

Renée Green's Contrapuntal Compositions

Alexander Alberro

Fig. 21
Colour Games, 1989. Acrylic on wood,
Letraset dry-transfer lettering, and rubber-
stamped ink on Masonite, 30 × 66 inches
(76.2 × 167.6 cm). Collection Yun Chun Lu



Renée Green describes her method of layering multiple images, texts, sounds, and spaces to bring the parts of her artistic compositions together as “contrapuntal.”¹ The artist prefers to maintain the constitutive components’ ongoing distinction, avoiding hybrid resolutions. As with the bent notes of musical instruments or the accents of linguistic dialects, the elements that Green coalesces to constitute her highly nuanced artworks are not so much in between distinct categories as more than their oppositional limitations. Each restructures the others contrapuntally, fostering articulated combinations augmented by a surplus that is both the differ-

ence between them and what they have in common. The multilayered interplay generates rich compositions that subtly test and challenge limits, mix and intermingle heterogeneities, and cut across expectations.

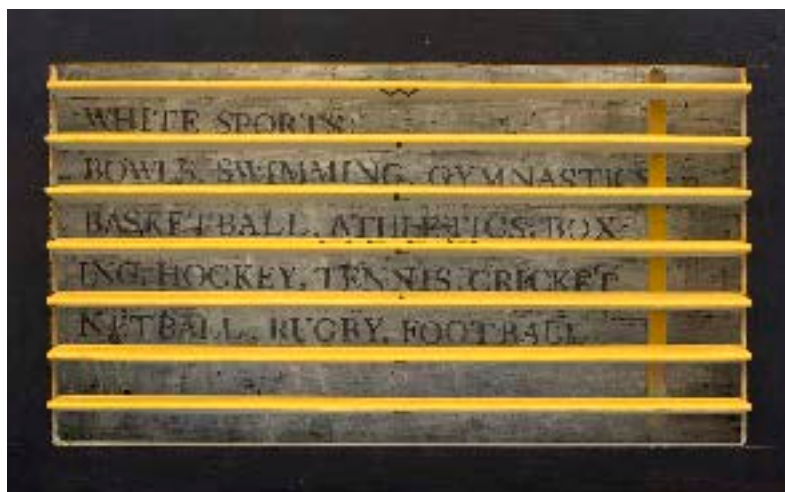
Counterpoint is a musical composition method that combines two or more independent melodic lines simultaneously. Each line of a contrapuntal composition maintains its distinct character while interacting with and

complementing the others. Green mobilizes contrapuntal techniques in her artistic practice to explore creative possibilities while maintaining a structured approach to compositional form. Her artworks’ components play off each other, creating discrepant wholes without subordinating any single part. They are open to dialogue without hierarchy, intersecting equilaterally with the elements of neighboring artworks and even the architectural spaces in which they are installed.

Color

The contrapuntal technique of simultaneously integrating and contrasting diverse components in a single composition characterizes Green’s exploration of color’s polyvalent effects. Since the 1980s, the artist has produced artworks that critically examine the signification of color within cultural and historical contexts. The taxonomies that constitute many of these productions explore how color-based categorizations inform value judgments and underpin discursive biases. A case in point is *Colour Games* (1989; figs. 21–22; pp. 194–95): a 30 × 66-inch box-like wooden structure that features colorful grids that playfully engage with language and meaning. Green painted the field of the box’s surface plane with the crossbar in the center in black

Fig. 22
Colour Games (detail), 1989. Acrylic on wood, Letraset dry-transfer lettering, and rubber-stamped ink on Masonite, 30 × 66 inches (76.2 × 167.6 cm). Collection Yun Chun Lu



