

**The Power of Pink:**  
**Reimagining the history of pink's stereotypes through**  
**society and contemporary art**

BA Fine Art

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## Preface

*'Color is a social phenomenon. It is society that 'makes' colour, defines it, gives it its meaning, constructs its codes and values, establishes its uses, and determines whether it is acceptable or not. The artist, the intellectual, human biology, and even nature are ultimately irrelevant to this processes of ascribing meaning to colour the issues surrounding colour are above all social issues because human beings live in society and not in solitude'* (Pastoureau, 2001, p. 10).

## Prologue

I was never really the type to break away from regulations. I always stood by the life I was given. Working six days a week, and having one day to myself, a day of tranquility. That was my life.

My name is Lucy. For some time now I have worked at the factory producing micro technology. I wasn't aware at the time that I was involved in the construction of control. I was part of a section of the process, so that we never knew the whole truth about what we made. When I found out that it was all a lie, it was hard to imagine anything else.

After the usual 12-hour shift, I am very tired, but I tend to walk the long way home because I enjoy crossing the park. The surrounding buildings on all four corners of the park tower high into the air before they reach the sky that they support; this area is called the Capital. Great avenues between these towers cut through to the edge of the biosphere, where the only gateways are sealed. There are more buildings in blocks all the way along the avenues that tower up, getting less tall the farther away until they are no more than one floor. Stretching for miles all around me. It is said that this domed false-sky was created to keep us safe, that when the world was destroyed, they created this place to keep us from toxicities and war.

59 years ago in 2026, earth was destroyed in a long agonizing war, a massacre of chemicals and hydrogen bombs. Triggered by two extreme world leaders. The planet became uninhabitable and toxic.

Now in 2085 we have only one leader in control of our world, there is no one to oppose our President therefore we are safe. This world is known as P-618, its construction began in

2035, and this year is the 50<sup>th</sup> celebration of freedom and tranquility. I celebrated my 27<sup>th</sup> year of gratitude to the leader the same week.

In the beginning of P-618, there weren't many of us, so a system was created whereby the healthiest people were chosen to be birthers, to procreate as many times as possible. At the age of five each child is then removed from their birthers to be brought up in groups, supervised and classified by agents. Depending on our strengths and loyalty we are assigned our hierarchical class. I am a class C citizen: constructor, others are honoured to become birthers (class B) and more rarely those who are most supremely obedient become class A: the agents.

Sometimes I hear rumours of rebels, but they either disappear or are given a new implant. I had never understood why one would rebel, what was there to be unhappy about?

I often like to sit on a bench at the end of the park, to close my eyes briefly. As I reopen them the brilliant colour floods back into my eyes. I look at the grass near the path, the trunks of the trees, the branches and the leaves, the towering buildings, the sky, and the setting sun, as it all glistens with pink. I feel a rush of tranquillity. It is beautiful.

Nighttime's are different, my dreams make me uneasy, and I see things that unsettle me. However, every morning when I wake up and open my eyes it fades away, as if it had never been there.

It is in my dreams that the colour fades. The protection and tranquility that it brings disappears and the utopia that we live in twists into a dystopia. A switch flicks, and the world is reversed. In the darkness I see people locked into themselves, their own unhappiness and fear suppressed. So deeply they are unable to fight back. There is cruelty in not knowing one's own

thoughts and feelings.

Strangely enough it is during the night that I have a feeling of being myself. I am full of rage and sadness. I am fearful of where we are and why there is no free will. I think about how I will fight, overcome, contribute to change. But every morning when the alarm rings we are awoken from reality and begin to dream again.

There is an internal battle that we lose everyday as soon as our eyes open. When we are able to see, our individuality is instantly wiped away, forgotten, until the night comes again. Trapped in a cycle of sleeping wakefulness and wakeful dreams.

Most days are the same; I have developed a routine. Yet that day would be different.

It was the day after my birthday, the 20<sup>th</sup> of June 2085, and I had just earned enough money to afford my first room. It was about 10 blocks from the park to the north of the capital, on the 27<sup>th</sup> floor. My room was a good size, much better than before when I slept in a room with 20 others. Finally I had my own space. I had paid for some privacy.

That day whilst cleaning the room, I noticed the air vent seemed loose and as I went to fix it back on, I found a small metal container, inside there was documentation of some sorts. At the time I knew I should have reported it or burnt it, but I was curious. Glancing round, making sure the door was locked; I opened the book and began to read *The Power of Pink...*

## Chapter One – Pink is for Boys

### A History of Pink

As the sunrises and sets, from the darkness to the light, there is a spectrum of colours that manifest. Within the colours of the sky often, there is pink. Within nature pink is transient and serene deepening the *'aura of pink'* (Nemitz, 2006, p.28). However, pink in culture is often associated with being 'girly', it is looked down upon as if being 'girly' is a slur, and as a result pink *'is one of the most vehemently rejected colors of all'* (Nemitz, 2006, p.48).

Pink is associated to a plethora of meanings including innocence, femininity and artificiality, with its connotations creating a colour divide between the sexes. The evolution of pink's relationship to girls began in recent times and is further complicated by the fact that it is the only gendered colour to have so many different contradictory meanings. There are many who have reflected on how pink became so unconditionally attached to girls, but there is no clear agreement since there are so many factors, from iconic figures, patriarchy, consumerism and mass media. Originally pink was like any other colour, worn by both men and women, but by the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century it became slowly recast from youthful to feminine. American clothing and social conventions had an important role in this change by influencing popular culture not just in America but also in the rest of Westernised world and beyond. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century alternative uses of pink have slowly appeared, however the use of the colour for girls is still apparent to this day. To fully understand the connection that pink has formed to femaleness I will look chronologically at when it began, and how it became reinforced over time.

Before the 20<sup>th</sup> century children wore mostly white because of the introduction of bleaching and cheap cotton, and at this time pink was gender neutral (Paoletti, 2012). Colour gendering began around the time that child psychology emerged in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, when



Figure 1.  
Boucher, F. (1759) Portrait of  
Marquise de Pompadour



Figure 2.  
Carmontelle, L. (1766) Baron  
D'Holbach



Figure 3.  
Young Boy with Whip  
(1840)



Figure 4. Sachsenhausen  
(1939)

childcare experts demonstrated the importance of a *'greater and earlier distinction between girls' and boys' appearances'* (Paoletti, 2012, p.89). It is suggested that since pink and blue were sometimes gender signifiers, they could subsequently be used for colour coding, but at the time they still didn't have consistent meanings (Paoletti, 2012). In fact, before WWII there is evidence in Earnshaws trade publication in 1918 that pink was actually for boys:

*'The generally accepted rule is pink for the boy and blue for the girl. The reason is that pink being a more decided and stronger colour is more suitable for the boy, while blue, which is more delicate and dainty is prettier for the girl'* (Paoletti, 2012, p.85).<sup>1</sup>

At this time blue was preferred for Christian girls because of the Virgin Mary, and pink for boys because of its link to bold red. The first apparent signs of the current colour coding were allegedly *'a French innovation'* (Peril, 2002, p.4)<sup>2</sup> but since people still made their own clothes it took some time to catch on. Over the 1920s there appears to have been the start of a shift, when Vogue published an article that *'categorically defined blue as a boys colour and pink as a girls'* (Kang, 2012, p.290). Oddly Vogue's article uses the exact same descriptive words that were used in Earnshaws article explaining that *'blue is sturdier and pink dainty'* (Kang, 2012, p.290), exposing just how superficial these definitions really were.

Kang (2014) explains how at the beginning of the 20th century, as a result of a general masculinists societal fear of *'weakening manhood and feminised society'* (Kang, 2014, p. 291) a growing fear of homosexuality was being defined more publically. Alongside this women were appropriating men's clothes, creating a pressure to segregate the sexes with something that was easily recognizable (Kang, 2014). Here colour was chosen, meaning that perhaps before our conventional uses of pink for girls, the reverse rule was still used to gender children to the same end. This is when *'children's clothing came to play a significant role in consolidating*

<sup>1</sup> In 1927, Time Magazine printed a chart demonstrating *'sex-appropriate colours for girls and boys'* according to leading US stores... telling parents to dress boys in pink, although some others were beginning to suggest blue. (Maglety, 2011)

<sup>2</sup> A quote from the book *'Little Women'* by Louis May Alcott 1868 describes *"a blue ribbon for the boy and pink on the girls, French Fashion"* (Peril, 2002, p.4).



Figure 5.  
Mamie Eisenhower on the eve of her husband's inauguration in 1953.



Figure 6.  
Jayne Mansfield 1950s



Figure 7. Vintage 1960s magazine advertisement; Lustre-Creme's "Pink Is for Girls" ad

current ideas about gender images, and blue and pink became a social code as markers of each gender' (Kang, 2014, p.299). The invention of chemical dyes in the 20<sup>th</sup> century meant that clothing could be mass-produced. Thus encouraging a new colourfulness to fashion and household items for everyone, and not just the wealthy.<sup>3</sup> This enabled manufacturers to produce more gendered clothes, and by the 1940s pink for girls was more established in America and Western Europe. Another factor that perhaps helped reinforce the new coding was that the Nazi's used a pink triangle to identify homosexuals, during WWII, as a badge of shame when they were imprisoned. This would have certainly had an influence on men's outright rejection of pink, as homosexuality continued to be a felony until the late 1960s.<sup>4</sup>

There are some popular figures in American society that had a significant influence on the status of pink. Mamie Eisenhower, the first lady of America in 1953 made pink a craze because she adored it. She also believed it was '*patriotic to be an exemplary wife*' (Peril, 2002, p.8) and this support of traditional roles for women, helped form a connection between pink and being a dainty housewife. Jayne Mansfield a major sex symbol in the 1950s was the ultimate pink princess. She famously said, '*men want a girl to be pink, helpless, and do a lot of deep breathing*', (Mansfield in Wright, 2015, online) which helped form a connection between pink and women as delicate creatures. This could have been because many women welcomed domesticity after their experience in WWII factories, or part of the generally very colourful and optimistic 1950s. The term coined at that time '*la vie en rose*', literally meant a state of rosy cheerfulness and was a very popular song by Edith Piaf. Consequently, pink became fashionable, lady-like and sexy for women to wear. The decade after austerity and war was when the 'American Dream' became the foreground for baby boomers, and consumerism became a massive part of society,

<sup>3</sup> Some men continued to wear pink well into the 1950s, as seen in '*The Great Gatsby*' (1949) written in 1925, with the male lead Jay Gatsby's pink suite, and Elvis Presley with his pink Cadillac in 1955.

<sup>4</sup> The pink triangle was reclaimed in the 1970s by the LGBT community, and has come to represent gay rights and gay pride; this is an important symbol for the shift in the way pink is seen.



Figure 8. What a Way to Go (1964) [film still]



Figure 9. Funny Face (1957) [film still]



Figure 10. Donna Mae Mims (1966)

along with other parts of the westernised world. The New Look<sup>5</sup> and Elsa Schiaparelli, who created shocking pink, encouraged a new colourful artificial paradise of pink. Hundreds of commodities that were formerly genderless, were produced for women in shades of pink.<sup>6</sup> The categorizing of pink as a gendered colour had a significant role to play because:

*'pinkness reinforced the idea that femininity was a fixed category in the lives of women from childhood onward and by surrounding themselves with it women could constantly reaffirm their unambiguously gendered selves'* (Sparke, 1995, p.198).

Nevertheless did women welcome this in the 1950s? In the film *'Funny Face'*, Maggie Prescott's sings *'women today have gotta think pink!'* but when asked whether she would wear it, *'me? I wouldn't be caught dead in it'* (Donen, 1957). Suggesting that many were using pink in a more calculated manner, for example Ms Mims<sup>7</sup>, a race driver who succeeded against only men, used pink to her advantage. The colour helped deflect criticism and was *'trusted to help those women engaged in activities not traditionally associated with their gender to maintain an aura of femininity'* (Peril, 2002, p.15) helping men feel less emasculated by being beaten by a woman.

The period between 1965-1985, brought women's liberation to the forefront, second wave feminism was anti-feminine and made unisex fashionable. Girls were dressing more masculine as it was felt that they were being lured into subservient roles, and gender was beginning to be seen as being learnt through environmental queues. Pink was so intensely connected to traditional femininity that feminist parents refused to dress their daughters in it. This conscious rejection of pink for young girls, if nothing else is proof that pink had come to symbolise femininity. An American artist Sheila Levrant created the *'Pink'* poster in 1973,

<sup>5</sup> Dior's New Look brought a revolution to fashion in the 1940s.

<sup>6</sup> One could now buy anything from a kitchen or household appliances, razors, pens, and clothes to a pink Cadillac or even a pink Dodge complete with matching lipstick, umbrella and handbag.

<sup>7</sup> Ms Mims was the first female to win the Sports Car Club of America championship in 1963.



