



Colour Society  
of Australia

Knowledge  
Inspiration  
Community

## NSW Divisional Report, December 2022

ITTEN AS HÖLZEL'S STUDENT:  
STUTTGART 1913-1916

Adolf Hölzel c. 1930

Hölzel's 12-colour hue circle

Itten's Seven Colour Contrasts – a Critical Review

The Dimensions of Colour Today

Why Literacy?

Understanding Colour

Seeing the Colours of Joondalup

Implementing a Bottom-Up and Top-Down Approach

For our International Colour Day 2022 event on Sunday **March 20**, six of the ten committee members of the ISCC/AIC Colour Literacy Project gave presentations on the theme of *Progress in Colour Education*. The event, organized by CSA President David Briggs and chaired by CSA Past President Jean Pretorius, attracted 205 registrants from 37 countries including every state and territory of Australia.

Colour Literacy Project Co-chair Robert Hirschler (Hungary) presented the keynote address, a critical review of the doctrine of seven "contrasts" of colour as presented by Johannes Itten. Robert's presentation was co-authored with another CLP committee member, Andreas Schwarz (Germany), who in 2010-2015 conducted by far the most comprehensive scientific study into the effects of Itten-based colour theory on students and teachers. Robert shared some of his recent spectrophotometric studies of diagrams from Itten's *The Art of Color*, which uncovered some inconsistencies both between the text and the images, and between the various editions and printings of the book. The presentation brought out various sources of frustration for students and teachers in Itten's disparate collection of "contrasts", including the conflation of different senses of the word "complementary", some misleading implications for paint mixing, some surprising omissions of important perceptual phenomena, and above all, the danger already noted by other

authors that only looking for one or more contrasts may serve as a filter that detracts from the appreciation of a complex artwork.