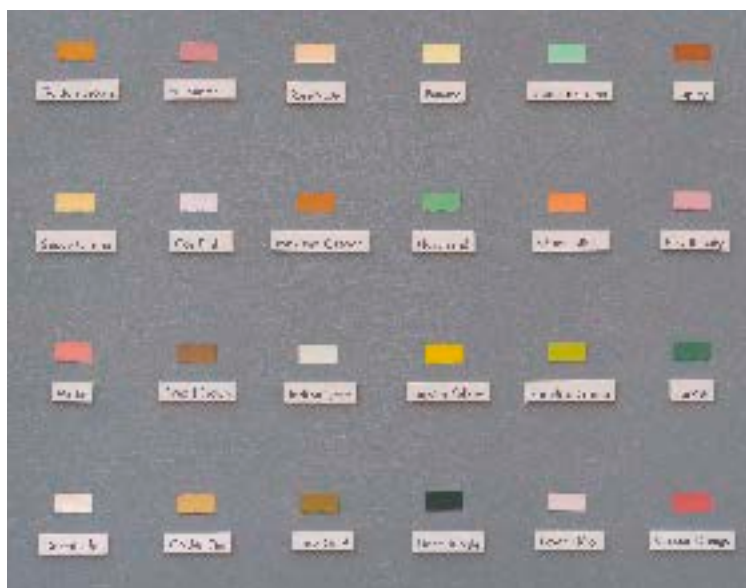
acrylic and the interior panel with strokes of gray. She also applied primary colors to the surfaces of the four rectangles that feature shutter-like contraptions and flat gray to their backs. She then adhered the word OPEN with a small arrow pointing at it from below in the middle of each of these four colored fields with Letraset type. Opening the green shutters reveals rubber-stamped text in black ink on the interior panel that reads AFRICAN SPORTS: BASKETBALL, ATHLETICS, BOXING, NET BALL, RUGBY, FOOTBALL. Continuing to open each of the painting's shutters, the text beneath the red section on the bottom left reads COLOURED SPORTS: GYMNASTICS, HOCKEY, TENNIS, CRICKET, NETBALL, RUGBY, FOOTBALL; the one beneath the yellow section reads WHITE SPORTS: BOWLS, SWIMMING, GYMNASTICS, BASKETBALL, ATHLETICS, BOXING, HOCKEY, TENNIS, CRICKET, NETBALL, RUGBY, FOOTBALL (fig. 22); and the one beneath the blue section INDIAN SPORTS: SWIMMING, HOCKEY, TENNIS, CRICKET, NETBALL, RUGBY, FOOTBALL. The shutter-like contraptions ensure that viewers can never see the words OPEN simultaneously with the text on the interior panel beneath the rectangles. The piece's title, COLOUR GAMES, accompanied by the phrase WILL BE BANNED, becomes visible when viewers turn the shutters around to reveal their backsides.

Green produced *Colour Games* for Art Against Apartheid '89, a group exhibition at Goddard-Riverside Community Center in New York as elsewhere in 1989 that protested the discriminatory system of segregation in place in South Africa from 1948 until the 1990s. Apartheid stratified society based on racial classification, with white Africans at the top, followed by Indian, coloured, and then

black Africans. The administrators of the apartheid regime used the designations on the text below the shutters in *Colour Games* to categorize the population and specify which sports were open to which people within these classifications. Accordingly, Green's artwork encourages viewers to question these seemingly fixed and highly politicized color hierarchizations, exposing their complex and often problematic notions of race, perception, and culture while uncovering understandings of color as "natural" or "neutral" as pretexts for pervasive ideological constructs. This counterpoint draws together elements of color and language, though the configuration never fully resolves into a harmonious whole since the relationship between the operative components remains dissonant.

Green's focus on the dependence of color concepts on cultural significations and their role in the interplay of ideas, identities, and socialities, what Jennifer A. González refers to in a discussion of the artist's work as "color as a social discourse," also characterizes the series of paintings Green titled *Color I-IV* (1990).² *Color I* (fig. 23, pp. 15–17) utilizes mixed media, including latex paint and plexiglass, to explore the social meaning of color and its linguistic mediation. The artwork's format of comparison highlights the cultural structures that name colors and buttress ideological

Fig. 23
Color I (detail), 1990. Latex paint and acrylic
 on wood, rubber-stamped ink on vellum
 and foamcore, plexiglass, and paint chips,
 48 1/6 x 96 1/6 x 3 15/16 inches (122 x 244 x 10 cm).
 Dia Art Foundation, gift of the artist and
 Free Agent Media



beliefs. Two literary citations hand-stamped on vellum, placed under plexiglass and mounted on darker gray wooden plaques hang on opposite ends of a large gray panel. A “color chart” arrangement of small, rectangular paint-chip fragments touches on the arbitrary relationship between color names and colors, drawing attention to cultural references and biased significations in the names of commercial paints:

JAMAICAN DREAM, BURMESE GOLD, HAVANA SUNRISE, SIAMESE GREEN, MEXICAN ORANGE, ORIENT BLUSH, BRAZIL BROWN, INDIAN IVORY, and EMPIRE YELLOW tell us more about the cultures that designated these names than about the colors they ostensibly signify. The color swatches, labeled and mounted as samples, occupy the middle zone between the two literary passages and relate to them contrapuntally.

