

Stijn Cole

“October” Project, 2015

Stijn Cole’s “October” project brings together two large-format and some fifteen smaller paintings, as well as photographs. All were produced over the course of a one-month residency at the Darling Foundry in Montreal, during which the Belgian artist pursued his exploration of light and landscape in series entitled *Colorscapes* and *Timescapes*.

Cole’s interest in light first took form in 2003 when he participated in a workshop beginning at daybreak in the vicinity of Ghent. His first attempt to capture time consisted in fixing the entire day’s light on a roll of sensitized paper. He has since developed a practice whereby he goes on excursions into nature and takes photographs of a particular landscape several times a day or over a longer period, ultimately composing a travel diary of sorts. Stijn Cole was attracted to the Montreal region because of its autumn light and colours.

The process Cole uses to make his *Colorscapes* is rigorous. After taking several shots of a spot, which requires him to stay outdoors for long stretches of time, he transfers the images to a computer program that ranges them into colour cubes from light to dark. He then prints the digitized files. Cole applies paint over the paper prints, some of which will become paintings on linen. Far from being minimalistic, his pictorial and tactile work reveals both his gesture and the mood of a particular place. His *Timescapes* are photographs taken once a minute (some of which are used for *Colorscapes*) and treated in a linear fashion to create a spatiotemporal portrait in which each vertical line represents a minute; the final result is a laminated photograph on Dibond. The landscape’s characteristic horizon present in all his works makes possible a perspective view of the colours.

Drawings are a third component of Stijn Cole’s project. Often large sized, his drawings can be the result of an observation of nature, for example Branitz Park in Germany for *2 steps aside* (2013), or they can reproduce a well-known work of art—in some cases eliminating cultural details, in others remaking the work in its entirety, as is the case with *De Watzmann* (2010) in which Caspar David Friedrich’s famous painting is sublimated into two works: a pencil drawing and a painting whose original colours have received the *Colorscape* treatment. The drawings, which highlight the artist’s role as an observer and similarly engage us, are labour-intensive. Cole’s short stay in Montreal did not allow him to produce drawings.

In addition to Stijn Cole’s interest in light and landscape, the presence in his work of both figuration and abstraction deserves to be mentioned. In fact, the artist draws from a figurative form—an old painting or photograph of a place—the elements of an abstract work whose final rendering, after being submitted to various contemporary technical processes, still evokes nature. As Cole himself has stated, what he is trying to extract, or abstract, is essence—the essence of light, time and landscape.

— Colette Tougas, Montreal, October 2015

Stijn Cole (born 1978) lives and works in Chimay, Belgium. He holds a degree in advertising, studied sculpture and directed his own gallery for a short period. Since 2005 he has participated in numerous solo and group shows in Europe, including the Musée Dhondt-Dhaenens (MDD) in Deurle, the Ghent Museum of Fine Arts (MSK), the Malines Culture Centre/De Garage, Second Room in Brussels and the Kunstverein Schwerte, Germany. He is represented by Galerie Van De Weghe in Antwerp.