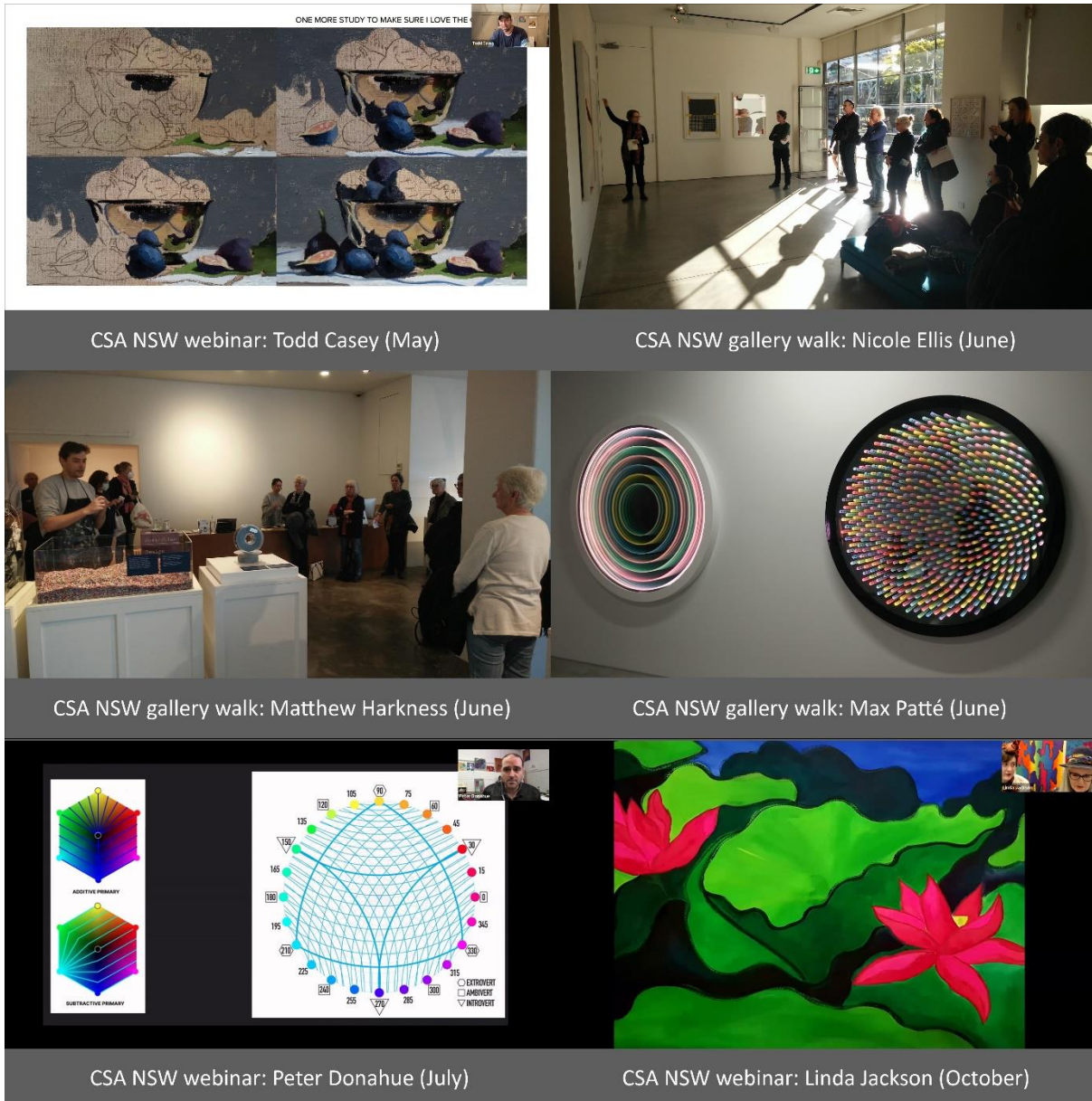
In the second presentation, *The Dimensions of Colour Today*, David Briggs (NSW) illustrated the relevance to painters of hue-blackness-chromaticness and hue-brightness-saturation in addition to the more familiar hue-lightness-chroma framework, and compared several options for simple hue circles that have advantages over the traditional colour wheel, before highlighting some of the numerous positive developments in colour education for painters that have emerged since he addressed the issue in his website *The Dimensions of Colour* nearly 15 years ago. Then in *Understanding Colour: Teaching the Science of Colour*, Robin Kingsburgh (Canada) discussed her remarkable multidisciplinary colour course at York University. In Robin's course, six weeks on colour foundations - light, materials, absorption, and the eye and brain – is followed by an examination of colour applications including pigments and dyes, interference and iridescence, fluorescence and luminescence, colours of stars and astronomical images, bioluminescence and biofluorescence, rainbows, gemstones and minerals, and coloured glass, with hands-on assignments requiring critical thinking.

These presentations were followed by two shorter reports. The first, *Seeing the Colours of Joondalup* by Paul Green-Armytage (WA), described two related workshops conducted with Sean Adamas for the City of Joondalup in January, leading to a major installation by Sean for the Joondalup Festival in March. The second was *Implementing a Bottom-Up and Top-Down Approach; an Update on the Joint ISCC/AIC Colour Literacy Project* by CLP Chair Maggie Maggio and Luanne Stovall (USA). Maggie addressed the “bottom up” component (nursery and pre-school to ages 10 - 11) with a report on the first round of beta-testing with the teachers at St. Teresa's Primary School in Manchester, England, and Luanne Stovall addressed the “top down” component including the new *Colour Literacy Forum*.

On **May 29** the Colour Society of Australia continued its series of free webinars with *Painting Light and Form* presented by acclaimed still-life painter Todd Casey (USA), author of *The Art of Still Life* (2020) and *The Oil Painters' Color Handbook*, to be published shortly. Todd began by discussing the major influences on his artistic education and their connections to different historical traditions of painting, explaining how his own approach strives for a balance between the optical and conceptual or scientific approaches. He then gave a beautifully illustrated overview of the main elements of the conceptual approach to light, colour and form, including the zones of light and shadow and the line of uniform saturation, before concluding with a detailed step-by-step account of his painting process and the thinking behind it. A lively discussion at the end of the session consolidated the importance both of understanding the underlying conceptual principles of light and colour, and of observing how these principles apply in practice. Todd's website is at <https://www.toddmcasey.com/>