Figure 11. advert on Ebay

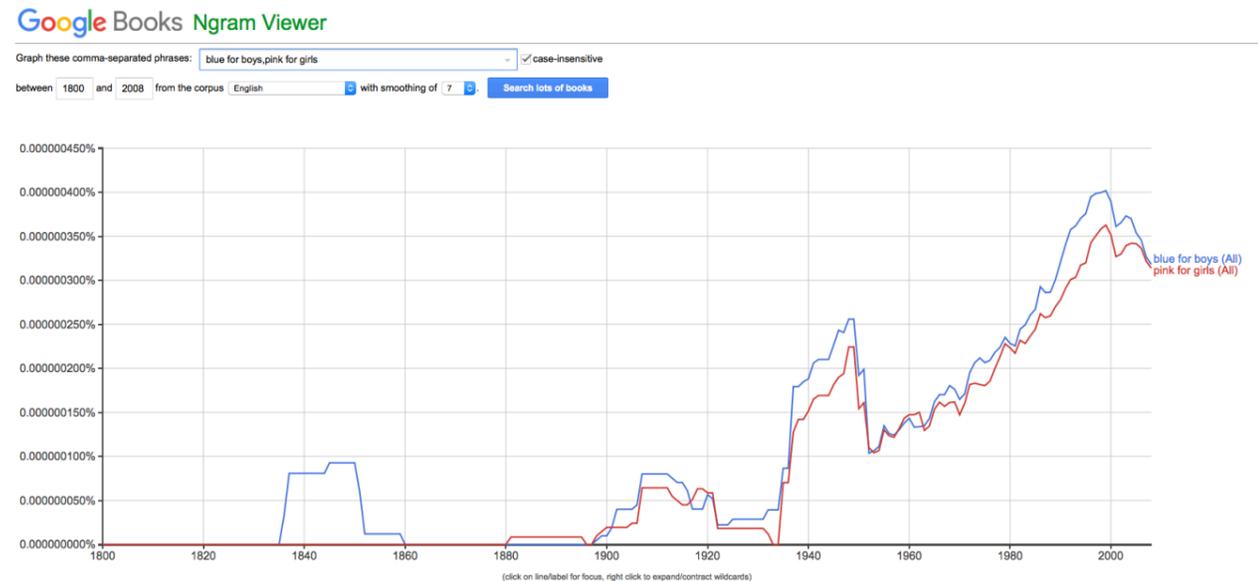


Figure 12.  
Pink for girls, Blue for boys timeline

which has become well known as one of the first artistic critics of pink's meanings. During this period people crossed the binary and wore flamboyant clothes embracing colours including pink, and for a brief period it seemed like there was going to be equality.

Around the mid-1980s, everything changed, resurrecting the elevation of pink as the most visible marker of femininity and weakness so intensely that the affects are still apparent today. The first resurgence affected mainly children, but this would have a significant impact on women too.<sup>8</sup> In the 1980s prenatal testing could reveal the sex of your child and consequently parents excitedly began shopping for their baby, not realising perhaps that this would create a massive divide between the sexes. This is when intensifying age and sex distinctions became a tool for selling more, industries cashed in on the possibility of selling doubles, every item was gendered, pink and blue nappies, clothes, toys and more. Marketing also had a significant effect on children's upbringing<sup>9</sup> and the method was highly successful at segregating the market by sex and creating differences that previously never existed. It wasn't until this happened that pink *'began to seem innately attractive to girls, part of what defined them as female'* (Orenstein, 2011, p.36). The rise of consumerism among children added to this, as characters on TV became buyable toys and costumes when in 1984 advertising regulations for children were stripped away. Industries say they were just giving girls what they want *'as if magnifying kids desire is less coercive than instigating them'* (Orenstein, 2011, p.42). Third wave feminists predominantly accepted this, as they didn't view femininity in the same way as before. An issue with rejecting pink for girls was that it *'framed equality more in terms of girls 'being like boys' than boys being more effeminate'* (Paoletti, 2012, p.96). Furthermore, some mothers who were brought up neutrally, were rebelling and wanted pink and Barbie's for their

<sup>8</sup> When women were first breaking into managerial professions, *'many female executives shunned pink because they felt it undermined their credibility'* (Brennan, 2009, p.157). Furthermore, *'many big accounting and technology firms didn't even allow women to wear the color to the office'* (Brennan, 2009, p.158).

<sup>9</sup> It wasn't until the 1980s that so many categories for the stages between childhood and adulthood existed. Terms created by manufactures like toddler and tween, became *'considered a full-blown psychological, physical, and emotional phase'* (Orenstein, 2011, p.37).



Figure 13. Portia Munson (1994/2016)  
*Pink Project: Table*



Figure 14. JeongMee Yoon, *Jeeyoo and Her Pink Things* (2008)

girls as a sheer reaction to being denied them as a child. While imported items to the USA from other countries could still have variety,<sup>10</sup> by the end of the 1980s, *'pink and light blue were used consistently and universally in the finally 'traditional' manner'* (Paoletti, 2012, p.95) and had become a *'moral imperative'* (Paoletti, 2012, p.86) for young children.

The segregation of gender has become so involved with pink that artists have been documenting the ludicrous quantity of pink toys and products. Portia Munson has collected pink things for many decades, and her piece *'Pink Project'* (1994) see fig.13, brings together thousands of pink feminine objects. It creates a visual overload of things that were made for women and girls. Collating a massive quantity of pink objects confronts the audience into thinking how much colour coding is part of our daily lives.

*'Each iteration of the work has revealed the marketing of femininity and the infantilization of the female gender while also exploring the culturally loaded color pink and its continued societal projection onto girls and women'* (Munson online).

Her work is visually powerful and effortlessly shows how ridiculous marketing is. A more recent photographer JeongMee Yoon created *'the Pink and Blue Project'* (2005+) see fig.14, taking pictures of children in South Korea proudly surrounded by their gender coloured belongs. These images are extreme in pinkness and unavoidably show how involved children have become with consumerism.

<sup>10</sup> For example Belgium and Korea still had pink for boys, and Switzerland was blue for girls.

## Is it Really a Genetic Desire to Like Pink?



Figure 15. Example of how the media enforces pink as a 'girly colour' (2015) by Geoff Robinson



Figure 16. Example of reinforced pink feminine stereotypes for young girls. (2016) by Tono Balaguer

Large companies like Disney believe *'it's just a genetic desire to like pink,'* (Walter, 2010, p.12). However, Eliot explains that toddler's behaviours and interests are virtually indistinguishable and they don't know between pink and blue. Up till the age of six, children typically know their gendered identity, but not how that is defined. *'In general, the concept of permanence is hard for children to grasp, the prefrontal cortex of the brain is what looks to the future, and that's the slowest part to develop'* (Eliot, 2009, p.116). Children don't differentiate between the concepts of boy and girl in the same way as adults, and since clothing is an important tool to teach femininity and masculinity (Kang, 2014, p.290) children often believe that the defining things of gender are the superficial divisions. So when colours and toys are marketed for boys or girls, out of self-preservation they are bound to choose the 'appropriate' toy for their sex in case their gender transitions. Girls will latch onto *'the most exaggerated images their culture offers in order to stridently shore up their femininity'* (Orenstein, 2011, p.61). This has also had an especially hard affect on boys, who struggle the most when they like pink, as they can be teased for being 'gay' or 'girly'.<sup>11</sup> This *'seems to arise from deep misogyny, homophobia and transphobia, a suspicion of any who embraces femininity which is considered synonymous with weakness and subordination'* (Cochrane, 2014, online). Until pink can be separated from its link to girls and femininity it will continue to have a damaging effect on children.

Over the last few decades, there has been an unexpected renewed interest in biological determination, which is perhaps surprising, because of the current climate of equality. Moreover, research concerning traditional femininity as a social phenomenon, is being less publicized. The stereotypical link between girls and pink is being explained away as being a product of biology (Walter, 2010). By eliminating cultural influences on children's preferences,

<sup>11</sup> Which are seen as an insult for some reason

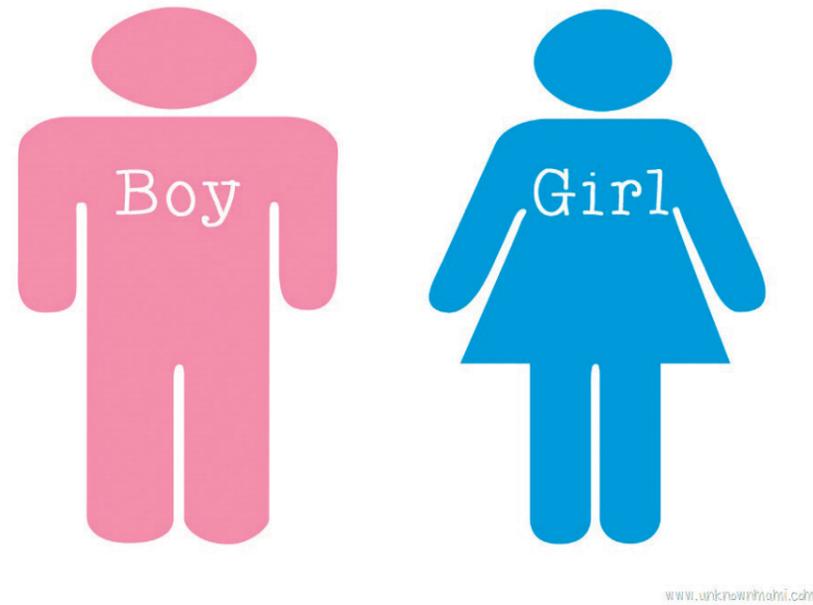


Figure 17.  
How colour can influence  
gender stereotyping.



Figure 18. BBC (2017)  
screenshot. An experiment  
where a woman treats a  
baby boy dressed as a baby  
girl, in a subconsciously  
sexist way.

the media fails to acknowledge that 'girly' things, which are 89% (IET, 2016) of the time pink, can have an impact on girls liking the colour and becoming 'feminine'. The weakness in the associations of femininity to women lies within even the most noteworthy advocates of it. If these stereotypes were predetermined, why is there so much effort going into reinforcing them when it should be happening naturally (Walter, 2010)? For example the media uncritically reported Hurlbert and Lings (2007)<sup>i</sup> research concerning women innately preferring pink, despite it being full of theoretical holes. It exemplified the problem that many are trying to justify that pink is for girls, without any actual proof, thus reinforcing the belief. This study and its reception mark the return to traditionalism, for if it were purely aimed at determining preferences for pink it would be insignificant, it's effectively '*being used to explain away the inequalities we see in adult life*' (Walter, 2010, p.13).

Cunningham and Macrae (2011) through a series of experiments, with children and adults, found the correlation between pink/ blue colour associations together with gendering was still vigorously prevalent today. They found that pink and blue stimulated a set of beliefs that affected the speed of analysis<sup>12</sup>

*'the practise of saturating young children's environments with gender-specific colours furnishes categorical knowledge such that the mere presence of these critical colour cues is then sufficient to trigger the activation and application of gender categorical beliefs'* (Cunningham, 2011, p.610).

Meaning that when something is pink it can be hard to separate it from current stereotypes, it's become so engrained within society that there is still a fear of boys wearing pink. This demonstrates that '*once a stereotype is so entrenched that it becomes activated automatically, there is relatively little that can be done to control its influence*' (Bargh, 1999, p.378). So while this contemporary society advocates gender equality, it also in parallel endorses childhood's

<sup>12</sup> The test found that when masculine or feminine things mismatched the colour to which they were stereotypically attached to, the speed people could analyse them was affected.



Figure 19.  
Joe Raedle/Getty Images  
(2015)

artificial division, which could have a detrimental effect on perceptions as an adult. People have been shown to treat children differently according to the colour they are wearing regardless of their sex, and therefore *'the frequent association of a specific colour with each sex is an unhelpful obstruction to the reduction of adult gender biases'* (Cunningham, 2011, p.608). The problem isn't being surrounded by pink is bad, because that would mean there is something wrong with being a girl, it's just that it shouldn't be limiting or limited to girls.

Fine (2005) argues that almost all gendered characteristics are learnt, and that there are many holes in contemporary science. A child's brain is so susceptible they are bound to absorb information of social phenomenon. When a child's peers reinforce a stereotype, it becomes fact, thus explaining the continued association that pink is 'girly'. Professor Eliot (2009) looks deeply into 'neuroplasticity' the biology behind the notion, that

*'every interaction every activity strengthens some neural circuits at the expense of others... brains are the most malleable, the most open to long-term influence on the abilities and roles that go with their sex'* (Orenstein, 2011, p.64).

According to Eliot therefore *'nurture becomes nature,'* (Orenstein, 2011, p.64) every experience a child has develops different parts of their brain. Therefore if children are limited by their gender, they will continue to express the traits expected of them as a result of these expectations. Therefore although pink is not bad in itself, it seems to have roots in some psychological developments for children. It is a self-fulfilling prophecy that girls like pink.



