

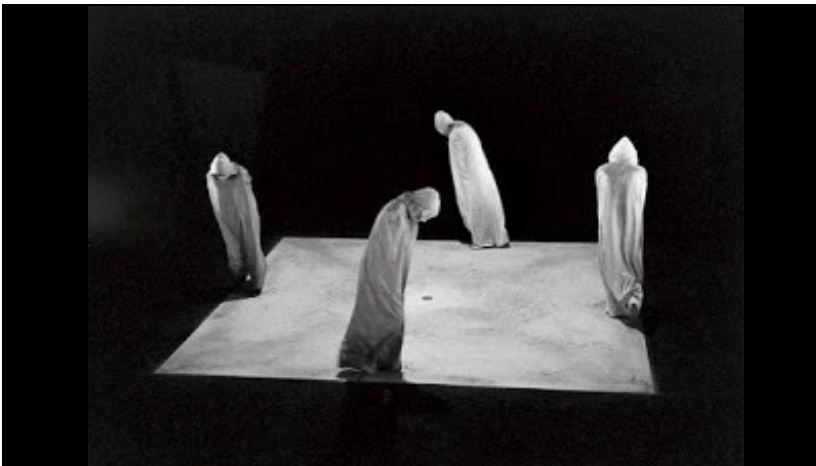


Samuel Beckett: QUAD I

With black and white—in photography, cinema and TV—came the notion that notions are essentially added to black and white: black and white media were subject to manual, and later automated, coloration. In this idea of colour, it is something that is put in at the end, and that we also really can do without.

An unexpected turn, also for himself, came as Beckett saw the QUAD performance filmed in black and white and realised that it appeared slower. So, he also made it slower. We can pick up on his trail and connect to how colour is a driver, rather than a supplement. Of speed, motion, action.

Hence the possibility to concentrate on colour in a design perspective: taking interest in what it does, rather than what it looks like (i.e., whether we enjoy it or not). In this artistic research Beckett may accordingly have picked up an essence from a mediaeval pictorial past. As an archaeologist, not a historian.



Samuel Beckett: QUAD II (black and white)

In design art-works are not interesting from the vantage point of what they look like, but by what they do: this is a semiotic vantage point. A painting will be viewed like a panel. They are read rather than simply viewed. From this vantage point, a painting is a panel. And a line-up of paintings, an atlas.

Here, the panel is simply a kaleidoscope with turning pieces that are temporal. Thereby the process of adding and removing elements from a panel—which an artist is sure to do when working on a painting—since this very special kaleidoscope we have in mind, is meant so sync with something else.

Time is of the essence: the substance of a panel—then—is not created, but lined up to sync with the mediation that emerges between the initiation and the finalising of a panel. The reading of a panel relies on the affective transposition of this mediation. A crossover between 2 receptions of embodiment.

The embodiment of agency—a vector of initial and final phases conjuring an interceptive timescape—and material embodiment: between them the panel as a synchronising instrument. Changes in the panel will affect the relation between subject and object, while defining an affective realm of its own.

The black spot is an element of this—affective—realm. Accordingly, the black spot is not an object nor a subject of synchronisation: rather a gate, a door, a threshold, a hatch, an interface. It is substantially *liminal*. Or, even better, or features the liminality of *substance*. It is the *ground zero* of synchronisation.

That is, in Beckett's QUAD. But also beyond it. In Beckett's QUAD what is added and removed are 1, 2, 3, 4 moving shapes in cloaks and hoods. Adding and removing colour, Beckett linked to speed. The points of entry 1, 2, 3, 4 are always rectangular: also when there is a single mover on the floor.

As movers 1, 2, 3, 4 are added the options become more limited: this self-limiting affordance of the QUAD corresponds with the specific focus built into each case. It will not be the same if the order white, yellow, blue and red are shuffled. If only by the link to when children discover red, blue, yellow, white.

It is because the kaleidoscope operates at the level of categories that it can operate to focus—or, home in—on timescapes. Colours are here considered as categorisers on the threshold to a timescape as it unfolds. The signatures of timescapes can therefore be intercepted by colours. Pace and lead.

Whether colours define contours or define space shifts under conditions of light and darkness. Which is why they can be contained neither by objects nor space (that is, neither material time nor spatial time). The notion that colours—as darkness and light—precede matter and space, is rather traditional.

That is, our pictorial heritage is based on this precedence of colour, and our current incomprehension of older images—and also our contemporary visual illiteracy—likely hinges on an ethos and worldview that questions this precedence. The question is not whether it is true, but if we can do without it.