On **June 18** the CSA NSW Division held its first live since the beginning of the covid pandemic, a gallery walk taking in three galleries in Sydney's Darlinghurst art precinct. Our party of nearly twenty participants visited the Liverpool Street Gallery at 243A Liverpool

Street to hear eminent Australian abstract painter Nicole Ellis talk about her [Tatterdemalion exhibition](#), the Australian Design Centre at 101-115 William Street to hear Canadian designer Matthew Harkness talk about his exhibition [Bioplastic Futures: 3D Printing and the Maker Movement](#), and the LightWorx Galler at 89 Crown St to hear Chevy Chisholm talk about the unique and beautiful works on show by British sculptor and light artist [Max Patté](#). We are very grateful to committee member Kerry O'Donnell for organizing and conducting the walk, and to the Liverpool Street Gallery, the Australian Design Centre and the Lightworx Gallery and their artists for their generous participation.



CSA NSW webinar: Todd Casey (May)

CSA NSW gallery walk: Nicole Ellis (June)

CSA NSW gallery walk: Matthew Harkness (June)

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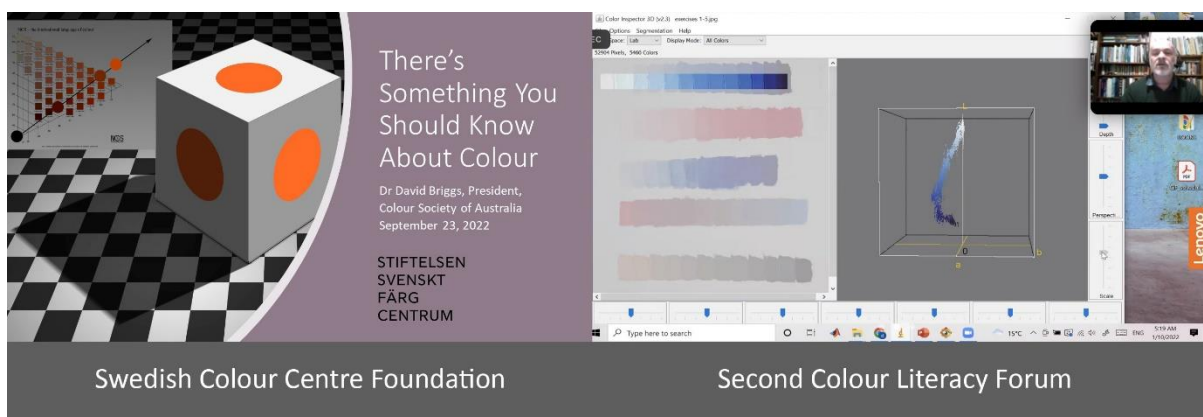
CSA NSW webinar: Peter Donahue (July)

CSA NSW webinar: Linda Jackson (October)

Our next webinar was given on **July 24** by art educator Peter Donahue (USA), known as the “color.nerd” on the social media platform TikTok, where his more than 500 highly entertaining videos explaining science-based colour theory for artists have attracted almost 300,000 followers in just over a year and up to 2.5 million views each. Peter chairs the Art and Design Department of a prestigious private school in New Jersey, where he teaches art



history, an art foundations course, and creative writing. He discussed how his foray into TikTok arose from his frustration at the prevalence of Itten-based red-yellow-blue colour theory he found online when he became responsible for finding resources for remote learning at the start of the covid pandemic. One highlight of his talk was a list of practices he found were effective for driving engagement on TikTok but which also made him a better colour theory teacher in face-to-face classes. Peter also showed how responses on TikTok gave him insights into differences in colour education around the world and into prevalent misconceptions about colour. He concluded by generously sharing various educational resources he has been developing, including a very elaborate explanatory tool building on the patterns of paint-mixing paths previously distinguished as “introverted” and “extroverted” by David Briggs (see image). Some of these tools can be found on Peter’s linktree on his TikTok channel at <https://www.tiktok.com/@color.nerd>.



