

*ILL SEEN, ILL SAID: THE DELEUZIAN STUTTER  
MEETS THE STROOP EFFECT IN  
DIANA THATER'S COLORVISION SERIES (2016)*

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In his essay “He Stuttered”, Gilles Deleuze demonstrates how a dominant language might be contested or “minorized” from within by placing it within a constant state of disequilibrium or bifurcation, by making it vibrate or stutter, creating, as he puts it, “an affective and intensive language, and no longer an affectation of the one who speaks.”<sup>1</sup> But what if we were to destabilize this disequilibrium still further by creating a rupture between language and sensation, between color and space, stasis and movement? Los Angeles-based video artist Diana Thater explored this pattern of interference or inhibition—a form of “stutter that stutters” —in her 2016 installation *Colorvision* at Brian Butler’s 1301 PE Gallery in Los Angeles. The exhibition consisted of eight individual monitor pieces, each displaying the name of a color along with a bouquet of flowers in a different, complimentary, color. As in her previous works, Thater uses the colors of the video spectrum—red, green, blue (primaries); cyan, magenta, yellow (secondaries); purple and orange (tertiaries) —in order to meta-communicate the system of the apparatus all the better to subvert its innate structure from within. The word “GREEN”, for example, appears with magenta flowers, while the word “MAGENTA” appears with green flowers (Figure 1). Similarly, Blue is reverse-matched with Yellow, Red with Cyan, and Purple with Orange.

This slippage between reading and perceiving is based on a series of neurological tests developed by the psychologist John Ridley Stroop (1897-1973), who reported his findings— since known as “The Stroop Effect” —in two papers: “Studies of Interference in Serial Verbal Reactions” (1935) and “Factors Affecting Speed in Serial Verbal Reactions” (1938). His experiments were based on L.W. Kline’s law of associative inhibition, which declared, “If *a* is already connected with *b*, then it is difficult to connect it with *k*, *b* gets in the way.”<sup>2</sup> In other words, Stroop’s experiments are strictly materialist in their



Figure 1: Diana Thater, Green and Magenta from the *Colorvision* Series.

function and for this reason are still highly relevant today, for they explore how concrete social conditions impact and influence our perceptual and affective response to expressive stimuli such as corporate branding, buzzwords in advertising and political campaigns and the internet (which may help to explain why “Brexit” was a far more effective associative catch-phrase than “Remain”) as well as our ability to concentrate while chatting on our cell phones while driving. As the Psychologist Gordon D. Logan argues:

The Stroop paradigm requires a judgment about one dimension of a multidimensional stimulus in which other dimensions may conflict with or agree with the judged dimension. For example, the judged dimension may be color, which the subject must name aloud, and the unjudged dimension may be form, which specifies a word representing a compatible or conflicting color. Again, the response depends primarily on the judged dimension, but performance is influenced subtly by relations between judged and unjudged dimensions. Performance is facilitated when relations are consistent with expectation and inhibited when they are not. The Stroop paradigm represents real-world situations in which one property of an object (or event) cues another property of the same object (or event).<sup>3</sup>

Through a series of experiments involving a broad range of volunteers, Stroop applied this principle to explore the innate time differential for naming colors (in the form of homogeneous squares or as swastikas, where, similar to letter forms, white space “invaded”

the color and made it harder to “read”) compared to reading color names as words. Stroop discovered that when the meaning of a word and its color are congruent (e.g. the word **BLUE** written in blue color), it is easy to recognize and “read” the actual color of the word (Figure 2).

<b>RED</b>	<b>YELLOW</b>	<b>BLUE</b>	<b>GREEN</b>	<b>BLACK</b>
<b>PINK</b>	<b>ORANGE</b>	<b>BROWN</b>	<b>GRAY</b>	<b>PURPLE</b>
<b>GREEN</b>	<b>GRAY</b>	<b>BLACK</b>	<b>BLUE</b>	<b>YELLOW</b>
<b>GRAY</b>	<b>BROWN</b>	<b>PINK</b>	<b>ORANGE</b>	<b>BLUE</b>
<b>YELLOW</b>	<b>RED</b>	<b>GREEN</b>	<b>BLACK</b>	<b>GRAY</b>
<b>BLACK</b>	<b>BROWN</b>	<b>PURPLE</b>	<b>ORANGE</b>	<b>PINK</b>
<b>PURPLE</b>	<b>BLACK</b>	<b>YELLOW</b>	<b>RED</b>	<b>GREEN</b>
<b>ORANGE</b>	<b>PINK</b>	<b>BROWN</b>	<b>GRAY</b>	<b>PURPLE</b>

Figure 2: Stroop Test: Naming the Colors of the Print of Words Where the Color of the Print and the Word are the Same (RCNs).