The texts, penned by authors of different genders and ethnicities, narrate challenging exchanges, each addressing questions of race and color. On the left, an excerpt from Frances E. W. Harper’s 1892 novel *Iola Leroy, or Shadows Uplifted* (p. 16) describes a dialogue

between two physicians, the white Dr. Latrobe and mixed-race Dr. Latimer, who is assumed to be white. An unabashed racist, Latrobe advises Latimer to avoid equitable relations with black people during his travels in the US South. The exchange between the two men is tremendously provocative and utterly terrifying at the same time.

The citation on the right side of *Color I*’s panel comes from F. Scott Fitzgerald’s *The Great Gatsby* (1925; p. 17). It describes a dinner party conversation at the mansion of Tom and Daisy Buchanan about a fictional book by an author named Goddard titled *The Rise of the Colored Empires*, a thinly veiled reference to Lothrop Stoddard’s *The Rising Tide of Color Against White World-Supremacy* (1920). Fitzgerald casts the Buchanans as long-standing members of the US elite, born into money and social status. Relaying Goddard’s claims that miscegenation is destroying civilization to his guests, Tom hesitates momentarily before including Daisy, who may have Southern European ethnic roots, within the category of the white race. Tom’s slight vacillation when identifying his wife as white reveals his hypocritical standards as he struggles to consider even her in his racist concept of superiority. As with Latrobe’s inability to discern Latimer’s race visually in Harper’s novel, Tom’s equivocation highlights the arbitrary and problematic nature of racial ideology. The citations on the *Color I* panel allow for a visual intersection between the literary past and present-day taxonomies of color that continue to permeate the US imaginary. This intersection remains unresolved, with the literary passages and color chart samples dissonantly coming together in a complex whole that underlines the tenuousness of color-based beliefs.

Green’s *Color II* also focuses on color’s arbitrary significations. The artwork features an arrangement of seven small glass bottles filled with powdered pigment on individual shelves, each labeled with the day of the week and the color of the

Color IV, 1990. Latex paint and acrylic on wood, rubber-stamped ink on vellum, rubber-stamped ink on acrylic on wood, plexiglass, vinyl lettering, and engraved plexiglass signs. 2 parts: 96 $\frac{3}{8}$ $\times$ 24 $\times$ 5 $\frac{1}{2}$ inches (245.4 $\times$ 61 $\times$ 14 cm); 3 parts: 21 $\times$ 17 $\frac{3}{10}$ $\times$ 2 $\frac{3}{10}$ inches (53.3 $\times$ 44 $\times$ 5.8 cm). Installation view, *Renée Green, Ongoing Becomings: Retrospective 1989–2009*, Musée cantonal des Beaux-Arts, Lausanne, Switzerland, 2009–10. Collection Landesbank Baden-Württemberg, Stuttgart



grapheme-color synesthesia. However, there is no systematic logic to these psychologically unique correlations. For Latrobe to announce a “clearsighted” (i.e., visual) perception of race “when all physical traces had disappeared” is equally paradoxical and absurd. Yet it reveals the doctor’s unconscious fantasy of being able to see even the invisible traces of race. As with the nebulousness of color-based beliefs Green addressed in *Color I*, this composition’s dissonance also plays on the randomness of visual perception when related to color’s ideological significance.

Color III features twelve small square wooden blocks arranged in a grid on a large gray-painted panel (p. 155). Green colored and numbered the blocks from one to twelve. Words made of rubber-stamped individual letters in black type on white labels located immediately below the blocks describe the colors. As in *Color I* and *Color II*, two texts on dark gray plaques hang on opposite ends of the large panel and relate to the colored elements in the center in counterpoint. The text to the left of the grid of wooden blocks features an excerpt from William Cheselden’s *An Appendix to the Fourth Edition of The Anatomy of the Human Body* first published in 1730, which touches on the affective dimension of color (p. 157). The plaque on the right of the color grid references another excerpt from Harris’s “Coloured Thinking and Allied Conditions” (p. 156). The combination of both passages with the numbered colored blocks’ “scientific” taxonomy addresses color’s subjective dimensions, pointing out the cultural and political implications that come about when people treat such categorizations as objective.

