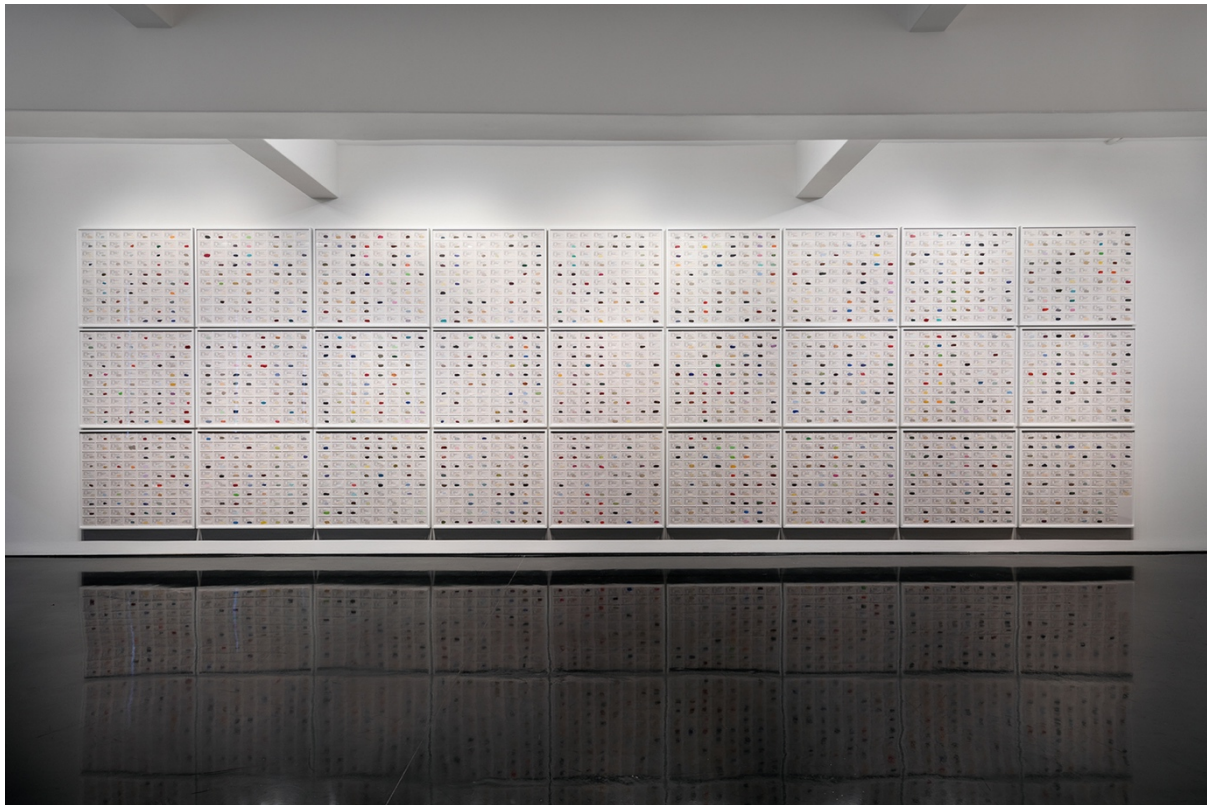


DAN MOYNIHAN*Mixed Emotions***8 June – 6 July 2019****DAN MOYNIHAN***Mixed Emotions 2006/7 2019*

adhesive labels and paint

27 panels presented chronologically as a grid of 3 vertical columns x 9 horizontal columns

2,157 labels in total

each panel 90 x 105.5 cm, total installation size 270 x 949.5 cm

On 21 April 2006, Dan Moynihan embarked on a curious spell of collecting. Working four days a week in the paint department of Bunnings' Moorabbin branch, he began to accumulate duplicates of each of the computer-generated labels that he provided to his customers as a record of their paint purchases. Measuring 10 x 6 cm, each label displays, along with the date, time and store location, details of the brand of paint, the quantity ordered and the chosen colour's exact formula. 'The only thing absent,' notes Moynihan, 'is the colour itself.'