Conversely, when the meaning of the word is incongruent with the color, such as **RED** written in blue color, it creates a conflict between the color and the word’s meaning and takes slightly longer to read (Figure 3). More importantly, it is also difficult to name the color “blue” when it constitutes the word “**RED**.” “In other words”, as Stroop himself puts it, “if the word “red” is printed in blue ink how will the interference of the ink-color “blue” upon reading the printed word “red” compare with the interference of the printed word “red” upon calling the name of the ink-color “blue”?”<sup>4</sup> This conflict between word-recognition (which is faster) and color recognition (which is slower) requires extra processing time for the brain to resolve. In short,

The increase in time for reacting to words caused by the presence of conflicting color stimuli is taken as the measure of the interference of color stimuli upon reading words. The increase in the time for reacting to colors caused by the presence of conflicting word stimuli is taken as the measure of the interference of word stimuli upon naming colors.<sup>5</sup>

RED	YELLOW	BLUE	GREEN	BLACK
PINK	ORANGE	BROWN	GRAY	PURPLE
GREEN	GRAY	BLACK	BLUE	YELLOW
GRAY	BROWN	PINK	ORANGE	BLUE
YELLOW	RED	GREEN	BLACK	GRAY
BLACK	BROWN	PURPLE	ORANGE	PINK
PURPLE	BLACK	YELLOW	RED	GREEN
ORANGE	PINK	BROWN	GRAY	PURPLE

Figure 3: Stroop Test: Naming the Colors of the Print of Words Where the Color of the Print and the Word are Different (NCWd).

Stroop began his experiments with a simple contrast between “Reading color names where the color of the print and the word are different” (RCNd) (for example, reading “RED” printed in the color blue) and “Reading color names printed in black (RCNb).”<sup>6</sup> He noted that “It took an average of 2.3 seconds longer to read 100 color names printed in colors different from that named by the word than to read the same names printed in black.”<sup>7</sup> However, there is another language-perception discrepancy here that involves a specific kind of Saussurian universal semiotics which attempts to explain reality in terms of signs, a system that Deleuze and Guattari subvert throughout their writings on language. While the difference between color names and printed color (RCNd) tests tend to internalize their discrepant stammering effect within the arena of color itself (i.e. we remain focused on why the word doesn’t match the hue), the black and white test (RCNb) opens itself up to a form of metonymic skidding, giving the signifier full rein to set up connotative chains extending towards an endless outside, reinforcing Saussure’s definition of language as a relational system whereby the field of immanence is always constituted by a pre-set value determined by the various orders of sign-signifier-sign etc. Thus Red might suggest communists, rage, fire engines, London mail boxes or, in terms of cinema, Jean-Luc Godard’s famous reply, “Not blood, red”, to the *Cahiers du Cinéma* editors remark that “There is a good deal of blood in *Pierrot*.”<sup>8</sup> Similarly, Yellow might be associated with cowardice; Blue sadness; Green youthful inexperience or ecological awareness, and so on. Saussure thus codes the gaps between signs (in this case colors and their

connotations) and then conveniently provides the signifier that over-codes them in turn (relational language as a whole).

Although the cognitive interference between the two brain processes of word-recognition and color-recognition may be a problem to be solved in psychological terms, from Thater and Deleuze's point of view, this *aporia* between reason and sensation, language and affect is the very definition of a multiplicity:

Creative stuttering is what makes language grow from the middle, like grass; it is what makes language a rhizome instead of a tree, what puts language in perpetual disequilibrium: *Ill Seen, Ill Said* (content and expression). Being well spoken has never been either the distinctive feature or the concern of great writers.<sup>9</sup>