The same contrapuntal relation of taxonomy to text that characterizes the first three works of Green’s *Color I–IV* series is also at play in *Color IV* (fig. 24, pp. 182–87), which consists of five parts: three hung plaques and two large panels leaning on the

Fig. 25
Standardized Octagonal Units for Imagined and Existing Systems (S.O.U.s), 2002. Fabric, metal structure, 8 units, 1 with monitor and looped film with sound, 7 with sound, dimensions variable.
 Installation view, Documenta II, Kassel, Germany, 2002



wall. The leaning (rather than hanging) panels expand the artist's work and thinking architecturally, and by extension, implicate the space of the viewer. Green painted them gray and attached vertical rows of blocks, each labeled with a letter of the alphabet and in a different color, to their surfaces. Green designates three case studies on the three plaques that complete *Color IV*'s overall composition. On the left plaque, the excerpted text comes from a classic work of Greek physiognomy by Aristotle, describing four humors (purest blood, yellow bile, black bile, and phlegm) and the colored bodies they produce (p. 184). The plaque at the center of the work features a passage that draws yet again from Harris's "Coloured Thinking and Allied Conditions" (p. 185), and the third plaque is an extract from John Howard Griffin's nonfiction book *Black Like Me* (1961), in which the journalist recounts the process of changing his skin color from white to black in order to experience living in the US South as a "Negro" (p. 186).

Color IV's five parts play off each other without losing their distinctness, their counterpoint encouraging viewers to analyze attributes people have subjectively given to color over the years. The work effectively indicates that color and race are

dependent on equally inexact visual classifications that nevertheless compel people to construct prejudiced yet stable categories of racial difference, leading to uncompromising value judgments that lack justification. This cultural history troubles ostensibly objective symbolic systems and reveals color as anything but natural. Green's *Color I–IV* series evokes the larger ideological implications of color and the role of language in endowing it with meaning, bringing unspoken genealogies of color (and noncolor) into view while exposing the complexity of all that colors encompass in their varied significations through different times and places.

Space

Along with color, space plays a crucial role in Green's highly intricate contrapuntal artistic practice. The artist uses space as a medium in much of her production, repeatedly returning to "ways of perceiving space, questions of site, including and exceeding questions usually posed by architecture."³ "Determining how to communicate to a viewer," Green reflects in an important early interview, "involves setting up spatial relationships between the viewer and the work," a practice that she notes derives from her resolute "predilection for thinking in spatial terms."⁴

Treating space as an essential element in developing and presenting her work, Green often locates her art installations in interstitial and unconventional sites, such as stairwells, atriums, ceilings, public-facing windows, streets, and parks. This unorthodox approach allows her to recontextualize familiar environments and challenge viewers' expectations. It also enables her to integrate and extend diverse elements and spatial encounters simultaneously, finding spaces not in *between* the elements and encounters but in relation *to* and at some distance *from* them.

The audio and visual stations of Green's *Standardized Octagonal Units for Imagined and Existing Systems (S.O.U.s)* (2002; figs. 25, 55) and *Phases + Versions* (2002; p. 82) represent this characteristic of her practice well. *S.O.U.s* consists of eight metal-frame open octagonal units, seven with a single weatherproofed textile panel. Each of these seven panels has its own unique color—yellow, vivid orange, magenta, cyan, vibrant green, red, and ultramarine blue. White textile sheets and a red textile roof enclose the eighth unit. All units share a red seating arrangement. The artist first installed *S.O.U.s* in the Karlsaue Park at Documenta 11 in Kassel, Germany. The small, shelter-like cells referenced the concept of the primitive hut as “a place of rest” in early modern European design, as a place “of shelter in urban settings, and as a place of fantastic imaginings.”⁵ For Green, these associations linked the units to historical, commemorative, and fantastical architecture, such as the follies commonly found in Baroque landscape gardens. However, to the reprieve offered by these Baroque features, Green's *S.O.U.s* add the incentive to recognize systems of consistency within flux, as they treat their public's attention as “a medium.”⁶