Figure 20.  
Meme of MacDonaldis  
advert

## Millennial Pink



Figure 21. Women's March Washington (2017) by Reuters

Figure 22. [film still] Gulabi Gang (2013)



Figure 23. Buckingham Palace (2012) for Breast Cancer Awareness, by Getty Images

Pink has continuously been seen as a colour that can't be taken seriously, so how is pink represented in the 21<sup>st</sup> century? According to Paoletti pink was '*peaking around 2000,*' (Paoletti, 2012, p.97) but it has far from faded in 2018, in fact pink has made a massive come back! There is still evidence of the damaging results of the gender divide in children's toys, with 89% of girl's toys still pink (IET, 2016), almost everything pink in the girl's section reinforces traditional femininity as well as fusing it to appearance.<sup>13</sup> Marketing still holds responsibility for a lot of pink gendering that is happening, consumerism still doesn't always give the freedom of choice and young children are still struggling to cross the binary. There is a danger that the type of pink toys made for girls has an impact on how they think they should behave. As girls grow up, '*the innocence that pink signalled during the princess years... has receded, leaving behind narcissism and materialism as the hallmarks of feminine identity*' (Orenstein, 2011, p.49). Highlighting the negative associations of pink and femininity for women. Orenstein (2011) asks a noteworthy question, '*what anxieties account for the contemporary surge of pink and pretty?*' her answer: '*the desire to prolong innocence, to avoid early sexualisation*' (Orenstein, 2011, p.52). Does the comeback of pink represent a desire for innocence? With more ways for children to grow up younger and faster, could this be the answer? Or, could it be evidence that the more freedom we have '*the more polarized [our] cultures ideas about the sexes become*' (Orenstein, 2011, p.52). Is it a fear of sameness; is there a genuine fear of what could happen if we were truly equal in opportunities and choices in the material things that make up the distinctions? A superficial difference maintained purely to what end?

<sup>13</sup> There is still a lot of 'controversy' around children's choices of colours. Sadly one in ten children under the age of eleven '*experiences an increased risk of physical or sexual abuse and psychological trauma due to gender non-conformity.*' (Lewis, 2013, online)

Figure 24.  
Hannah Goldstein  
(2017)



Figure 25.  
Millennial Pink  
(2015)



Figure 26.  
Moss, A. (2017)

For millennials however, the 21<sup>st</sup> century has brought about some progressive change; girly tacky items have made an ironic comeback. Gender neutrality and gender as a spectrum is more accepted, and millennial pink is the mascot,<sup>14</sup> with Pantone naming rose quartz (millennial pink) colour of year in 2015. Many have come forward to reclaim pink, including the LGBT community, the Breast Cancer campaign<sup>15</sup>(1991)<sup>ii</sup>, the Women’s March that wears pink pussy hats to symbolise solidarity, and the Gulabi Gang in India who wear pink saris. It has come to signify fun, power, success, and people who aren’t afraid to embrace femininity, ‘pink isn’t just a colour, it’s a state of mind’ (Koller, 2008, p.419). It’s also showing signs of breaking away from being just for girls, for instance in the city, business men have been embracing the pink shirt. The associations of pink have been receiving more negativity from parents and the press, as is evident with sites like ‘Pinkstinks’ (2008). There also seems to be more awareness of gendering’s impacts. A definite shift is happening with this generation, and millennial pink in particular is being used to reclaim pink and has come to represent feminist empowerment.

However, millennial pink is also heavily commercialised and it’s difficult to tell whether it’s a choice or chosen for us. This has been explored by Sara Cwynar in the film ‘Rose Gold’ (2017) using an abundance of images and scenes to illustrate that perhaps it’s a passing phase<sup>16</sup>, implicating us in materialist desires (Liberty, 2017, online). When this trend passes will we ‘be left with an emptiness that can only be filled by the next new trend’ (Liberty, 2017, online). Has this liberated pink from the shackles of consumerism if companies are cashing in on aesthetic millennial pink to commercialise feminism, and ‘watering down its message’ (Leibrock, 2017, online). Additionally, millennial pink is being over-justified as gender neutral

<sup>14</sup> In 2015, Apple released the rose gold iPhones that spurred a massive popularity for the colour amongst all genders, since then millennial pink, also known as Rose quartz, has become a massive trend.

<sup>15</sup> Global landmarks illumination Initiative has lit up lots of famous places rendering them magical and sublime, but it seems to romanticise the cause, and has led to pink being overused.

<sup>16</sup> This is symbolised with the imagery of the now obsolete landline telephone, to represent passing trends.



Figure 27.  
Harry Styles  
(2017)



Figure 28.  
Missguided ad (2017) showing how  
men are proudly wearing pink!



Figure 30.  
The Queen of Pink, Kitten Kay  
Sera (2017)

and there has been a stress on disassociating it 'from bad taste, too-girly Barbie pinks' (Doyle, 2017, online). This shows there is still shame associated with 'feminine' pinks; it 'seems to betray our cultures fundamental assumption that... for girls interests or preferences to have any real legitimacy, they need to be somehow de-feminized' (Doyle, 2017, online).

Nevertheless, there has been a massive shift and pink is becoming more accepted as not just a girl's colour. Shops are starting to remove gendering signs and labels. Many are reclaiming traditional femininity, using 'pink as a resistance strategy against heteronormativity' (Nordenstam, 2013, p.149) showing that it's not a weakness. There is nothing wrong with being clad in pink accessories whilst supporting feminist causes. This is the starting point of believing femininity can be strong, it is becoming a quality men are adopting more in this generation, and with this we are becoming more gender fluid. Millennial pink is helping to bridge the gap. Equality is arriving and pink seems to have an important role to play. Pink keeps coming back, in a new shade representing something new, but it always comes back.

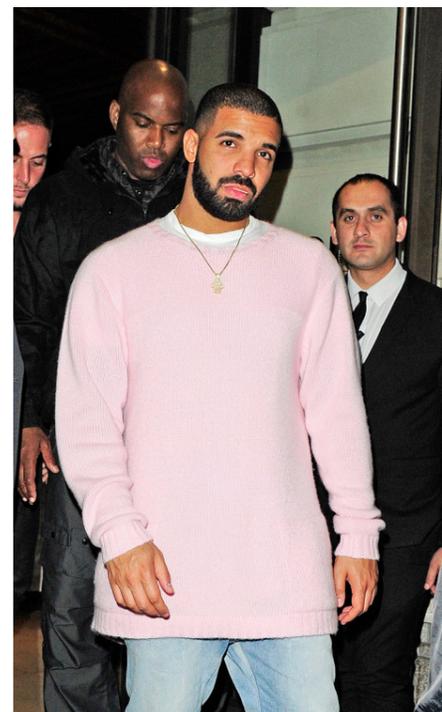


Figure 29.  
Drake (2017)

## Chapter Two - the Power of Pink

### Baker-Miller Pink

Pink is a unusual colour because even though it does not have its own wavelength or place in the rainbow, it is the only colour that is a tint at the same time as having so many of its own shades. Each shade also holds its own meanings, the lighter the shade the more innocent, and the darker more saturated tones more artificial. The contradictions in its meanings can go from natural to fake and from weakness to empowerment. *'Pink is inconsistent and facile, random and chaotic. Its link to the infantile and feminine necessitate its control'* (Hughes, 2015).

Pink is so constructed and inconsistent that it is hard to believe that it can be so universally associated to femininity. However, this happened for a reason, and it was as a result of society.

*'People are culturally socialised into colour meanings, what is associated with a colour or shade is indicative not of the colour itself but of the cultural and historical formation in which it is constructed... As such, colour classification is motivated by the interests of the social groups establishing the classification'* (Koller, 2008, p.399).

Remarkably, this classification of colour could have a significant effect on our behaviour, and furthermore it is believed by some that certain shades can trigger hormonal changes. In particular Baker-Miller pink, which has been under a lot scrutiny over the last 40 years.

Dr Schauss<sup>17</sup> worked with Dr Ott in 1978, experimenting with the effects of colours, found that pink seemed to have a significant effect on certain muscles, including the heart and had the potential to subdue aggressive behaviour. Inspired by this research Schauss tested many shades of pink on himself until he created P-618.<sup>18</sup> *'Had the colour I suggested been any other, resistance might have been minimal,'* (Schauss, 1985, p.57) exposing the attitude held

<sup>17</sup> The director of Life Sciences at the American Institute (USA)

<sup>18</sup> P-618 is also known as Baker-Miller, Drunk-Tank pink, or Cool Down pink. Originally created by mixing one gallon of pure white indoor latex paint with one pint of red trim semi-gloss outdoor paint. He found that by staring at an 18 by 24 inch pink card resulted in relaxation and a lowering of blood pressure after exercise in a way not observed with other colours.

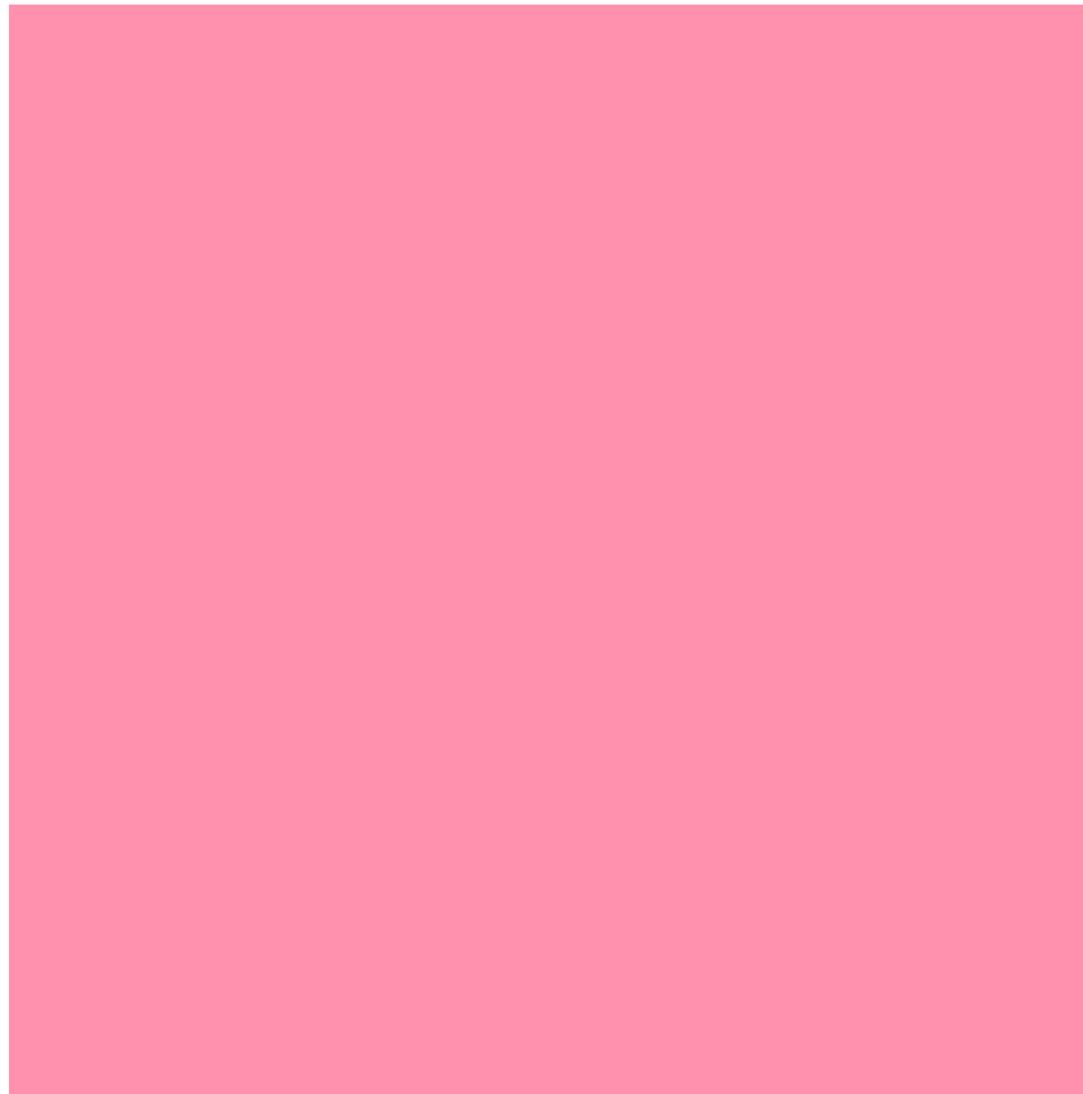


Figure 31.  
Baker-Miller Pink, R:255, G:145, B: 175.

Figure 32.  
Drunk Tank Pink  
prison cells



Figure 33.  
the US Naval Correctional Facility  
in Seattle, Washington, painted  
Baker-Miller pink



Figure 34.  
Frank's Cafe in Peckham  
is painted Baker-Miller  
Pink



towards pink at the time. Schauss eventually convinced two naval directors<sup>19</sup> to paint some prison cells in P-618, the colour was afterwards renamed Baker-Miller pink after them. Aggressive inmates were placed in the cells and observed over 200 days. They reported *'since initiation of this procedure... there have been no incidents of erratic or hostile behaviour during the initial phase of confinement,'* (Schauss, 1985, p.57) the inmates became calmer within 10-15 minute of staying in the pink 8 by 10ft cell. However, there were negative results discovered from overexposure in another prison with inmates scratching the paint off the walls with their nails.