Or, one might add, of great artists who exploit the stutter to create an even greater incidence of cognitive-perceptual skidding. We see this at work in Stroop's second experiment—"The Effect of Interfering Word Stimuli upon Naming Colors Serially"<sup>10</sup>—which is also the basis for Thater's *Colorvision* series as a whole. Where the word "RED" was printed in blue it is now to be called "blue", if "RED" is printed in green it is to be called "green." "Thus", as Stroop explains, "color of the print was to be the controlling stimulus and not the name of the color spelled by the word. This is to be known as the 'Naming color of word test where the color of the print and the word are different'" (NCWd).<sup>11</sup> Following Deleuze's application of C.S. Peirce's semiotics in *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*, this would constitute a "LECTOSIGN: a visual image which must be 'read' as much as seen",<sup>12</sup> where the brain is required to inhibit the faster and stronger word-recognition process so that color-recognition might win out in the spectator's final response.

The results showed a marked slowing down of the ability to name colors when they make up the word of a different color compared to perceiving a simple square: "...the interference of conflicting word stimuli upon the time for naming 100 colors (each color being the print of a word which names another color) caused an increase of 47.0 seconds or 74.3 percent of the normal time for naming colors printed in squares."<sup>13</sup> These interference values gave Stroop the basis for comparing the effectiveness of two types of associations:

Since the presence of the color stimuli caused no reliable increase over the normal time for reading words [...] and the presence of word stimuli caused a considerable increase over the normal time for naming colors (4.35 standard deviation units) the associations that have been formed between the word stimuli and the reading response are evidently more effective than those that have been formed between the color stimuli and the naming response.<sup>14</sup>

Although most studies agree that this discrepancy between naming and reading might be overcome through increased familiarity, Stroop cites Warner Brown's conclusions from an earlier study that, "From these data it seems safe to conclude that the difference in speed between color naming and word reading does not depend upon practice."<sup>15</sup> Indeed, Brown further notes that, "It is easier to speak a printed word than to name a color because when you want to name a color you have first to think of the name (the word) and then speak it, whereas the printed word can be uttered without your having to think of anything."<sup>16</sup> Brown also tried printing the individual color's name over the actual block of color but discovered little improvement in response time: "The one association process does not reinforce the other. The introspections of all subjects confirm the figures in declaring that the letters printed on the colors do not serve as helpful cues or prompts, but on the contrary actually interfere with the process of association."<sup>17</sup> In conclusion, he stated categorically that, "From the results of this part of the experiment it may be concluded that the association process in naming simple objects like colors is radically different from the association process in reading printed words."<sup>18</sup>

What is clear is that this is not an "either or" process but rather one of "inclusive disjunction" that generates, as Deleuze and Guattari put it,

an immanent use that would no longer be exclusive or restrictive, but fully affirmative, nonrestrictive, inclusive. A disjunction that remains disjunctive, and that still affirms the disjoined terms, that affirms them throughout their entire distance, *without restricting one by the other or excluding the other from the one*, is perhaps the greatest paradox. "Either... or... or", instead of "either/or."<sup>19</sup>

Such a multiplicity would necessitate less a linguistics of relational signs (à la Saussure) than one of flows, for “What defines it is the AND, as something which has its place between the elements or between the sets. AND, AND, AND—stammering. And even if there are only two terms, there is an AND between the two, which is neither the one nor the other, nor the one which becomes the other, but which constitutes the multiplicity.”<sup>20</sup> It is here that Deleuze and Guattari turn to the Danish linguist, Louis Hjelmslev (1899-1965), whose system abandons all privileged reference. Thus Plateau 3 in *A Thousand Plateaus*—“10,000 BC—The geology of morals (who does the earth think it is?)”—explores the chemical, organic and anthropomorphic strata of reality using Hjelmslev’s linguistic categories of content and expression. As Ronald Bogue explains,

These linguistic terms [...] are used in such a broad way that they cease to function linguistically and become physical concepts, categories for understanding the articulation and organization of matter (especially since they are combined with the quasi geological terminology of strata, epistrata, parastrata, and so on...) [...] The end result of Deleuze and Guattari’s analysis of the content and expression of the strata of reality is not to convert the world into signs, but to situate material signs within a plenum of matter.<sup>21</sup>