Accordingly, he began printing two labels with each order – one for the customer, which was affixed to the paint can, and one for himself. At the time, it was standard practice for employees to open each freshly mixed can so that customers could inspect the colour and confirm it was what they had ordered. Peering into all those cylinders of perfect colour, Moynihan recalls being entranced. 'I'd want to stick my hand in and disturb the surface.' So that's what he did, dipping his finger into the paint and swiping it across the bottom right-hand corner of 'his' label.

For Moynihan, who freely acknowledges finding it a struggle to finish a course of antibiotics, the collecting caper became something of a personal challenge in perseverance, especially when his colleagues began venting their frustration at the constant presence of paint-strewn labels drying on their shared workspace. Eventually he commandeered a drawer in which to store them and the tendency

solidified into a habit. By the time 21 April 2007 rolled around, he had amassed more than 2,000 labels.

Fast-forward more than 12 years and these unassuming rectangles, each a miniature canvas for a one-colour finger painting, now comprise the building blocks of Moynihan's new work. Arranged chronologically in columns – top to bottom, left to right, all together 27 panels – *Mixed Emotions* is as epic in scale as it is oblique in its intentions.

The formal qualities of its composition call to mind the grids so beloved of Agnes Martin, Sol Lewitt and Carl Andre. Yet Moynihan's orderly matrix seeks to keep in check and hence make sensible that which could otherwise be dismissed as so much visual noise – namely, the house-paint colour preferences of a seemingly random selection of Melburnians collected over a period of one year.

In scanning the precisely arranged labels smeared with the best of British Paints, Dulux, Taubmans and Watty, the viewer cannot help but search for the merest intimation of a pattern, the quietest of hidden rhythms, or at least their favourite hue.

Architecturally suggestive, *Mixed Emotions* could be read as a semi-abstract representation of a widescreen tower block 30 storeys high (a nod, perhaps, to Andreas Gursky's *Paris, Montparnasse*, 1993) each dab of paint a fingerprint face, or coloured curtain, at the window. Moynihan, a qualified carpenter, has skin in the game when it comes to making art that engages with the built environment. In 2013 he painstakingly reconstructed the facade and internal lobby of the CBD laneway building that houses the commercial gallery Neon Parc for his solo show, *Lost in Space*, at Gertrude Contemporary. Could the present work be his dystopian vision of an urban landscape, a vertical cemetery of homogeneous boxes, each distinguished only by the colour its inhabitants have chosen to paint the walls?

In chronologically displaying a year's worth of transactions, *Mixed Emotions* is also subtly autobiographical. Conceptually informed, it evokes a roll call of likeminded work, from On Kawara's date paintings and Sophie Calle's sly documentation of strangers' lives to Gabriel Orozco's aesthetic emancipation of the everyday. But this minimalist mosaic of crowdsourced colours may also be understood as a ballad of employment-induced boredom, the sort of ennui endured by the artist and innumerable others so as to afford them the freedom to continue making art.

As for the work's title, *Mixed Emotions* was chosen in reference to the mixing of paint performed as part of his duties, as well as to the affective power of colour itself. It's also a phrase that captures his feelings about working part-time, albeit in an environment that, for someone as 'handy' an artist as Moynihan, is surely as much of a workshop for his ideas as the studio to which he retreats on his days off.

Twelve years on, the 2,157 labels have been transformed into a delightfully obsessive work. The years 2006 and 2007 were a time of optimism and new beginnings for Moynihan, who had recently moved to Melbourne after completing his Bachelor of Creative Arts at the University of Wollongong.

'I was living in a warehouse space in Richmond and I had a tiny studio in which I was messing around, trying to find myself and navigate my way through the scene,' he says. 'I was eager and keen to make work, and I still am.'

It was also a time of bolder colour choices. Moynihan laments that it would be impossible to replicate this work using labels generated for customers' paint choices today. 'With colour schemes nowadays, everything is white and grey – it's so predictable.'

– Tony Magnusson, May 2019