This experiment was continuously carried out by many other certified individuals in prisons and psychiatric clinics, with many finding similar results. Several *'obstreperous'* youths were completely transformed, with one inmate *'literally stripped down to his real psychological state, expressing his real underlying frustration and depression'* (Dr Boccumini, Schauss, 1985, p.59). However, during this period there was some contradictory research, Pellegrini in 1981 painted Santa Clara County Jails holding room pink, and couldn't find any overall aggression reduction, reporting that it could be down to shock value. He also criticised previous experiment methods as being biased.

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, prisons and facilities around the world have painted cells and rooms pink, in Switzerland 20% of prisons and police stations have a pink detention cell. The celebrity Kendall Jenner, one of the Kardashians has even painted her walls in Baker-Miller pink in an attempt to lose weight since it was discovered that it had an *'appetite suppression effect'* (Schauss, 1985, p.58). Even some sports teams painted their opposition's locker rooms pink in an attempt to weaken them. Strangely farmers, have used pink glasses or contact lenses for chickens in attempt to calm them and stop them cannibalising. Recently there have been individuals who have retested the theory, such as Späth who researched it between 2005-

<sup>19</sup> At the Washington US Navy's Bureau Personal, Law Enforcement and Correction Division

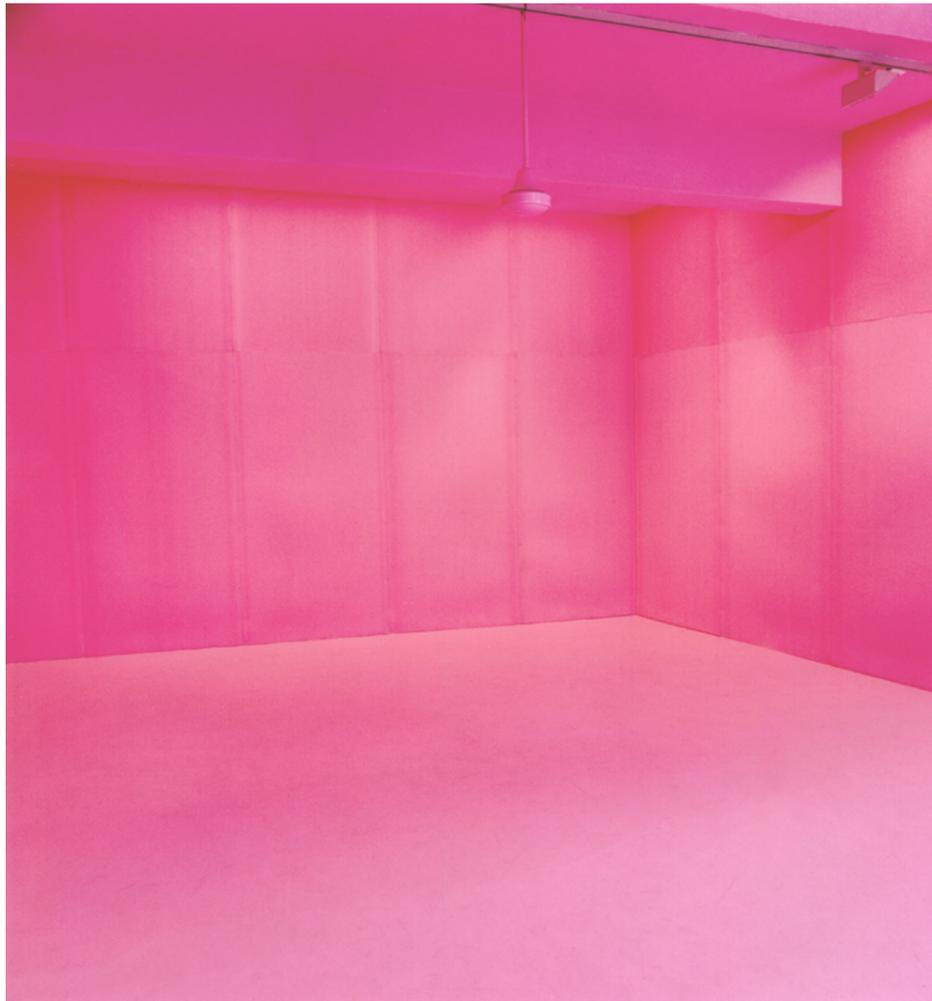


Figure 35.  
Bigert & Bergstrom (1996)  
*Bubblegum Pink*, uses Baker-Miller pink to create an immersive installation



Figure 36.  
Christopher Reynolds  
(2013) *the Schauss  
Kitchen*

2009, in a Swiss prison, and 'according to wardens aggressive behaviour of these prisoners decreased significantly' (Sputnik, 2017, online). Späth believes the colour could have an important use in schools, ambulances, and many other places. Even colour theorist have written that '*it's a tranquilizing color that saps your energy. Even the color-blind are tranquilized by pink rooms*' (Walker, 1991, p.50-52). However, the most recent study conducted by Genschow between 2012-2013, also in Switzerland, found no overall calming results, and criticised Schauss and other researchers methods because they did not provide a clear answer.<sup>iii</sup> Everyone seems to have categorical opinions, and it's difficult to conclude who is right.

Why would colour affect behaviour? There are two possible explanations for the phenomenon; the main theory for the effect of Baker-Miller pink is that it '*affects neurological and endocrine functions, which in turn reduces physical strength, and thus aggressive behaviour*' (Genschow, 2015). However, Schauss also questions whether it could be because of '*novelty*' (Schauss, 1985, p.59) questioning whether there are '*psychological (e.g. infant gender identity and sex-role stereotypes associations to pink and blue)*' (Schauss, 1985, p.60). This would mean that when colours are given meanings they have the ability to affect the way we see the world, (Genschow, 2015) suggesting that pink's feminine stereotypes influences people's behaviour. Whether this is due to trauma or social constructs '*if you repeatedly have a particular experience surrounded by a certain colour, then you eventually begin to associate that colour with the way you were feeling*' (Hammond, 2015, online). Zimmermann a former prisoner and head of self-help group, describes how he found it tiring and humiliating to be confined '*in a room painted like a little girls bedroom*' (Spottiswoode, 2013, online). This shows that the popular connotations of pink, making some prisoners feel emasculated, could be generating a rejection of the colour because of deep-seated misogyny or homophobia. Baker-Miller pink could have an impact even if it is due to the stereotypes associated with the colour and there seems to be an overall support for the theory, whether or not it is true.

At the end of the chapter in scribbled pen, someone had hurriedly written a note:

*This has been preserved from before P-618. If you find this, do not report it, you already know too much. You need to know that the world isn't pink, the agents have injected a chip into everyone's eyes, these create an internal filter, programmed to make the world P-618 or as it used to be known Baker-Miller pink. The world around you is not as it seems, it has been built to create conformity and enforce peace. If you want to be able to see there is a way...*

All this time pink was being used to tranquillize us. To suppress and make sure that we did not fight back or rebel, creating a capitalist system serving the President. Something has to change, choice has to exist. Pink has become a way of programming us to be someone we are not. To be uniform in our classes and subordinate in our lives. I can't help draw parallels between the past and now, I can clearly see how it led to this. We were under the influence of a materialist system that controlled thought and behaviour.

The rest of the message explained that there was a switch at top of my spine, which controlled the filter in my eye, and there were instructions on how to build a device to fuse it. If I could disrupt the signal I would be able to see as we used to. I needed to do this without scarring myself, otherwise I would be found out.

For many days I thought about what I had read, it was difficult to know exactly what had changed, but I felt like I had a purpose. I needed to do something. I didn't dare say anything to anyone, for fear of being reported to the agents. I started to discreetly collect the things I would

need to deactivate the filter, each week sneaking the odd part out of the factory. It took me a month before I was ready. I had to keep reminding myself why I was doing this, because everyday when I woke up and went outside and saw the pink dream world the feeling faded.

After a few hours, I worked out how to build the deactivator. Closing my eyes, I brought the device to the back of my head, my hand shaking. It sent a strong electro-magnetic shock through my neck. It burned, causing me to jolt forward and drop the device. I sat there my eyes still closed, fearful, what if it hadn't worked?

I opened my eyes, and for a moment everything was blurred as they adjusted to the light. The colour flooded into my eyes. I focused my eyes onto the floor, at my dull carpet. I stood up; overwhelmed I closed my eyes again. My room was gloomy, the walls muted colours. I looked around not comprehending the assortment of shades. I walked over to the window and stared out. The view was extravagant, soft and colourful. The layers of shades and tones were endless... I looked down the roads between all the buildings, and took it all in. It was unfathomable the complexity of colours that poured through my eyes. A rush of emotions and desires came over me, an overwhelming sense of loss and frustration that I had never felt when I was awake. For years I had not known anything. I was completely oblivious to the fact that I was controlled. I was beginning to see and feel for the first time.

That day my world changed forever.

## Chapter Three – The Power of Pink in Contemporary Art

### A Brief Background

Pink has been used historically within art in spatters, as blushing skin, textured fabrics, colourful skies and blooming flowers. However, there seems to be a lack of serious critical analysis of pink within art history, perhaps because its meanings are linked to diluted red, rather than a primary or secondary colour.<sup>20</sup> During the 20th century Goethe (1970) described colour by ways of additions and reductions, therefore creating a correlation between infinite tones and their pure colours (Goethe, 1970, p.179). Yet pink remains an oxymoron; it is both contaminated white and weak red, producing a colour full of contradictions. Respected theorists and artist's perhaps also neglected pink because of its strong associations to femininity and youthfulness<sup>21</sup> and its cheapened quality in attachment to popular culture.

Furthermore, pink can be seen as aesthetically pleasing and 'gay'<sup>22</sup> (Goethe, 1970, p.179) for example 'la vie en rose', seeing the world through pink, means everything is rosy and cheerful. This suggests that pink's overuse has made it a problematic colour in art. Throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century, society perpetuated a shift in our culture's interpretations of pink, shaping the power of pink, so how did this influence art?

During the first half of 20<sup>th</sup> century, artists used predominantly primary colours, but even when pink was used like with Yves Klein's three monochromes blue, gold and rose, it was treated differently to the rest. In Klein's work the three colours worked together harmoniously free of any specific connotations, yet the monochromes received unequal recognition, with 'Rose Monochrome' (1961) 'perceived as being less important than his blue or gold monochrome' (Dean, 2010, p.41). Overtime pink began to gain a foothold within Pop Art and in 'movements



Figure 37.  
Jean-Honoré Fragonard,  
(1767) *the Swing*



Figure 38.  
Paul Gauguin (1902) *Cavaliers sur la plage (II)*

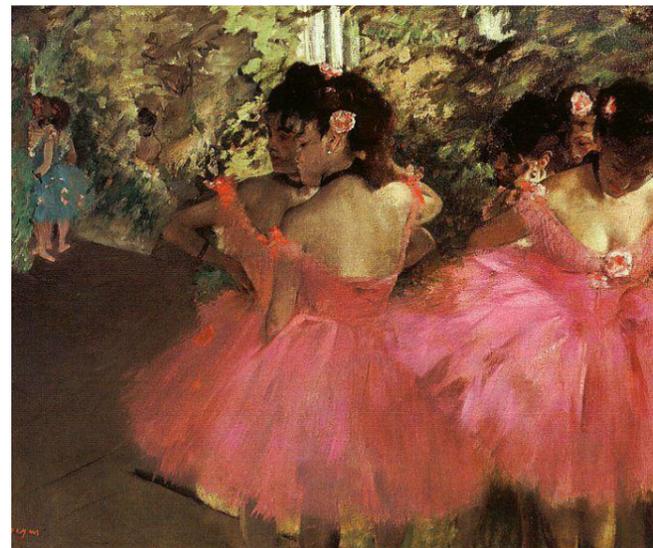


Figure 39.  
Edgar Degas, *Dancers in pink* (1885)



Figure 40.  
Yves Klein  
(1961) *Gold, Blue and Pink Monochrome*

<sup>20</sup> For example, in *Chroma* (Jarman, 1994), pink is under the section red

<sup>21</sup> 'The female sex in youth is attached to rose color' (Goethe, 1970, p.180)

<sup>22</sup> In this case gay means cheerfulness

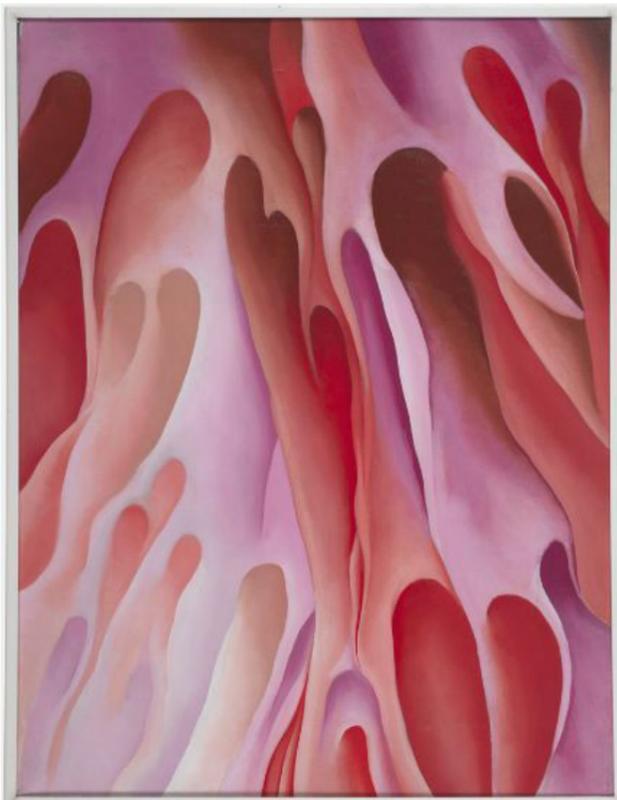


Figure 41.  
Andy Warhol, *Marilyn Monroe* (1967)

Figure 42.  
Rosenquist's, *Big Bo* (1966)



Figure 43.  
Georgia O'Keeffe (1925) *Red and Pink*



*melding... high art and mainstream culture'* (Bucknell, 2017, online) with works like Warhol's *'Marilyn Monroe'* (1967) and Rosenquist's *'Big Bo'* (1966). In fact *'pink is hardly absent from the history of art, and certainly not modern art'* (Banks, 2015, p.76). In recent years, there have been many projects around the colour and there have been more artists who have purposefully used it.<sup>23</sup> Although pink is still an enigma, this does not mean that it has played no role, artists have *'discovered the mysteries of this former taboo color, its capacity to move us and frighten us... it is thus a driving force in contemporary art'* (Bucknell, 2017, online). So how have artists used pink and have they been able to reclaim pink from its associations to femininity, fragility and artificiality?