Instead of Saussure’s signifier and signified, Hjelmslev refers to an *expression plane* (functional structures) and *content plane* (formed matters) respectively, and also creates a distinction between form and substance. Thus every sign is a function of two forms: content form and expression form; but these are in turn manifested by two substances—content substance and expression substance. Whereas the content substance is the psychical and conceptual manifestation of the sign (manifested in Thater’s work through the word), the expression substance is the physical matter through which a sign is materialized (usually sound, but in Thater’s case, video color). More importantly, Hjelmslev distinguishes between an unformed material or matter—an undivided surface upon which a net or grid is cast, not unlike Deleuze and Guattari’s plane of consistency spread over the body without organs—and the forms and substances that are shaped from it (e.g. the colored squares, swastikas and words in Stroop’s experiments). “Thus, in the analysis of language”, notes Bogue, “Hjelmslev distinguishes between the raw sonic matter of expression, the expres-

sion-form imposed on this matter and the expression-substance created by this form (phonemes therefore having both a form and a substance)."<sup>22</sup> However, Hjelmslev adds an important caveat, arguing that

The terms expression plane and content plane [...] are chosen in conformity with established notions and are quite arbitrary. Their functional definition provides no justification for calling one, and not the other, of these entities *expression*, or one, and not the other, *content*. They are defined only by their mutual solidarity and neither of them can be identified otherwise. They are defined only oppositively and relatively, as mutually opposed functions of one and the same function.<sup>23</sup>

This has an obvious appeal to Deleuze and Guattari for it advocates the existence of a material substrate which precedes the formation of the planes of expression and content (not unlike Bergson's aggregate of matter and Spinoza's immanent substance). In sum, as Bogue puts it, "The plane of consistency is destratified, decoded, absolutely deterritorialized matter, which is not dualistically opposed to organized strata of content and expression but 'everywhere present, everywhere first and primary, always immanent.'"<sup>24</sup> In this way the artist or user of language shapes or sculpts matter not by creating signs but by tracing flows and causing them to circulate through disjunctive or conjunctive syntheses. "That is what style is, or rather the absence of style", argue Deleuze and Guattari, "asyn-tactic, agrammatical: the moment when language is no longer defined by what it says, even less by what makes it a signifying thing, but by what causes it to move, to flow, and to explode—desire. For literature is like schizophrenia: a process and not a goal, a production and not an expression."<sup>25</sup>

Of course matter expresses and formalizes itself very differently depending on medium and the stutter effect is by no means limited to works of literature (or film). Jasper Johns's 1959 painting *False Start* (Figure 4) is a prime example of "The Stroop Effect" at work, but the brain's inhibiting effect on our ability to name colors is far weaker than in Thater's videos largely due to the material nature of the pigment itself. At first glance, Maurice Merleau-Ponty's discussion of color in painting as a form of latency or possibility, what he calls the *flesh* of things, seems relevant here. However, unlike Hjelmslev, who relates language and color directly to matter, Merleau-Ponty insists that



Figure 4: Jasper Johns, *False Start* (The Museum of Modern Art, New York).

The flesh is not matter, is not mind, is not substance. To designate it, we should need the old term “element”, in the sense it was used to speak of water, air, earth, and fire, that is, in the sense of a *general thing*, midway between the spatio-temporal individual and the idea, a sort of incarnate principle that brings a style of being wherever there is a fragment of being. The flesh is in this sense an “element” of Being.<sup>26</sup>

In other words, for Merleau-Ponty, flesh starts from body and spirit, not from substance. Instead it’s an element of Being, expressed through the formula: “Flesh of the world—Flesh of the body—Being.”<sup>27</sup> This reversibility of feeling and the felt (and by extension, perception and cognition) is not unlike a handshake, an intimate intermingling of clasped hands where the subject is touched as well as touching.