Our webinar with pioneering Australian fashion designer and artist Linda Jackson AO was originally advertised for late August but was postponed until the beginning of October to give our speaker more time to prepare. No event was organized for September, but NSW Division Chair David Briggs gave two public online presentations in that month for international colour organizations. On **September 23** he gave a two-hour presentation for the Swedish Colour Centre Foundation sharing illustrations and explanations he has developed over the years for communicating some of the most fundamental yet often controversial aspects of colour for an art and design audience, and on **September 30** along with Saara Pyykkö and Dr Robin Kingsburgh he illustrated a practical teaching exercise for the ISCC/AIC Colour Literacy Project at the Second Colour Literacy Forum, *Teaching Colour Online - Three perspectives from the Arts & Sciences*.

Linda Jackson’s webinar *A Colourful Life* on **October 2** was given in company with Gallery Assistant Eloise Crossman from the Bathurst Regional Art Gallery in central NSW. Linda and Eloise spoke from the gallery, which is holding a very extensive retrospective exhibition of Linda’s work, *Romance of the Swag*, until October 30. Linda began with a slideshow tour of the exhibition, showing paintings, sketches, prints and printed textiles and scrolls from throughout her career, while explaining her sources of inspiration from the Australian bush, flowers, desert, wetlands, coast and reef, and especially from Australian opal. Linda then showed some of her spectacular experimental photography, based on her

own paintings, prints, printed fabrics and “frocks” combined with movement and blurring. In the final section Linda provided commentary on a short film that was made for her exhibition at the Cairns Regional Art Gallery in 2006, compiled from her photographs going back to her first collaboration with fashion designer Jenny Kee in 1974. We were very pleased to be able to hold a webinar that showed so much of Australia, as well as the work and career of an eminent Australian, for our many international registrants. We’re very grateful to Linda, Eloise and the Bathurst Regional Gallery for taking part in the webinar, and to Kerry O’Donnell for securing Linda as a speaker and for helping her to prepare for the talk.



CSA NSW webinar: Peter Gainsford (November)

For our final webinar for the year on **November 20** Dr Peter Gainsford spoke on *Making Sense of Greek Colour Terms*. Peter is a New Zealand-based scholar of early Greek literature and related aspects of ancient history. He received his PhD from Cambridge in 1999 and is the author of *Early Greek Hexameter Poetry* (Cambridge University Press, 2016) and the *Kiwi Hellenist* blog at <https://kiwihellenist.blogspot.com/>. Despite coming down with covid two weeks before, Peter prepared and gave a very clear and well-illustrated talk addressing the popular misconception that ancient Greek did not have a word for the colour blue, and the associated speculation that they may not have been able to perceive blue. Peter explained how the misconception has arisen from the unrealistic expectation that colour terms in other languages should always correspond to English colour terms. Peter’s talk was our first foray into the language of colour in recent memory, as well as our first webinar from a New Zealander; both very welcome firsts!

Our webinars this year have all been very popular, with those by Todd Casey and Peter Donahue being booked out within a couple of days of opening to non-members, and the Linda Jackson and Peter Gainsford webinars attracting about 90 registrants each, including some very eminent members of the international colour community. All four webinars in addition generated dozens of requests for the temporary public link to the webinar recording. We regret that a fifth webinar planned to coincide with the centenary of the National Art School could not occur due to the ill health of our speaker, but we hope to proceed at another time. Recordings of all of this year's webinars and presentations are of course available in the Members' Area of the CSA website.

Our free webinar series will resume on **January 27** with a presentation by Dr Balthasar Indermühle (Senior Experimental Scientist, CSIRO Astronomy and Space Science) on *Colour in Scientific Imaging and Space*. Highlights from the remainder of the year include a very special online event to celebrate International Colour Day 2023 in conjunction with the AIC Study Group on Art and Design, in which several speakers will examine the impact of colour order systems on painting practice.

David Briggs,

President and NSW Divisional Chair,

Colour Society of Australia