<sup>23</sup> Such as *'Pink Week'* by Gioia Fonda running since 1993, *'Pinks not Dead'* presented by Maurycy Gomuliki (2006), PINKD publication (2014), *'Think Pink'* at the Museum of Fine Arts Boston (2014), and *'Pink Art'* at the WCMA in the USA (2017). The book *'Pink'* by Nemitz (2006) however is the only in-depth study of pink art.

## Case Study – Richard Mosse

Richard Mosse's work has been a pivotal discovery for my practise since his work contains pink as its main colour. His two projects created in the Congo (DRC): *'Infra'* (2010-2011) and *'the Enclave'* (2012), involved using discontinued Infrared Aerochrome film, developed by the US military.<sup>24</sup> The film uses infrared light reflecting off of chlorophyll to reveal shades of pink. Mosse who is Irish, wanted to use this medium as a metaphor to reveal the unseen tragedies in war-torn Congo in a new light, where a speculated 5.4million people have died in the area since 1998. Images often *'reduced the conflict in Congo to a spectacle of crazed warlords'* (Stearns, 2011, online) and one can see how Mosse's sublime images rework that perception. The nature within these images is transported to a false paradise; they create a fairy-tale setting, just through the transformation to pink. The excess of pink renders the already dramatic landscapes into dreamlike spaces of simulated serenity and peace. Within these images people are suffering, but they also seem surreal. The effect of pink on this project is unmistakable; it plays a vital role on how Congo is perceived. This work has a very strong aesthetic, which juxtaposes with the distressing content, *'horror as ravishing iridescent beauty'* (Blackburn, 2010). This makes the artwork problematic, since these are images of death and war, which Mosse has stylized.<sup>25</sup> The colour pink has played a larger role in these images than any other; it is unavoidable and has been part of their controversy.

Pink can be seen as revealing the world in a more cheerful light. Consequently, does the colour overwhelm the political cause of Mosse's images, or is it the style of the images, or even the message itself that is problematic. It is understood that Mosse disrupts the *'traditional aesthetics' of political photography,* (Bajorek, 2015) but why does pink have a different

<sup>24</sup> In the early 1900s and used to detect camouflage in vegetation in Vietnam.

<sup>25</sup> The style of photography has *'no critical value in his representation of soldiers'* (Gresle, 2014, online) since they appear stylized and rely too heavily on the medium itself.



Figure 44.  
Richard Mosse, *Nowhere To Run*, (2010)

Figure 45.  
Mosse, R. (2012) *Wave of Mutilation*

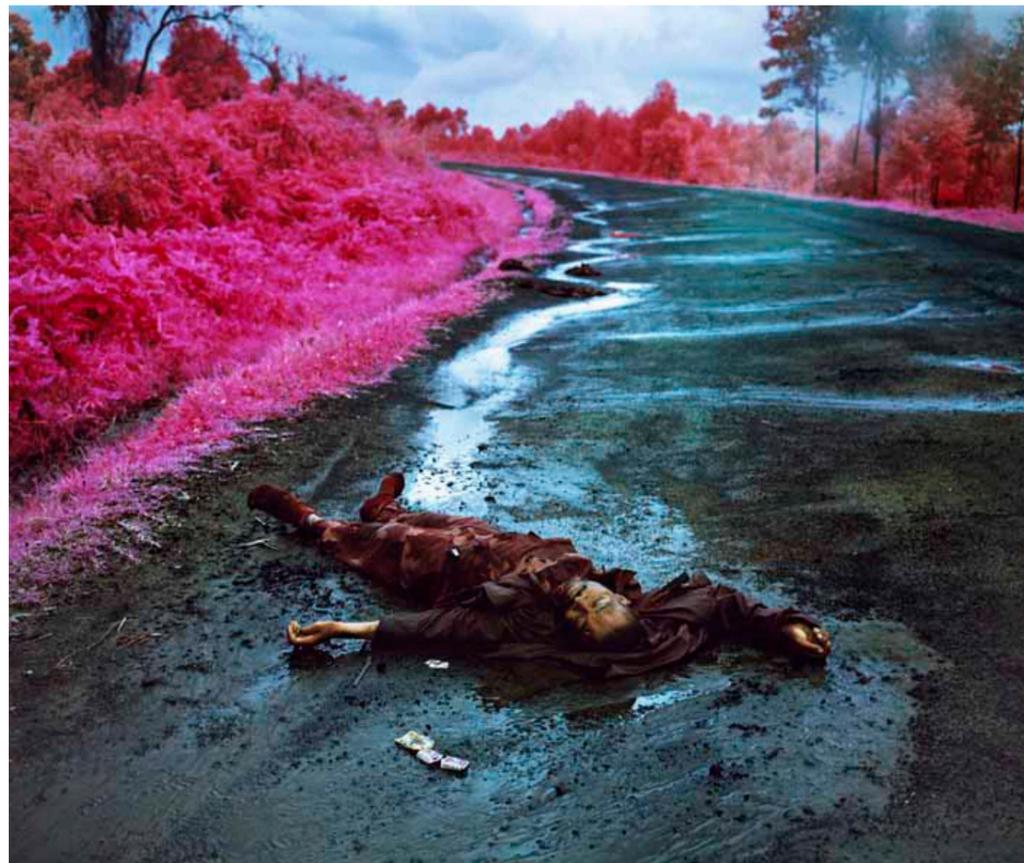




Figure 46.  
Richard Mosse,  
*Higher Ground* (2012)



Figure 47.  
Richard Mosse, *Madonna and Child* (2012)

aesthetic quality then b/w war photography?<sup>26</sup> Does pink aestheticize politics or is it just colour photography in general. Has pink's associations to artifice and frivolity tainted this artwork or could they be magnifying the issues in Congo. Pink is so constructed as a 'girls' colour that it risks being anti-political, but why should it create a paradox for impenetrable situations? According to Blackburn '*camp and sublime can be modes of disengagement,*' (Blackburn 2010) but it seems misogynistic to accept that a 'girls' colour cannot be political. Does pink really hold such strong meanings that they erase the content of the images, or is it perhaps that the '*stylization that Mosse relies on here is not the same as beauty*' (Blackburn, 2010). While there has been a colour shift, the land is still real and the people are real, and although the images are extraordinary because of unusual position of pink, they are also disturbing; it is perhaps not the colour that is the issue but the forced stylization of the subjects. Perhaps this says more about the audience's beliefs than the colour itself, since pink is so constructed and cannot justifiably be the reason why this work is problematic. In fact the premise of Mosse's work that Congo is unrepresented and tragic '*seems beholden to the 'traditional aesthetics' of African inscrutability,*' (Bajorek, 2015, p.235)<sup>iv</sup> especially since a number of contemporary artist's have made work about Congo.<sup>27</sup> Historically patches of pink on maps represented unexplored regions as well as the British Commonwealth, in this way pink could suggest colonial times. Mosse has used pink to reveal the unseen, as a cartographer would have of 'new' land, taking from Africa once again.

When Mosse first saw his photos he '*almost ignored it because it was a pretty picture*' (Davis, 2014, online), demonstrating how he may have regarded pink as unserious. However, he still used Infrared when many would not have dared to use it in such circumstances. Mosse used the medium because of its history, creating a neat connection to re-representing war

<sup>26</sup> Traditionally political photography was in black and white, because it was believed that it helped create respectful rawness and authenticity to the images so they wouldn't be considered a paradox of aesthetics and politics.

<sup>27</sup> Renzo Martens, *Episode III*, 2009; Harwood, Wright and Yokokoji, 'Tantalum Memorial', 2008; Guy Tillim, *Congo Democratic*, Michael Stevenson Gallery, Cape Town, 2006 (Bajorek, 2015)



Figure 48.  
Mosse, (2012)  
*Platon*



Figure 49.  
RAF conducting aerial reconnaissance, using new camouflage: pink Spitfires to blend in with clouds at sunset/rise



Figure 50.  
Shibazakura Takinoue Park, Japan

through the enemy's eyes. Perhaps this is an important project for pink to be liberated from being unserious; the medium shows pink has another history linked to destruction, showing that it can be ambiguous.<sup>28</sup>

Photography is a representation of a reality that can be manipulated, but there is truth in these images and although pink may disrupt this, it doesn't eradicate the cause. Mosse says that '*pink pushed the viewer into this extraordinary space, way past the threshold of the imagination and into science fiction*' (Mosse, Davis, 2014, online). Showing pink's power to visualise a place differently, and this how pink successfully brought the subject to popular attention. Therefore it seems that pink's meanings have become so powerful that they influence the way we see art and even the world.

### Natural Pink

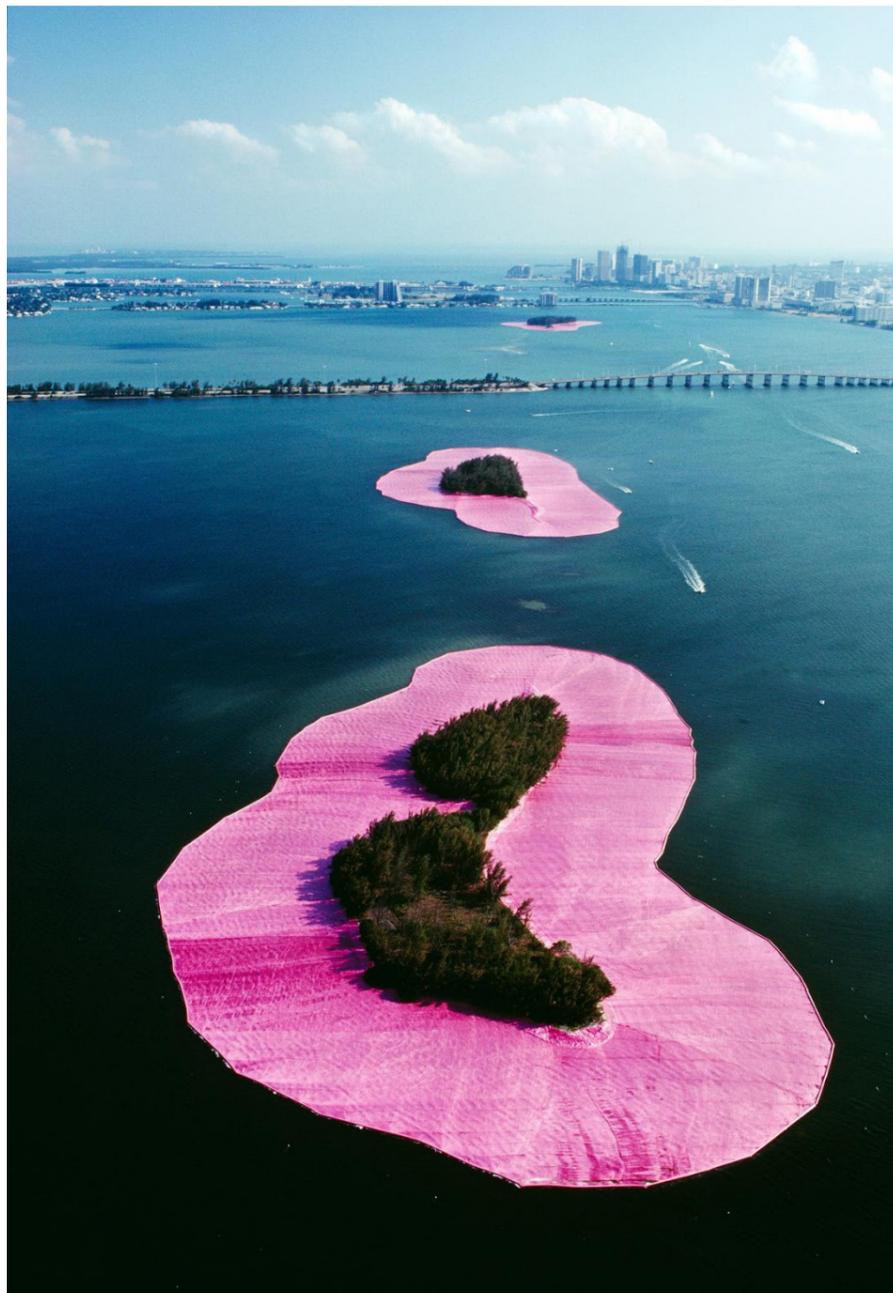
As previously discussed in Chapter One pink has been overused to commercialize girls products, creating a myth that has affected the way it is seen today. The effect of pink as an unnatural colour is apparent in Richard Mosse's work, but is it justifiable for pink to become a default colour for expressing artificiality within art?<sup>29</sup> Pink appears within nature in surprising places, though mainly in flowers. Flowers are also seen as feminine, but in Japan the sacred love of cherry blossoms (Sakura) far outdates pink's stereotypes. Sakura, has been painted and depicted in Japanese culture<sup>30</sup> for centuries and has represented the masculinity of warriors. The beautiful flowers blossom in the spring for a short period, enveloping Japan in a cloud of pink petals, it is likely to be the exceptional natural event rather than the colour that renders

<sup>28</sup> In WW2 the British Royal Navy painted their ships Mountbatten pink (Stewart, 2013, p.17). The navy scrapped it by 1944, because when the sun rose they became big pink targets, however it was continued on operations in deserts.