In *What Is Philosophy?*, Deleuze and Guattari challenge Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenological perspective by arguing that flesh is less an issue of Being than of *becoming*, for “It is like a passage from the finite to the infinite, but also from territory to deterritorialization. It is indeed the moment of the infinite: infinitely varied infinities.”<sup>28</sup> For Deleuze and Guattari, Merleau-Ponty by-passes the key issue of the flesh’s relation to color because he ignores its relationship to sensation: “The question of whether flesh is adequate to art can be put in this way: can it support percept and affect, can it constitute the being of sensation, or

must it not itself be supported and pass into other powers of life?"<sup>29</sup> Painting's objective is to paint forces which have a direct contact with the infinite. Thus, in Stroop's terms, the word **RED**, painted in blue, would no longer "house" the color as a kind of inhabitant of time and place, but would instead defer to blue's ability to turn percept (and language-as-matter) into a "cosmic sensibility." "In short", argue Deleuze and Guattari, "the area of plain, uniform color vibrates, clenches or cracks open because it is the bearer of glimpsed forces",<sup>30</sup> not unlike the temporal crack opened up by Barnett Newman's trademark zips. The body and the cosmos thus swirl around each other as so many zones of indiscernibility, revealing latent forces lurking in the area of plain, uniform color. Thus forces as percepts and becomings as affects are perfectly complementary, for,

[...] the being of sensation is not the flesh but the compound of nonhuman forces of the cosmos, of man's nonhuman becomings, and of the ambiguous house that exchanges and adjusts them, makes them whirl around like winds. Flesh is only the developer which disappears in what it develops: the compound of sensation. Like all painting, abstract painting is sensation, nothing but sensation.<sup>31</sup>

Let's explore this use of sensation in Jasper Johns' paintings and combines so that we can get a better understanding of how the Stroop effect works differently in relation to pigment compared to the movement inherent to Thater's monitor works. *False Start* consists of a field of rough, abstract gestures in red, yellow, orange, white, blue and gray, with corresponding stencils of the different colors' names placed seemingly at random over selected areas. Johns deliberately sets up a text-color discrepancy whereby in most cases the words don't match their corresponding fields: RED is placed over yellow or blue; ORANGE over red; BLUE over red, etc. However, RED is occasionally stenciled in red, so that there is a direct correspondence between word and color if not word and ground. Conversely, BLUE is appropriately (in spatially descriptive terms) placed over a blue field but stenciled in Yellow. Although this might appear to make Stroop's original assignment even harder for the uninitiated, it is in fact much easier to suppress the linguistic bias in our attempts to name the colors because we can focus our gaze on the unstenciled color fields, absorb the affectively sensate material saturation of say, red, yellow or blue and then seek out the corresponding colors in the stenciled words. In Hjelmslevian terms, the

plane of matter—through expression substance—effectively overrides content/form substance and creates a pure intensity that defies linguistic inhibition, a case of the logic of sensation superseding the logic of sense.

Significantly, *False Start* turned out to be anything but, for Johns incorporated variations on the Stroop Test in a number of subsequent works, including *By the Sea* (1961), *Diver* (1962), *Field Painting*, *Periscope (Hart Crane)* and *Land's End* (all 1963), *According to What* (1964) as well as two versions of *Souvenir* (1964). This is fully in line with Johns' methodological maxim from a 1963-4 sketchbook memo: "Take an object. Do something to it. Do something else to it." The Stroop Test also tallies with Johns's explanation of the source for his signature use of colored clusters of parallel lines or hatch marks, which he had seen on a passing car: "It had all the qualities that interested me—literalness, repetitiveness, an obsessive quality, order with dumbness, and the possibility of a complete lack of meaning."<sup>32</sup> *Diver*, for example, partly duplicates *False Start*'s discrepant use of word and color, thereby following Stroop's NCWd schema discussed earlier. Thus RED is stenciled in blue and YELLOW in red on the same yellow ground. However, *According to What* (Figure 5) radically deconstructs the Test by breaking up the word-color correspondence to the lowest common denominator of individual letters (an unlikely fusion of painting and Lettrism).



Figure 5: Jasper Johns, *According to What* (Philadelphia Museum of Art).

Divided into multiple vertical panels with attached objects such as an inverted chair and a fragment of sculpture, the work is a complex exercise in the relation between materiality and representation, pigment and sensation, color and language. As Patricia Kaplan describes it, "Colors assume many guises. They are named by hinged free-swinging letters,



Figure 6: Jasper Johns, *Periscope I* (Surovek Gallery).

