason despite the absolute futility of this ambition.

* Paul Lawrence Farber, *Finding Order in Nature, The Naturalists Tradition from Linnaeus to E.O. Wilson* (The Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore), p. 55.