<sup>29</sup> There's no real way to graph which shade can be natural or artificial, '*with each passing day the traditional boundary between natural and artificial becomes less distinct*' (Bensaude-Vincent, 2007, p.1).

<sup>30</sup> '*Pink's paradoxical connotations of sweetness and pornography*' (von Taschitzki, 2006, p.70) is evident in Japan. In Japan porn is called 'pink movies', and there is a very saturated pink girly culture.

Figure 51.  
Christo & Jean-Claude  
*Surrounded Islands*  
(1983)



them beautiful. It seems that pink's qualities originate from nature, and that despite cultures oversaturation it can still hold its own. The rareness of pink in nature suggests that pink's aesthetics are linked to the extraordinary and that this renders it aesthetically sublime. For example, Christo and Jean-Claude undertook the enormous project '*Surrounded Islands*' in 1983, wrapping 11 small wooded islands in Miami with 6.5 million sq. feet of radiant pink fabric for just two weeks. Christo said at the time '*the pink shade selected... exhibits no string ties to nature and, as an artificial color, emphasizes and intensifies the man-made character of this artist gesture in a very specific way*' (Christo, von Taschitzki, 2006, p.68). The resulting painterly images are deeply beautiful and breath taking, but from above the islands seem as if they belong with the pink, contradicting the basis of this artwork. Aristotle explained that

*'if things made by nature were made also by art, they would come to be in the same way as by nature... generally art partly completes what nature cannot bring to a finish, and partly imitates her'* (Aristotle, 350 B.C.E., 15-17).

Meaning that although something may be manmade it can, despite the intentions of the artists, complete nature. It is apparent through this artwork that the aesthetic of pink can appear natural (von Taschitzki, 2006, p.74) and that despite preconceived ideas about pink, the colour can still command its own meanings and remain ambiguous.



Figure 52.  
Lake Hillier in Australia,  
pink appears in unusual places  
in nature.

## Pink Politics

Pink has been regarded as anti-political because of its aesthetics, but there are many instances in recent history when pink has been used as a political tool within art in an attempt to engage people and even question government's actions. As seen with Richard Mosse pink can bring a situation to popular attention because it is extraordinary. This stems from pink prevailing as an obvious juxtaposition to the traditionally 'masculine' force of war or politics. There seems to be mainly two shades of pink considered aesthetically when used in this context, light pink representing femininity, and hot pink representing rebellion and shock (Mednicov, 2014). Many artists have followed these associations, for example David Černý who painted a Soviet memorial tank light pink<sup>31</sup> (1991) in Prague, as an art action after the collapse of Communism. *'He wanted to confront [people]... to break through their stereotyped ideas... to force them to question their own complacent assumptions'* (Wright, P, 1991, p.3). Creating a stark contrast between what the tank represented and pink, which according to Prague's tourist board *'twisted that national monument into a powerless, almost pretty, superficial object, devoid of historical meaning or purpose'* (Burns, online). This artwork, consciously used pink's negative associations to lash out at what this Soviet tank represented and what Communism had done to Czechoslovakia (Czech Republic) during the Cold War. It caused uproar and it was painted back and forth by different groups, becoming a political symbol. Light pink triggered this disparity, highlighting that the memorial tank for Soviet soldiers had no place in Prague, and was merely a reminder of the suffering. Pink here was used in a sense to emasculate a war symbol; to ridicule it and subvert the way it was perceived, this shows just how powerful pink's meanings in society have become. On the other hand New York based artist Yazmany Arboleda, collaborated with 30 artists on *'Beware of Colour Urban Project'* (2014), used hot pink to paint and reimagine abandoned heritage buildings in Johannesburg, South Africa.

<sup>31</sup> *'Part of the Monument to Soviet tank crews commemorating the Russian liberation of the country in May of 1945, the tank was still considered a national monument in 1991'* (Burns, online).

Because they felt pink could help reinvent the situation and create safety. Here pink was clearly used to reclaim and literally highlight an ongoing issue, and what's more this action existed without a connection to weakening the subject. Pink was used here to make a point about those in power abandoning parts of the city; this goes to show that pink exists in many ways. The abnormality of the colour in this situation helped create an impact. These two art actions, over 20 years apart, saw the power of pink, whether they used it to disempower or empower both artworks made a powerful point. As Lynda Benglis said *'pink is so strong!... it feels innately powerful to me'* (Banks, 2015, p.76).



Figure 53.  
David Cerny (1991)  
Tank 91

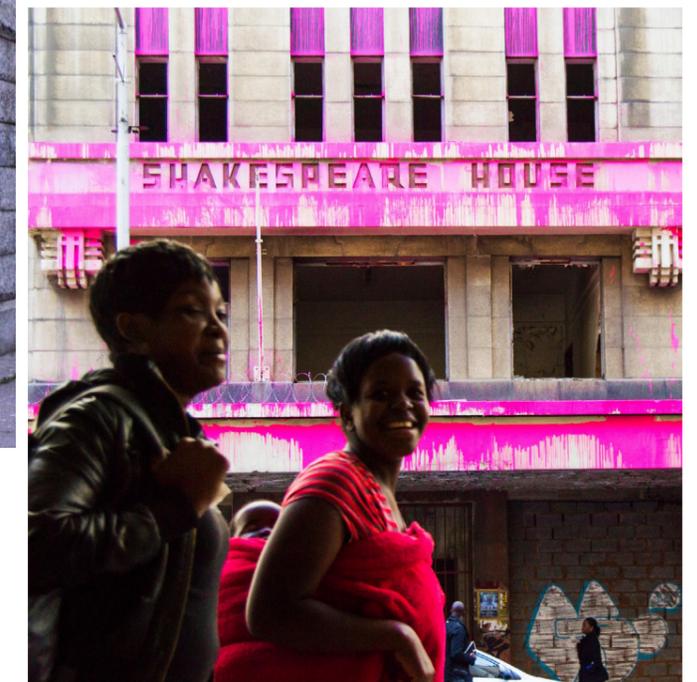


Figure 54.  
Arboleda, *Beware of Colour Project*  
(2014)

## Contemporary Art



Figure 55.  
Sylvie Fleury, *Skincrime 3*  
(Givenchy 318) (1997)



Figure 56.  
Sylvie Fleury, *First Spaceship to Venus* (1996)

During the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century it was normal to see '*heterosexual masculinity as a historical narrative*,' (Smith, 1997, p.7) because of pink's associations '*men rejected pink categorically*' (Heller, 2009). This seems to have deterred pink's use in 'masculine' movements like Modernism and Abstract Expressionism, hence shaping the way pink has been used by artists. For instance Matthew Deleget's '*Pink Nightmare*' (2007) describes on his website '*I emasculated my monochrome... by painting it a bubble-gum pink*' (Deleget, online). Showing that when pink has been used, in this context, it has been destructive criticising the masculinity of an artwork.

Feminist artists since the 1970s have been trying to reclaim pink, attempting to highlight its overuse as a feminine indicator and its derogatory connotations. Artists have used pink in an attempt to remove it from its context, whilst culture continues to reinforce pink's meanings. As previously mentioned one-way artists like Portia Munson and JeongMee Yoon have tried to do this is by confronting the link head on. If pink's use can be seen as being ridiculous in popular culture then perhaps this can subvert its meanings. For example contemporary pop artist Sylvie Fleury uses shades of pink derived from globalised consumerism like make-up, to critique superficial '*culturally determined aesthetics codes*' (von Taschitzki, 2006, p. 71). She has created enlarged versions of feminine consumer objects like handbags and lipstick in shades of pink. For Fleury the colour is a symbol of artificiality, so she also uses it to ironically feminise objects that are traditionally seen as male, such as '*First spaceship to Venus*' (1996) and '*Skincrime*' (1997) which involves crumpled cars painted with Givenchy nail varnish, a reworking of John Chamberlain's cars. This reference to male artworks from the 20<sup>th</sup> century criticises masculine movements. Pink plays an important role in her artwork since it is the main colour of feminine gendered products, rather than denying it she satirises it by confronting the audience with oversaturated exaggerated versions serving to highlight the issue. This isn't to undermine the colour, but to help reflect on its use.

Figure 57.  
Molly Soda, *From my Room to Yours* (2016)

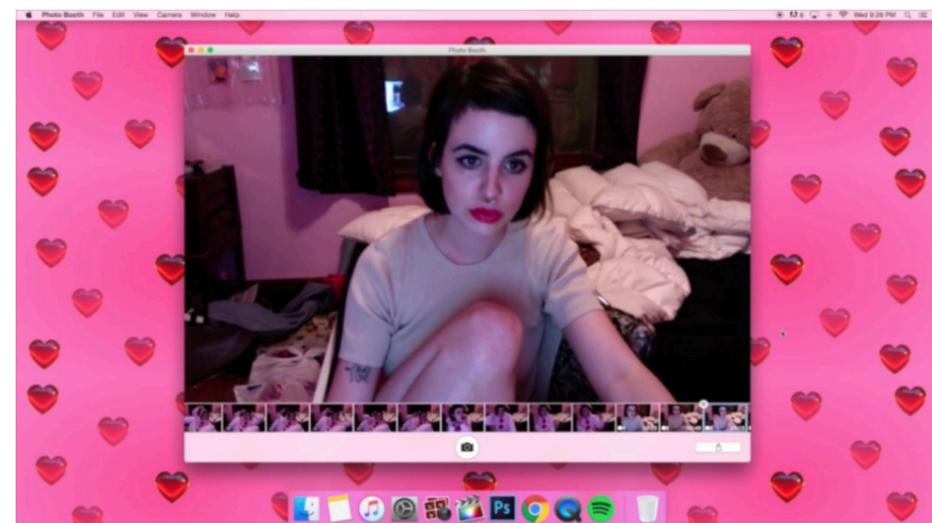


Figure 58.  
Molly Soda (2015)



Figure 59.  
Signe Pierce  
(2016) *Untitled*



Figure 60.  
Signe Pierce  
Twitter (2017)

Another way artists have dealt with pink is by embraced it, not just to satirise it, but showing they are unashamed to love it or seem feminine. Pink seems to be enjoying a comeback as a resilient political colour in recent years and the reclamation of pink is varied, 'but what it unanimously conveys is a sense of the contemporary' (Banks, 2015, p77). It is no longer a weakness and instead it has become empowering. There are some artists who have played with pink using their bodies to digitally aestheticize kitsch and social media. Instagram and Tumblr accounts sporting colourful images, saturated with pastel shades and pink are connected to reclaiming a space for this generation, expressing personal or political themes about gender, sexism and patriarchy. These Cyber-feminists such as Molly Soda, Laurence Philomene, Juno Calypso and Arvida Byström have become a force in the art-world and have not shied away from pink; there has actually been a 'growing rejection of the shade as a secondary color for a secondary sex' (Bucknell, 2017, online).