read as impressions, presented as a chart of circles and seen as rectangles of red, yellow, and blue. This intermingling of the concrete with the conceptual parallels Duchamp.<sup>33</sup> Crucially, Johns no longer paints RED, YELLOW or BLUE in uniform colors (whether matching or otherwise) but picks out individual letters in different hues. Thus while the “RE” of RED is painted in red, the D is isolated in white. Similarly, the “LUE” of blue are rendered in blue, but the “B” is also in white. There is also a discrepancy between the free-swinging letters and their stenciled imprints, so that a black “Y” in the sculpted YELLOW is now mirrored by a yellow impression. This experiment shows that Stroop’s original conflict between word-recognition and color recognition disappears entirely when the words are reduced to individual letters: the letter “D” is no longer linked to the word “red” but simply acts as a shaped perceptual ground for the logic of sensation to do its work without interference. In this respect, *Periscope (Hart Crane)* is the metacommunicative apotheosis of this development, for as William Poundstone points out, it’s a Stroop painting but also a grey monochrome, with RED, YELLOW and BLUE rendered in exactly the wrong hues to be a viable Stroop test.<sup>34</sup> A later lithographic version from 1979 goes to the opposite extreme, with the three colors rendered in white outline against their own

corresponding colors (Figure 6), blurring the relationship between map and territory to the point of seeming redundancy.

An excellent example of such perceptual-linguistic overdetermination, and a useful bridge to a discussion of the cinematic aspects of Thater's *Colorvision* series, is Joseph Kosuth's neon works from the mid 1960s. Taking his cue from Ludwig Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations*, with their emphasis on language games and the idea that the meaning of a word lies in its concrete use and specific context (thus, for example, "Red" used in a Stroop Test is playing a completely different game than the same word used in a right-wing political tract), Kosuth fashioned a series of neon works consisting of self-evident "truisms", such as *Five Words in Green Neon* (1965), which consists of exactly that, or *Four Colors Four Words (Orange, Violet, Green, Blue)* (1966) (Figure 7).



Figure 7: Joseph Kosuth, *Four Colors (Orange, Violet, Green Blue)*.

As Simon Morley points out, Kosuth "substitutes a discursive definition of the object for its image, arguing that the linguistic nature of his work transforms the seen into the said, turning the viewer into a reader."<sup>35</sup> However, as a reader we are far from being a passive receptacle for ready-made truisms. The whole point is to open language up to critical analysis, for as Kosuth affirms in a famous statement:

Works of art are analytic propositions. That is, if viewed within their context—as art—they provide no information whatsoever about any matter of fact. A work of art is a tautology in that it is a presentation of the artist's intention, that is, he is saying that that particular work of art *is* art, which means, is a *definition* of art. Thus, that it is art is true a priori (which is what [Donald] Judd means when he states that “if someone calls it art, it's art”).<sup>36</sup>

Kosuth's neon text pieces, like Thater's monitor works, are of course moving, vibrating images as well as “static” sculptures, and it is this durational characteristic that makes them affective vehicles of affect and sensation in addition to being reductive tautological “analytic propositions.” This places both artists closer to cinema than to painting, to Deleuze's Bergson/Peirce schema outlined in *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image* rather than the logic of sensation explored in his study of Francis Bacon. Because of her tendency to foreground the apparatus as a metacommunicative device, Thater is often described as a reductive, structuralist filmmaker, but as Tim Martin rightly argues,

In Thater's work, these reductions are never permitted to negate the cinematic subject, as is often the case in structural film, nor to subsume it entirely within the discourses of the respective apparatus. But the cinematic subject retained by Thater ceases to conform to a static model based on identities—an apparatus, an eye, a gaze, a self, a character—and is constituted and deconstituted according to a more dynamic model based on *movements*, a model in which the subject may be better characterized as a “subject/predicate” or an “assemblage.” That is, a cinematic subject fully entangled with the viewing subject in a constant state of unfolding: becoming other, becoming itself, becoming nothing, becoming “a becoming.”<sup>37</sup>

In many of Thater's works this becoming is tied to a specific action-image, such as becoming-wolf in *China* (1995), becoming-dolphin in *Delphine* (2000), and becoming bees in *Knots + Surfaces* (2001), each of which tie the decentered and deterritorialized apparatus to a form of becoming-molecular, for as Deleuze and Guattari remind us,

[...] all becomings are already molecular. That is because becoming is not to imitate or identify with something or someone. Nor is it to proportion formal relations [...] ... becoming is to extract particles between which one establishes the relations of movement and rest, speed and slowness that are *closest* to what one is becoming, and through which one becomes. This is the sense in which becoming is the process of desire.<sup>38</sup>