At Documenta 11, Green located the *S.O.U.s*'s enclosed unit on the lawn in front of the Orangerie at Karlsaue Park, and it featured a looped screening of the artist's essay film *Elsewhere?* (2002), which meditates on utopian dreams, architectural enactments, gardens as sites of refuge, and Documenta's history. The soundtrack features Javanese gamelan music and remixes of Alice Coltrane's spiritual jazz compositions. Running text along the bottom of the film—a trope adapted from cable newscasts—provides an indexical key to *S.O.U.s*'s seven other units, encouraging viewers to find them in the park. More than 1,400 alphabetically listed names of imaginary places scroll through a color-coded bar referencing the color panels that dress the seven units dispersed throughout the landscaped gardens. These units are both architectural and sonic, as whispered sounds are layered over fragments from *Elsewhere?*'s soundtrack, creating an indexical circuit in the garden.

Green drew on the Neoconcrete work of Hélio Oiticica that dramatically tested the boundaries of existing aesthetic frameworks, in what scholar Laura Harris describes as an effort “to formulate new forms, new frameworks, however awkwardly and imperfectly” to theorize the *S.O.U.s*'s eight units.⁷ The latter function as intermediary structures that develop from Green's empirical and embodied research in opticality, plasticity, and the body. The artist rendered the units at a human scale to enable the public to use them as devices for mediation, noting in a 2004 essay that the intimate cocoon-like spaces of these works, made of standardized parts and from industrial fabric, are analogous to the wearable objects Oiticica referred to as *parangolés* (fig. 26).⁸ This series of works marked the Brazilian artist's 1960s exploration of color and dance as three-dimensional experiential art removed from the conventional modes of artistic contemplation such as painting and sculpture. Oiticica's *parangolés* consist of sewn-together textiles made of various fabrics and thrown over bodies, fully enveloping their wearers' physique like portable shelters. Some resemble robes or capes that are appended with multiple items and feature phrases printed

on the material's exterior or concealed in pockets; others look like banners, flags, or tents. Oiticica wanted all of them "to be activated and experienced corporeally."⁹ "The true form" of these "structures in space," Harris explains, "would only be revealed by the action[s] of the spectator[s] who carried, wore, and inhabited" them.¹⁰



Fig. 26
Caetano Veloso wearing Hélio Oiticica's
P 04 Parangolê capa oi [*P 04 Parangolê cape oi*]
(1964), 1968

Like Oiticica's *parangolés*, the *S.O.U.s*'s units are multisensorial, encourage participation, and generate aesthetic forms and behaviors that reconcile the problem of individual and group activity. Their significance resides in the relations they establish with viewers. They trouble the notion that art operates within a distinct cultural sphere as they expand art to publics beyond the limited frameworks of art institutions.

Reinterpreting earlier works has long been essential to Green's artistic practice, which developed through dialectics and accretion at the same time. She repeatedly modifies her art projects into new configurations and recombinations, adapting them to new contexts. *Phases + Versions* translates the *S.O.U.s*'s system into an interior space; like the latter, the former features an octagonal arrangement of eight parts. Seven of these parts are benches painted to coordinate with the textile color in the units installed in Karlsruhe Park; the eighth, painted flat black, is a functional module structure with a monitor playing *Elsewhere?* on a loop. Green placed the essay film's title on the back of this structure, with a quote attributed to Vladimir Nabokov in a spiral arrangement of white letters directly below it. The passage emphasizes the significance of notions of interior and exterior space, suggesting that, like the enriching effects of narrative prose, drawing from a metaphysical realm might clarify human existence and enhance its meaningfulness.

In addition to *Phases + Versions* replicating the color codes of *S.O.U.s*, each bench reproduces its sounds, though, in this instance, Green whispers the lists of names over Javanese gamelan and Coltrane's music on recordings heard through headphones. *Phases + Versions* renders *Elsewhere?*'s scrolling color-coded list of imaginary place names in vinyl letters and positions them on the walls of the gallery space, where they attain a kind of monumentality. The artist color-coded the benches and the imaginary place names to the film's scrolling text, following the same system of indexical correspondences described above. This scheme allowed exhibition visitors seated on the related color bench to hear the names communicated by the colored words on the wall through headphones.