Molly Soda uses herself to explore the public and private and the undoing of shame using a hypergirly aesthetic.<sup>32</sup> She interacts with her online audience showing a 'genuine insight and synchronicity with the common concerns... of our generation' (Jansen, 2015, online). 'From my Bedroom to Yours' (2015/16) involves videos that use pink, to recreate the intimacy of her bedroom by turning the gallery into a comfortable space to hold her personal life. Pink seems to be the aesthetic of internet art, a new type of art that is only just starting to work its way into galleries. Signe Pierce another artist who works within post-Internet art, creates a dialogue between feminism and technology (D'Angelo, 2016). She purposefully uses pink along with other 'girly' colours to deal with there link to weakness and uses it to play, in response to the 1990s, hyper-feminine characters. Pierce says 'women are trained to like these colours... yet in real life the same colors are demeaning and not truly represented in adult life' (D'Angelo,

<sup>32</sup> Molly Soda- proliferation of seapunk (a subculture that originated on Tumblr in 2011. It is often associated with an aquatic-themed style of fashion, 3D net art, iconography, and allusions to popular culture of the 1990s) (Wikipedia)



Figure 61.  
Signe Pierce (2016)  
*CLITOPIA*  
Set Design / Art Direc-  
tion for Dorian Elec-  
tra's Clitopia

2016) which is why she creates artwork that can re-represent pink as strong. Reflecting upon the aesthetic of Internet art and kitsch, she uses neon colours to oversaturate ordinary subjects to create images that seem artificial, that are aesthetically pleasing but also create unease. In some of Pierce's artworks she makes ultra girly spaces, like a bedroom to show case her work or performances, to 'play along with elements of patriarchal constructs' (Diekhoff, 2016, online). This works to separate pink from being cute and harmless, instead playing an 'active powerful role' (Bucknell, 2017, online). Pierce is defiantly being a girly girl who likes pink, using it as an aggressively feminine device and showing that it is not a flaw. She manages to take control of the stereotypes and uses them to make captivating artwork. This shows that pink can be both aesthetically pleasing and empowering. That beauty can be political and femininity can be serious, all this is being expressed through using pink defiantly.

Figure 62.  
Signe Pierce  
instagram feed (2017)

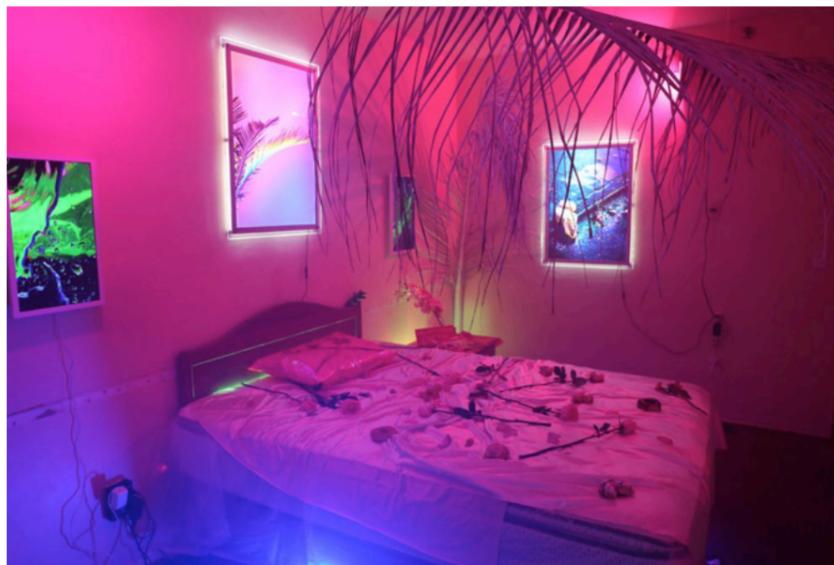
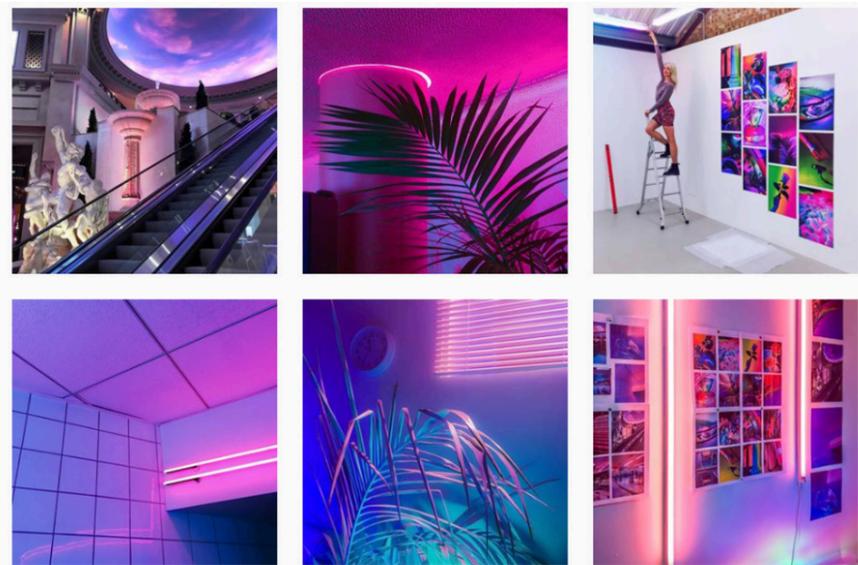


Figure 63. Signe Pierce  
(2016) *Entropical Getaway*



Figure 64.  
Signe Pierce  
(2016)



Figure 65.  
Katherina Grosse  
(2017) *Asphalt Air and Hair*



Figure 67.  
Juno Calypso  
*the Honeymoon* (2016)

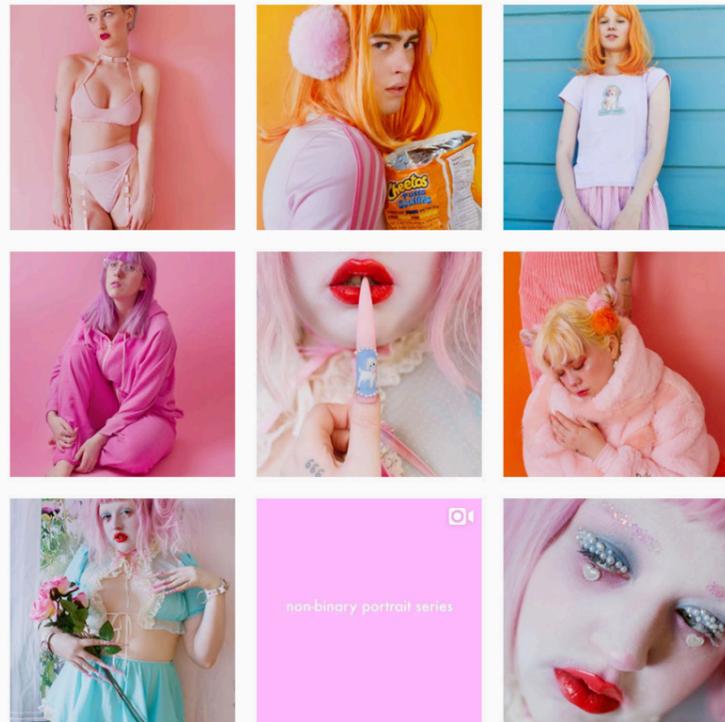


Figure 66.  
Laurence  
Philomene,  
instagram  
feed

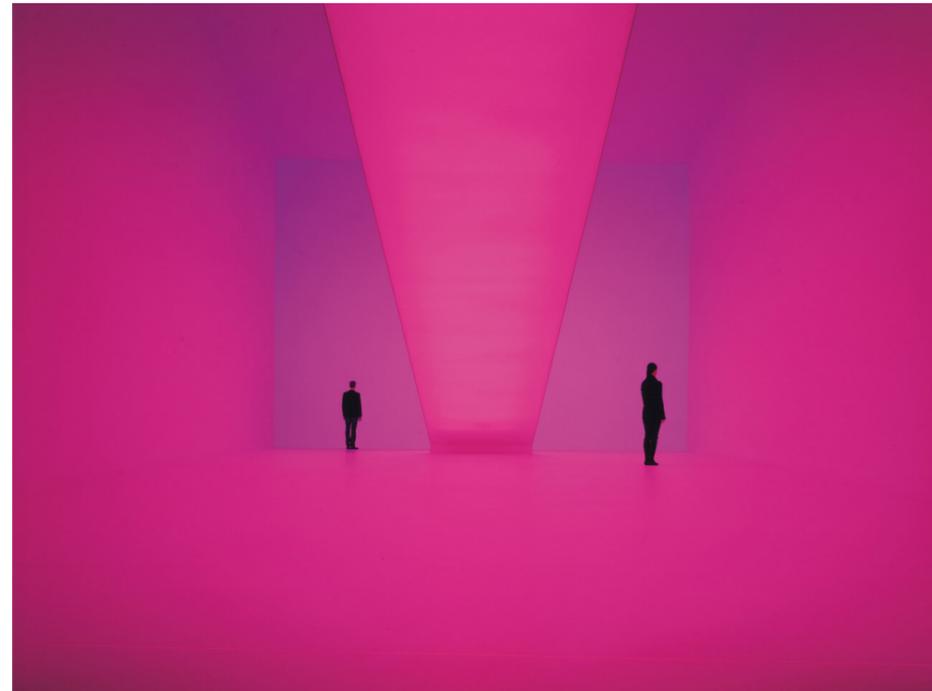


Figure 68.  
Juno Calypso  
*the Honeymoon*  
(2016)



Figure 69.  
James Turrell, (2008)  
*Bridget's Bardo*

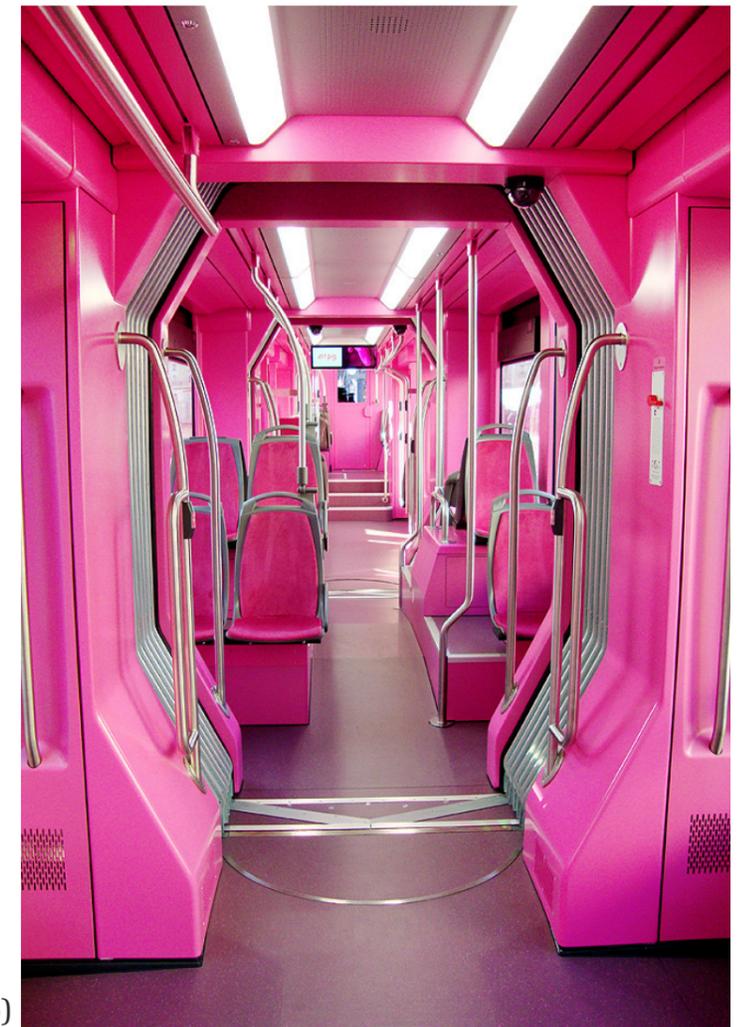


Figure 70.  
Pipilottie Rist, pink  
tram in Geneva (2016)

## Conclusion - Reimagining Pink

The use of pink has remained a largely personal journey and every artist has interpreted pink like most colours subjectively. Colours don't seem to hold permanent universal truths, but pink has predominantly been linked to femininity in recent history. The 20<sup>th</sup> century witnessed a new interest in gendered colour coding, and the transition of girls being associated to pink, this along with the period of neutrality in the 1960s-70s is the prevalent proof that 'pink for girls' is arbitrary and superficial. The fact that this is a recent social construct heavily influenced by marketing techniques that exploit or help create social norms proves that pink is a choice; and that its meanings are a social phenomenon and should be treated as such. The history of pink is important to fully comprehend the way artists have used it, and to understand whether they have reclaimed it or added to the stereotypes. Therefore has the history attached to pink has influenced its use.

Pink is a convenient tool within art because it can insinuate such a specific set of ideas about femininity or emasculation. This relies on a fleeting moment in time, where the idea of femininity became concretely connected to pink without consideration of its impact. It is an obvious colour in many ways, yet it still has been used for many purposes. Richard Mosse's artwork illuminates how many regard pink as beautiful; however, in juxtaposition it has shown how pink has another side separate from its associations. Pink is unique since it also embodies so many meanings, it is incredibly subjective, but it has the power to evoke strong feelings or reactions. It has been used to create the sublime, the extraordinary and the grotesque, or to make a political point. *'The ambivalence of the color pink results from the desire to establish harmony between the contradictory factors of social norms and personal feelings'* (Nemitz, 2006, p.41). Baker-Miller pink has shown that there is substantial consideration that pink can have an effect on emotions and the body, *'it appears to be a color that addresses us with such intensity that it poses a genuine challenge to our emotions'* (Nemitz, 2006, p.26). If there is a powerful essence to pink then artworks using it encompass that power.