In contrast, in the *Colorvision* series, the flowers and words are essentially static, closer to a pure perception-image, a “set [*ensemble*] of elements which act on a centre, and which vary in relation to it.”<sup>39</sup> The monochromatic saturation of each work is a perfect example of what Deleuze calls “colorism”, whereby, “In opposition to a simply colored image, the color-image does not refer to a particular object, but absorbs all that it can: it is the power which seizes all that happens within its range, or the quality common to completely different objects.”<sup>40</sup> In this case, color *is* the affect itself, a virtual conjunction of all the objects it picks up. It absorbs the spectator, the image, the texts *and* the situations the colors create in one concrete movement.

If we return to Hjeltslev we can see that Thater’s own form of colorism absorbs everything into pure matter, so that words no longer signify (in Saussure’s sense), or conceptualize tautologically (in the case of Kosuth) but rather vibrate along with their ostensible ground as an indistinguishable combination of expression substance and content substance. Although never stated directly, Deleuze’s originality in his cinema books is to combine Hjeltslev’s model with Bergson’s own theory of matter and memory:

The movement-image is matter itself, as Bergson showed. It is a matter that is not linguistically formed, although it is semiotically, and constitutes the first dimension of semiotics. In fact, the different kinds of image which are necessarily deduced from the movement-image, the six kinds, are the elements that make this matter into a signaletic material. And the signs themselves are the features of expression that compose and combine these images, and constantly re-create them, borne or carted along by matter in movement.<sup>41</sup>

Thater's monitor works thus behave (at least superficially) like a conventional cinematic shot, dividing and subdividing duration/matter into specific objects that make up the set—in this case words, colors and flowers—but at the same time reuniting them into a single identical duration which constitutes the real-time unfolding of the piece itself. Of course, as in any discussion of *durée* in Deleuze and Guattari, this discrete duration is also part of an immanent plane that links each work (as segment) to the ever-changing whole of the universe. Moreover, as Deleuze notes, "Given that it is a consciousness which carries out these divisions and reunions, we can say of the shot that it acts like a consciousness."<sup>42</sup>

However, it's important to remember that Thater displays her work in a spatial, gallery context, as well as through the durational properties of film/video. As a result, the spectator has far more agency than the necessarily more passive movie spectator because we are able to choose the order of shots as well as the speed with which we are able to move from one color/word and perception/cognition relation to another. Thus, taking a corner ensemble of four works as an example, we can read the texts quickly as a sequential "list" of colors—red; cyan; green; magenta (Stroop's RCNd test)—or slow down to perceive and name the words as part of their inherent color field—cyan; red; magenta; green (Stroop's RCWd test). More affectively, we can focus exclusively on color perception, soaking up the vibrating green flowers in the screen marked "magenta" before moving onto the red screen designated as "cyan" and attempting to read the color label as "red." It's much more difficult to "pass" the RCWd test when our eyes are *saturated* with a particular hue (as opposed to giving the video a quick glance) because the duration of one color bleeds over into the next, accentuating the stammer between the sets, triggering the endless vector of Deleuze and Guattari's "AND, AND, AND." It is here where the role of the gallery wall becomes increasingly important, because it acts as a necessary neutral ground between the oversaturated effects of Thater's absorptive color-vision, establishing a place where we can pause, re-set our photo-receptive rods and cones, all the better to exploit the stammer as something inherently material and physical, an intrinsic part of Helmslev's content substance and expression substance.

This is where Thater's monitor works part company with the conventional cinematic shot, for rather than acting, as Deleuze suggests, like a "noosign", "an image which goes beyond itself towards something which can only be thought",<sup>43</sup> they instead create, as we

noted earlier, what Tim Martin calls “becomings of becomings.” Thater’s inherent expression of materiality suggests that for her thought is always part of a far more extensive plane of consistency, a language that not only stammers but a stammer that itself stammers internally, thus pushing her practice far beyond Merleau-Ponty’s focus on flesh as Being or Jasper Johns’s concern with collapsing the relationship between map/apparatus and territory/representation. Deleuze puts it neatly when he argues that,

[...] just as the new language is not external to the initial language, the asyntactic limit is not external to language as a whole: it is *the outside* of language, but is not outside it. It is a painting or a piece of music, but a music of words, a painting with words, a silence in words, as if the words could now discharge their content: a grandiose vision or a sublime sound.<sup>44</sup>

We might usefully add to this list that it is also a video of words whose innate durational movement confronts the ultimate outside: pure silence or, as Deleuze dramatically (and somewhat discrepantly) puts it, “the *boom* and the *crash*.”<sup>45</sup>

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1. Gilles Deleuze, “He Stuttered”, in *Essays Critical and Clinical*, trans. Daniel W. Smith (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 107.