By setting *Elsewhere?* to play on a loop with the sound on in the room, Green provided visitors the choice of hearing the film's soundtrack reverberating through the space or putting on the headphones available on any of the seven colored benches and listening to the audio track keyed to the names on the wall. The correspondence the artist established between the imaginary place names on the wall, the seats in the room, and the sequences and scrolling text in *Elsewhere?* enabled her to develop an imaginative system of color-coded coordinates within the exhibition, bringing a configuration initially devised for an outdoor space into the art institution.

Space Poems

Green's *Space Poems*—ensembles of double-sided, brilliantly hued banners suspended from ceilings or placed on walls and windows that bring together poetry, space, and color—put her contrapuntal strategies into full operation. With their play of varying typographies, dazzling color schemes, and bold borders, the *Space Poems* function as stand-alone compositions, complete in and of themselves. In placing artworks beneath the ensembles, however, Green again enacts a fitting counterpoint within the room; their ensuing linguistic, chromatic, and spatial interactions manifest the artist's open-ended questioning of invented yet established taxonomies to engage with and displace designations that may seem to be known.

Green's installation techniques ensure viewers cannot process the *Space Poems* hastily. Her arrangements do not offer single vantage points from which to read the poems in their entirety. They slow the act of looking, tendering the complete poems and the artworks only to those who carefully navigate the space. The artist's distinct color palette and banner arrangement gently guide viewers through the installations, allowing them to process their constitutive components in unique and unpredictable

ways. The interplay of linguistic material, spatial arrangement, and reverberant color creates multisensory experiences that go beyond those traditionally offered by plastic art. Without prepared resolutions, the *Space Poems'* arrangements leave viewers to create their own connections and interpretations. Their counterpoints keep their elements in relation to but at some distance from each other in an unenclosed zone akin to what theorist Fred



Fig. 27
Space Poem #1, 2007. Dye sublimation print on Poly 600 banners. Installation view, *United Space of Conditioned Becoming*, Participant Inc., New York, 2007

Moten calls the “not-in-between.” For Moten, this zone “surrounds the surfaces that surround it,” piercing and passing through them.¹¹ It is neither simply between nor reducible to binary oppositions; it signifies an excess beyond traditional oppositional limits and emphasizes agency within constraints. Like Moten's provocative notion, Green's contrapuntal *Space Poems* trouble Western philosophical reductions by infusing text, sound, and space into artistic compositions, challenging traditional binaries while exploring the intersection of objects, sounds, and architecture in contemporary art.

Twenty-seven double-sided Poly 600 banners with printed text and images hanging from the ceiling make up *Space Poem #1* (2007; fig. 27). When first exhibited at Participant Inc. in New York in 2007, elements of this artwork interacted contrapuntally with those of the multifaceted installation *United Space of Conditioned Becoming* (2007). The latter explores cultural history, transnational travel, and the passage of time through diverse media. It incorporates stations visitors can use to view over thirty moving-image works displayed on or through various devices (monitors, mini-DVD players, and projectors), and features sound recordings and ephemera. *United Space of Conditioned Becoming* highlights Green's artistic activity under

the umbrella of Free Agent Media (FAM), her dream production company founded in 1994. This presentation, which aims at compressing the artist's expansive spatial installations into one location, features the constitutive moving-image elements of several durational projects such as *Returns: Tracing Lusitania* (1992–2001), *Platform* (2000–2001), *Wavelinks* (2002; fig. 38), *Elsewhere? Here* (2002–4), *Sound Forest Folly* (2004), *Relay* (2005), *Index (From Oblivion): Climates + Paradoxes* (2005), and *Unité d'habitation* (2006).

Space Poem #1's banners reference cultural figures who affected Green's formation as an artist and thinker, such as artist On Kawara (fig. 8), writer Octavia E. Butler, Coltrane, and scholar Edward W. Said. They also showcase political and enig-

matic phrases such as “Art + Life for Real !!!!!!!,” “Human Shields,” “Epiphanies,” and “Alleviating Suffering” that constitute axioms informing the artist's production. Resembling street banners and the types of flags commonly installed in airports and train stations, *Space Poem #1*'s components were arranged by Green to bring attention to a variable “pace of perceiving.” The work's tempo and, in its Participant Inc. installation, the contrapuntal relation of its parts to those of *United*



Fig. 28
From left to right: *Media Bichos*, 2012–13;
Space Poem #3 (Media Bicho), 2012–13.
Installation view, MoMA Media Lounge,
Museum of Modern Art, New York, 2012.