Currently it is still hard to un-see pink as feminine, but there are many who are fighting this. It raises the question whether culture and art are intrinsically tied together or whether pink can be ambiguous? Everyone seems to know where pink belongs and where it does not, yet it does still manage to break free. Pink is an underestimated colour and holds existential qualities, it is an assertive colour and fits within many contexts. Pink has become a very useful method in contemporary art and has been reviewed and confronted by many artists. Numerous artists seem to share a need to liberate pink and femininity, to use it as a vice for larger issues, because pink is powerful. Pink has been used again and again within art as a tool to highlight on-going concerns, and although many artists have used it to emasculate, trivialise or artificialize their work, there are those who continue to fight for pink. Pink's meanings have not deterred artists, but encouraged them to address the issue head, showing that beauty doesn't have to be anti-political, and endeavouring to overturn its stereotypes. Individuals are reclaiming pink through confronting it and subverting the way femininity is seen, using it to highlight how pink is used and encouraging thought around the colour. The 21<sup>st</sup> century has brought massive change, and people and artists alike have been reclaiming pink for their own, it has become a symbol of power and it has started to become unshackled. Empowerment is a large part of this process and by relearning the way we see and re-expressing femininity as a strength, pink will no longer have the same stereotypes. Art has and will play a big part in this shift, and it seems that before long pink will be reclaimed.

Pink is just a colour after all, but somehow has become one of the most powerful tools to express femininity negatively. This colour has caused more uproar, shame, hatred, fear, pain, beauty and joy than any other colour, there is no denying its power. It is endless in meanings, and endless in influence. It's a symbol of enduring patriarchy, the power of stereotypes and the role that we all play in reinforcing binaries. Unlearning something engrained in society is difficult but as history has shown, society evolves; we are in a time that ideas have never been so easy to communicate globally, so soon enough pink will change.

## Epilogue:

It had now been two weeks since I was able to see the true colours of the world. It had been difficult, because I was so aware and able to feel my pain everyday. Each day became tougher, as I watched everyone go on in oblivion; I wanted to do something.

That day, on my way home, as I put my hand in my pocket, I found a note. It gave me directions to a meeting point on the outskirts of P-618. I was captivated, but because I felt so hopeless I didn't feel fear.

An hour later, I stepped off the shuttle, near the address I had been given. Inside a small building, I found someone waiting for me. After some caution they led me to a hidden stairwell that led down into an underground bunker. They had found me. They told me that they knew who had left the document in my room, but she was gone. She must have hidden it before they took her.

They were the Liberation. They too could see. Many of those here were birthers; the loss of so many children led them to uncover the truth.

Over the following weeks I would travel there after work, helping to build multiple devices that could switch-off the P-618 filters. During this time we recruited others carefully building a team, and eventually after a few months we were ready.

We carefully distributed the machines to four locations around the city early in morning and activated them at the same time sending a powerful signal that fused everyone's switch, deactivating the filter.

It was brutal. Like a mass release from solitary confinement. I watched as one of the agents standing at his post looked around in shock and amazement. His whole persona deflated as he realised what was happening.

As the sun rose, more people flooded onto the streets, they were hugging and speaking sincerely for the first time. There was so much awe of colours, awe for freedom to feel and live.

We gave the option for some to continue using the filter, but the majority chose to see. For us if pink was a choice then we were free.

The years to follow were often chaotic; the people were at a loss not knowing how to deal with their collective pain. Yet, after some months with the reforms implemented by the Liberation, we were able to create a state that was not controlling, where people were able to make choices. The population had recovered and there was no need for birthers. Children were able to follow their own paths with their families. We worked to clean the world outside of P-618, which was renamed Laetus, in the hope that one day we would be able to rebuild our world.

Word count: 8700



Mike Kelley 71.  
Kelley, Mike (2011)  
*Kandor 10B (Exploded Fortress of Solitude)*

Figure 72.  
Mike Kelley: *Fortress of Solitude* (2011)



## Appendixes

### Appendix i

In 2007 neuroscientist Hurlbert and Ling tested 208 people in the UK, 37 of which were Chinese. In the study the average female preferred the reddish-purple region, whereas males peaked towards the blue-green region of the colour spectrum. Speculating that the hunter-gatherer theory was the most indisputable cause for women liking pink, suggesting that the female ancestral brain learnt to specialise in gathering-related duties to spot berries in the foliage, or blushing and change in emotions. The results showed that women preferred reddish-purple but they didn't take into account that they never actually tested a preference or specialism for pink. However, even though Hurlbert and Ling make these points, they end with *'we report finding a robust, cross cultural sex difference in colour preference,'* (Hurlbert, 2007, R623) suggesting that somehow testing 37 Chinese eliminates all other cultures preferences, or social influences. It appears that they jumped to conclusions with no evidence to back them up. A quick example of a counter study carried out in Namibia on the Himba people *'found there was no preference for reddish tones among women'* (Hammond, 2014) which goes to show the research was not in fact cross-cultural. The other issue is that Hurlbert and Ling only tested 20-26 year old, who will have already been affected by their upbringing.

A study run by Hines at Cambridge University, on 120 children under the age of two, showed no colour preferences. She wrote that *'as children grow up, they learn and copy from those around them, and children have a longing to fit in. This is exploited by toy companies etc.'* (Hines, 2013, online). She concluded that the gendered similarities in infant's favourite colours *'may arise from socialisation or cognitive gender development rather than inborn factors'* (Curtis, 2011, online). Another study taken on by Bigler looks into how children pick up on gendered queues. In a school she divided children by red and blue T-shirts regardless of gender or race, and after a period of time the children adopted biases towards the colour that they were grouped with. Meaning that children are easily influenced by what is imposed on them, because at a young age children's *'category-based processing dominates cognition'* (Cunningham, 2011, p. 600) as they are constantly trying to get to grips with their environment. This study goes to show how colour coding can play a large role in reinforcing stereotypes.

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An experiment on BBC Stories (2017) is one among many that showed adults treat children differently depending on their gender. The clothes of the boys and girls were swapped, and the participating adults unknowingly assumed the child's gender and then gendered their play correspondingly. Playing rougher and choosing more active games with the 'boys', and playing with pink soft toys with the children dressed as 'girls'. This subconscious segregation of what constitutes appropriate play is serious evidence that gendering is affecting the way we treat children regardless of their actual gender. Which could have a massive impact on the skills children learn as they grow up, and could be why there is still a lack of diversity in STEM subjects.

#### Appendix ii

Starting in 1991, pink began to be reclaimed by Breast Cancer Research, which *'legitimised the wearing of pink among adult women in a way Disney princesses never could'* (Brennan, 2009, p.157). However, Breast cancer culture has encouraged consumer led philanthropy controlling a multibillion-dollar industry. It is intrinsically intertwined with many shades of pink, and has a reliance on *'heteronormative expressions of womanhood'* (Hughes, 2005) in a way it has *'repackaged objectification'* (Hughes, 2005) pretending to go along with post-feminism. While it may be a very important and good cause, some believe it *'has become a tool of cause marketing and re-signified gender politics that appropriates rather than challenges existing binaries'* (Moore, 2008, p.69-70). The colour has come to represent a very powerful industry, but it lacks responsibility.

#### Appendix iii

In Genschow experiment, they were careful to be ethical, in a way that wasn't monitored by others in the 1970/80s, acquiring consent from participants and excluding highly aggravated inmates. They perceived no significant results, or a difference between the white and pink cells used. It is possible that if they hadn't excluded the aggravated inmates they would have had different results. Furthermore, the inmates were held for three days in the cell, which wasn't advised by Schauss, and guard's observations through questionnaires couldn't be precise.

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In 1932, research by J S Krieg, showed that light travelling into the eye, travels through neurochemical channels which are independent of the optic channel, meaning that colours could have a direct affect on the endocrine system which excrete hormones (behavioural photobiology). (Schauss, 1979, p.219) In scientific terms, it is reported, *'the phenomenon affects the endocrine system causing a tranquilising effect on the muscle system. The effect cannot be controlled by conscious or unconscious effort.* (Schauss, 1979, p.220) Therefor possibly causing the production of melatonin, which causes drowsiness.

#### Appendix iv

The titles of his photos are *'grotesque and naïve juxtapositions'* (Gresle, 2014, online) for example: Madonna and Child, and others are titles of songs like Ruby Tuesday by the Rolling Stones, Better the Devil you Know by Kylie Minogue.

Richard Mosse uses theatre to capture our attention, when in fact we are all complicit as

*'these images contain our globalized relation to the Congo's recourses'* (Blackburn, 2010). *'If there is no enemy to see here, it is because, today, we are all implicated in these wars, whose causes are not really so ineffable at all. Yet our involvement and the questions that our involvement raises about the nature of democracy in the era of global capital, or on a global scale, do not appear to be hiding anywhere in 'Infra', even behind the camouflage'* (Bajorek, 2015, p. 235).

These images do nothing to acknowledge our impact, instead Mosse is encouraging our cynical curiosity of looking at suffering,

*'there has never been an appropriate way to flash disaster, to introduce the pornography of war'* (Blackburn, 2010). *'Reimagining a subject already freighted with an especially brutal colonial past and a complex series of subsequent conflicts. What of the history of colonialism and the violence of the transition into independence... These histories represent a psychic wound, a trauma that has yet to be fully acknowledged'* (Gresle, 2014, online).

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Sachsenhausen, north of Berlin, was established in 1936 for German detainees. It was also an administrative and training centre for the SS. Prisoners in the concentration camp at Sachsenhausen, Germany, December 19, 1938. Available at [<http://ww2today.com/13-december-1944-sachsenhausen-concentration-camp-new-arrivals>] [accessed 10/01/18]

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Vintage 1960s magazine advertisement; Lustre-Creme's "*Pink Is for Girls*" ad campaign, 1967, blonde with pink feather boa. Published in Family Circle, Oct. 1967, Vol. 71, No. 4. Available at [<https://www.flickr.com/photos/29069717@N02/10157685226>] [accessed 10/01/18]

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Advert on EBay available at [<https://www.ebay.co.uk/itm/BABY-BOY-GIRL-PINK-BLUE-TWO-TIER-NAPPY-CAKE-TEDDY-AND-PLAQUE-BABY-SHOWER-GIFT-/122763146038>] [accessed 10/01/18]

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Pink for girls, *Blue for boys timeline*, Google search on ngrams (2017) (screenshot) available at [[https://books.google.com/ngrams/graph?content=pink+for+girls%2C+blue+for+boys&case\\_insensitive=on&year\\_start=1800&year\\_end=2008&corpus=15&smoothing=7&share=&direct\\_url=t4%3B%2Cpink%20for%20girls%3B%2Cc0%3B%2Cs0%3B%3Bpink%20for%20girls%3B%2Cc0%3B%3BPink%20for%20girls%3B%2Cc0%3B.t4%3B%2Cblue%20for%20boys%3B%2Cc0%3B%2Cs0%3B%3Bblue%20for%20boys%3B%2Cc0%3B%3BBlue%20for%20boys%3B%2Cc0](https://books.google.com/ngrams/graph?content=pink+for+girls%2C+blue+for+boys&case_insensitive=on&year_start=1800&year_end=2008&corpus=15&smoothing=7&share=&direct_url=t4%3B%2Cpink%20for%20girls%3B%2Cc0%3B%2Cs0%3B%3Bpink%20for%20girls%3B%2Cc0%3B%3BPink%20for%20girls%3B%2Cc0%3B.t4%3B%2Cblue%20for%20boys%3B%2Cc0%3B%2Cs0%3B%3Bblue%20for%20boys%3B%2Cc0%3B%3BBlue%20for%20boys%3B%2Cc0)] [accessed 10/01/18]

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Portia Munson, (1994/2016) *Pink Project: Table*, 29 1/ x 96 x 160 inches available at [<http://www.ppowgallery.com/artist/portia-munson/work/fullscreen#&panel1-7>] [accessed 13/01/18]

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Women wearing pink hats with cat ears gathered in Washington DC, by Reuters (2017) available at [<https://www.thesun.co.uk/news/2671536/womens-march-live-updates-donald-trump-protest/>][accessed 10/01/18]

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[film still] "Gulabi Gang," a film showing at the 11th Annual San Francisco South Asian Film Festival. (Courtesy of the San Francisco South Asian Film Festival) 2013 available at [<https://www.stanforddaily.com/2013/11/07/review-of-selections-from-the-san-francisco-international-south-asian-film-festival/>][accessed 10/01/18]

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Buckingham Palace (2012) Getty Images, In the spotlight: Buckingham Palace is bathed in a rosy glow for Breast Cancer Awareness Month available at [<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2211606/Turning-world-pink-Landmarks-globe-changed-colour-start-Breast-Cancer-Action-Month.html>] [accessed 10/01/18]

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the US Naval Correctional Facility in Seattle, Washington, painted Baker-Miller pink (a.k.a. Schauss pink). Courtesy Alexander Schauss. Available at [<http://cabinetmagazine.org/issues/11/pink.php>] [accessed 10/01/18]

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