2. L.W. Kline, “An experimental study of associative inhibition”, *Journal of Experimental Psychology* 4 (1921): 270.

3. Gordon D. Logan, “Attention and Automaticity in Stroop and Priming Tasks: Theory and Data”, *Cognitive Psychology* 12, no. 4 (October 1980): 524.

4. J. Ridley Stroop, “Studies of Interference in Serial Verbal Reactions”, *Journal of Experimental Psychology* 18, no. 6 (1935): 646-7.

5. *Ibid.*, 647

6. *Ibid.*, 648

7. *Ibid.*, 649.

8. Jean Narboni and Tom Milne, eds., *Godard on Godard* (New York: The Viking Press, 1972), 217.

9. Deleuze, “He Stuttered”, 111 (emphasis in the original).

10. Stroop, “Studies of Interference”, 649.

11. *Ibid.*, 650.

12. Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 2: The Time Image*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Roberta Galeta (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), 335.

13. Stroop, “Studies of Interference”, 659.

14. *Ibid.*, 659-60.

15. Warner Brown, “Practice in associating color names with colors”, *Psychological Review* 22 (1915): 50-1.

16. *Ibid.*, 51-2.

17. *Ibid.*, 54-5.

18. *Ibid.*, 54.

19. Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Robert Hurley, Mark Seem and Helen R. Lane (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983), 76 (emphasis in the original).

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20. Deleuze and Claire Parnet, *Dialogues*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987), 34-5.
  21. Ronald Bogue, *Deleuze and Guattari* (London & New York: Routledge, 1989), 126.
  22. *Ibid.*, 126.
  23. Louis Hjelmslev, *Prolegomena to a Theory of Language*, trans. Francis J. Whitfield (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1961), 60 (emphasis in the original).
  24. Bogue, *Deleuze and Guattari*, 132.
  25. Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, 133.
  26. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1968), 139 (emphasis in the original).
  27. Merleau-Ponty, *Visible and Invisible*, 248.
  28. Deleuze and Guattari, *What Is Philosophy?*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Graham Burchell (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 180-1 (emphasis in the original).
  29. *Ibid.*, 178.
  30. *Ibid.*, 181.
  31. *Ibid.*, 183.
  32. Jasper Johns, *Writings, Sketchbooks, Notes, Interviews*, ed. Kirk Varnedoe, Christel Hollevoets, compiler (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1997), 259.
  33. Patricia Kaplan, "On Jasper Johns' *According to What*", *Art Journal* 35, no. 3 (1976): 247.
  34. William Poundstone, "Jasper Johns and the Stroop Effect", Los Angeles County Museum on Fire, Monday, March 19, 2018, accessed 15 December 2018, <https://lacmaonfire.blogspot.it/2018/03/jasper-johns-and-stroop-effect.html>.
  35. Simon Morley, *Writing on the Wall: Word and Image in Modern Art* (Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2003) 145.
  36. Joseph Kosuth, "Art After Philosophy", in *Conceptual Art*, ed. Ursula Meyer (New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., 1972), 165.
  37. Timothy Martin, "What Cyan said to Magenta about Yellow", in *Diana Thater: China* (Chicago: The Renaissance Society at the University of Chicago, 1996), 50-1.
  38. Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 272 (emphasis in the original).
  39. Deleuze, *Cinema 1: The Movement Image*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), 217.
  40. *Ibid.*, 118.
  41. Deleuze, *Cinema 2*, 33.
  42. Deleuze, *Cinema 1*, 20.
  43. Deleuze, *Cinema 2*, 335.
  44. Deleuze, "He Stuttered", 112-3 (emphasis in the original).
  45. *Ibid.*, "He Stuttered", 113 (original emphasis).