Space of Conditioned Becoming encouraged viewers to organize their perceptions and thought processes through visual and textual elements that freely interacted with each other in space. The artist did not proscribe a temporal beginning or end or a spatial limit to the overall configuration, creating spontaneous and dynamic visual, textual, and spatial dialogues instead.

Green arranged the thirty-three hanging banners of *Space Poem #2 (Laura's Words)* (2009) in counterpoint with the film installation *Endless Dreams and Water Between* (2009; p. 94), in which four fictitious characters engage in an epistolary exchange that weaves together their “planetary thought” and the island locations they inhabit.¹² The installation also included a series of drawings of places and characters—some fictional, some real—referenced in *Endless Dreams*. Eight sound panels hung below the banners. All of the banners of this and subsequent *Space Poems* feature brightly colored borders that Green carefully calibrates to play off the colors of the central field, juxtaposing contrasting colors and creating chromatic effects that are both ornamental and structural. Included in the series of drawings were maps and materials referencing the island locations featured in the film. Islands become central and continents peripheral in *Space Poem #2 (Laura's Words)*'s creative arrangement of the geographical imagination.

Space Poem #3 (Media Bicho) (2012–13; fig. 28) comprises thirty-four double-sided nylon banners hung from above with phrases, aphorisms, and book and song titles such as *A Power Stronger Than Itself*, referring to George E. Lewis's pathbreaking 2007 volume, and *Blutopia*, citing Duke Ellington's boundary-stretching 1944 jazz track, arranged in a brightly hued grid. The artwork relates contrapuntally to the rectilinear forms and intimate spaces of Green's *Media Bichos* (2012–13; fig. 28), which evoke

Neoconcrete artist Lygia Clark's well-known *Bichos* (beasts) constructions of the early 1960s (1960; fig. 29). Like her *Caminhando* (1963), which invited participants to cut out a Möbius strip with scissors, creating an endless loop, Clark's *Bichos* are interactive sculptures that challenge traditional notions of art as static and idealized. They consist of geometric shapes connected by hinges, enabling viewers to fold, turn, and transform them, creating unique experiences each time.

Green's *Media Bichos*, especially in their current manifestation at Dia Beacon, are also malleable and held together by specially designed hinges, allowing the structures' panels to pivot relative to each other. In their first iteration, the human-scale units enclose screen monitors, headphones, and a few stools installed below the banners. The artist's concept was to create an open system—a series of units that could contract or expand and allow for different configurations and modes of viewing time-based media. Initially designed to facilitate ease of movement while providing stable structural supports where visitors could access moving-image works from MoMA's Media Collection, Green clads each *Media Bicho* unit with textiles of varying opacity. This technique allows the luminosity of natural light and the glow of screens to filter through the textile panels, sometimes creating an animated space pulsing in both audio and visual tones. Echoing Clark's *Bichos*, the pivoting panels of Green's *Media Bichos* allow for multiple possibilities of shape arrangement and formal configurations.

Green selected most of the panel textiles for *Media Bichos* from Knoll's mid-century and contemporary fabrics catalogue. Their palette and textures reference domestic living areas, waiting rooms, and classrooms. The permanent yet flexible

structures thus function as novel artworks, viewing spaces, and intermediary systems, allowing the artist or curators to reconfigure their modular forms in multiple ways according to need. The *Media Bichos* provide "private space[s] for reflection in a public space."¹³ Working in counterpoint, *Space Poem #3 (Media Bicho)* and its *Media Bichos* component contribute to Green's ongoing exploration of "forms of relation to spaces and locations that can be traversed and temporarily inhabited," gesturing toward the kinds of robust and unpredictable social experiences and interactions that can take place within these types of viewing sites.¹⁴

Green's rendering of May Swenson's 1965 poem "Color Without Objects" in her 2020 twenty-eight-banner installation *Space Poem*

#7 (Color Without Objects: Intra-Active May-Words) (p. 56) creates an inherent dynamism. In its initial presentation in New York's Bortolami Gallery, Green's *Space Poem #7* suspended lines from Swenson's experimental composition from the ceiling in four tight rows, placing the rows close together so viewers could see portions of the vividly colored, double-sided banners and poetic language from multiple positions. However, gallery visitors had to move about the room to see the full text and engage with its poetic and abstract nature. Green accompanied *Space Poem #7* with a suite

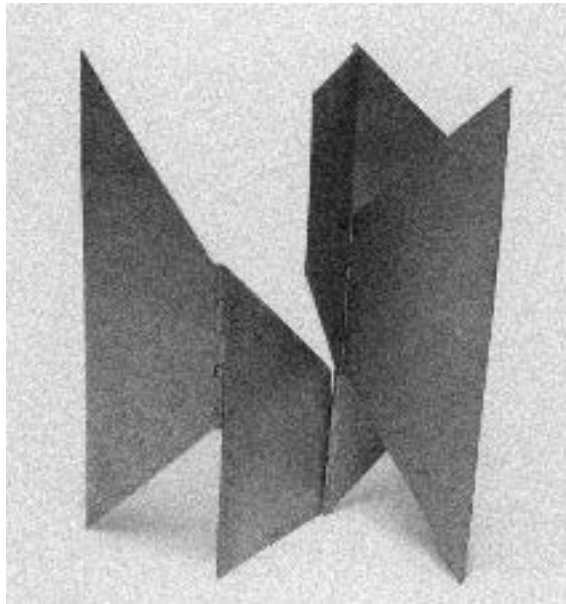


Fig. 29
Lygia Clark, *Bicho* (Citter), 1960.
Aluminum, dimensions variable

of thirty-three separate silkscreen prints on the room's four walls (p. 159). The prints, a translation of banners from *Space Poem #2 (Laura's Words)* into a different form, engaged in a contrapuntal dialogue with *Space Poem #7*, bringing together the writings of two twentieth-century modernist poets and transforming the spatial organization of the room. The coordinated interaction of the two artworks, a continuation of the artist's formal engagement with color, language, and perceptual movement, generated radically inclusionary structures and textures that allowed spectators to engage spontaneously with them without predetermined constraints.

Like Green's earlier works with color and space, the *Space Poems* combine different components and precipitate compelling counterpoints to grapple with differentiation and non-fixity. The artist allows unrestricted oscillation between discrete yet related elements that do not require specific resolutions to explore the interplay of concepts, identities, and cultural narratives and put a nonhierarchical and non-prescriptive redistribution of perception into play. But Green's *Space Poems* stretch her work's parameters more than ever before. The multilayered ensembles extend the counterpoint beyond internal juxtapositions. Their forceful exchanges interact dynamically with each other and with the greater architectural context to disrupt their grammars and rhythms, bend their regulatory frames, and open broader frameworks for understanding the complexities of social, cultural, and intellectual correspondences. In the process, the *Space Poems* locate viewers as active agents who negotiate the scope of the new discrepant wholes. They refuse simple resolutions, place their public at the center of their consequential operations, and evoke the relations from which a more radically democratic society might emerge.

I
Renée Green, "Certain Obliquenesses," in *Essays on the Essay Film*, ed. Nora M. Alter and Timothy Corrigan (Columbia University Press, 2017), p. 324.

2
Jennifer A. González, *Subject to Display: Reframing Race in Contemporary Installation Art* (MIT Press, 2011), p. 210.

3
Renée Green, in Nicholas Korody, "Ghosts of Schindler's Past," *Begin Again, Begin Again* (MAK Center for Art and Architecture at the Schindler House, 2015), p. 19.

4
Renée Green, in Donna Harkavy, "Insights: Renée Green," *Bequest* (Worcester Art Museum, 1991), p. 1.

5
Renée Green, "Why Systems?," in *Other Planes of There: Selected Writings* (Duke University Press, 2014), p. 384.

6
Green, "Why Systems?," p. 383.

7
Laura Harris, *Experiments in Exile: C.L.R. James, Hélio Oiticica, and the Aesthetic Sociality of Blackness* (Fordham University Press, 2018), p. 7.

8
Green, "Why Systems?," p. 384.

9
Harris, *Experiments in Exile*, p. 45.

10
Harris, *Experiments in Exile*, p. 28.

II
Fred Moten, *Black and Blur: Consent Not to Be a Single Being* (Duke University Press, 2017), p. 259.

12
On Green's *Endless Dreams and Water Between*, see Erika Balsom, "The Sea and Ambitions to Traverse It," in this volume, pp. 96–97.

13
Renée Green, "Secret, Part 1. Practiced Places," in *Other Planes of There*, p. 322.

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