



# The Colour Forest



Burghard Müller-Dannhausen  
Der Farbwald –  
The Colour Forest

An Artistic Contribution  
to the State Garden Show 2015  
in Landau in der Pfalz



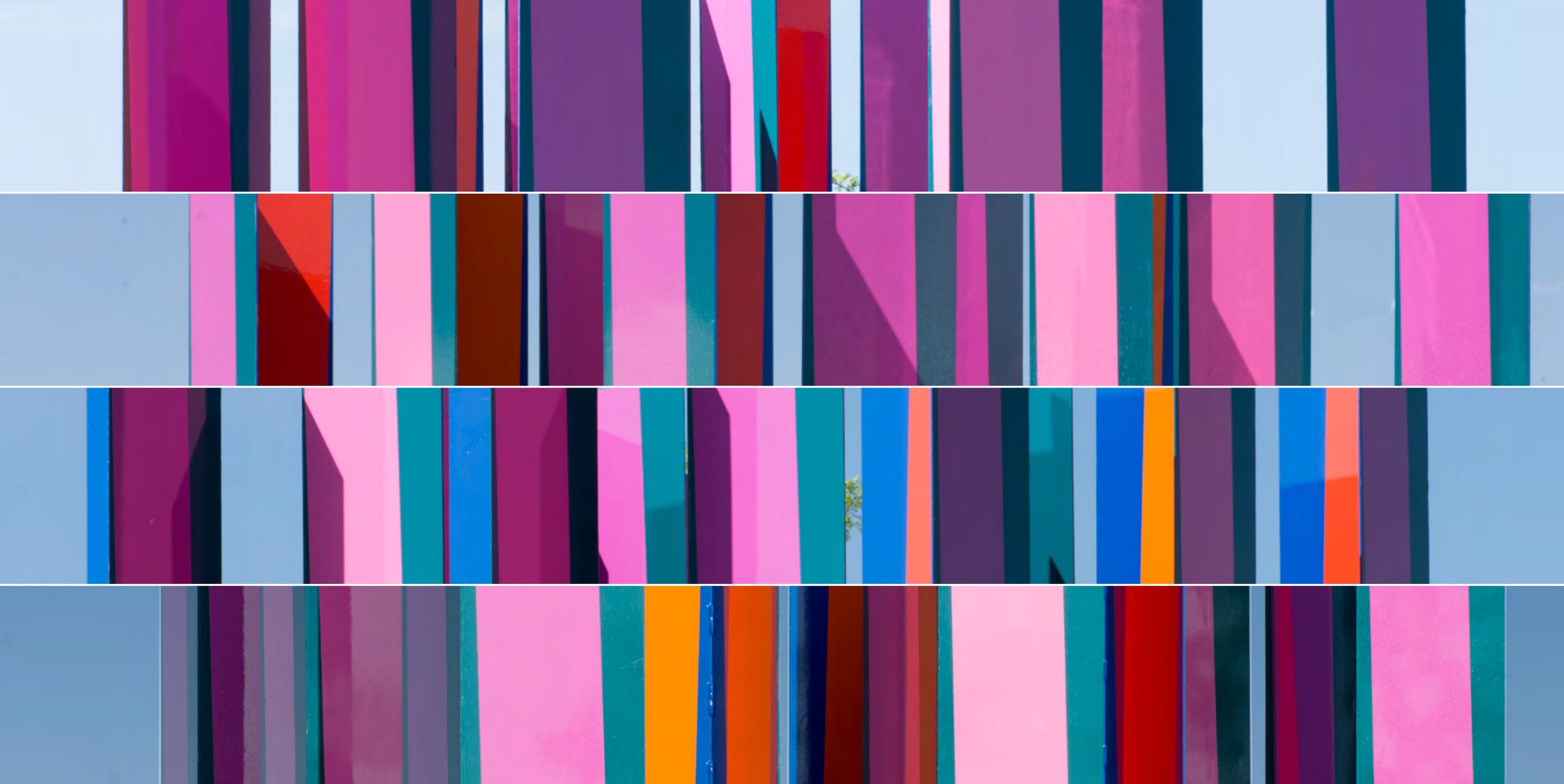


The perception of a work of art rests on many and various conditions. It depends not only on *how* but also on *where* the encounter between the work and the viewer takes place. The way the work is seen is conditioned by the location. If this location is a “place of art” – a museum, a gallery, a fair, an exhibition – the encounter is purposeful. The viewer comes as a viewer, accompanied by an intention and an expectation. The art awaits the beholder. The function and purpose of the location are to present art. If, by contrast, the location is a public space, an open space, the viewer comes not as a viewer but as a passer-by. Urban public space has practical, technical, economic and ultimately social functions. Here art is something additional and – in the ideal case – enters into a relationship with these primary functions.

Thus we have two completely different arenas for encounters with art. A third arena can be added to these. The park or garden landscape differs from places of art in its function, and from general public spaces in its use. Here, more than elsewhere and more than on streets and squares, people come as visitors. They are searching for fresh air and peace, but also for leisure and contemplation. They are seeking beauty. They come with openness and willingness to receive sensory experiences. Thus they are prepared to encounter art. The environment, too, is prepared: a garden is an ideal framework for the processes of art. Nevertheless, a park is not a place of art. It is an open, pluralistic space.







The Landesgartenschau 2015 (State Garden Show) in Landau is characterised by these interrelationships. As a temporary garden it attracts visitors during the course of a summer. It is a major event, as in advance it has already been the focus of a great deal of creativity, planning, skilled manual work and expense. This centripetal force encompasses the fact that a number of artworks are gathered at the garden show. Here they find a designed context and open, expectant visitors. And they enter into dialogue with the garden, as with the people. The Colour Forest is a work of art that was conceived for this dual conversation.

The Colour Forest responds to its environment, which is distinct from the cliché of a garden show in the sense of an idyllic display of flowers and in the style of the Keukenhof. The environment thus lays down a new standard. The show provides examples of contemporary garden planning, not by accumulating horticultural decoration but by designing a garden space. In this sense the Colour Forest is planted into a spatial concept. The conception of the space becomes the reception of the space. This means that what has been designed becomes a viewed, experienced, internalised space for the period of the visit – an experience of space that reinforces the Colour Forest. It responds to the horizontality of the ground through the verticality of its stelae, and to the slight deviation from the horizontal of the sloping lawns through a corresponding vertical deviation of its bands of colour. It responds to the green of the wide lawn and the trees on the horizon through a play of intensive reds.



The Colour Forest addresses visitors who have not come to the site to look at art but who are open for visual impressions and have taken the time to do so. They do not need the latest explanations and a specific understanding of art in order to accept this offering to their senses and to transform it into a subjective experience. They see the Colour Forest first of all as a conspicuous fixed point on the extensive area of grass – as a fixed point that cannot, however, be fixed. As they are walking, and in motion themselves, they perceive the Colour Forest as a changing object. With every step they take, the Colour Forest follows them by generating a new image. The object thus becomes a film.

To look at the Colour Forest is like looking into a natural forest. Here, too, the view changes as the beholder finds a different constellation of tree trunks in every position. A natural forest is also a film that plays out before the eyes of a walker. This mode of perception is enhanced by the art object and at the same time reduced to an exemplary excerpt: the principle is important, not the extent of the forest. Whereas the appeal of natural woodland lies in its diversity of individual, organic forms, the Colour Forest restricts itself to a simple scheme and compensates for this reduction through the highly efficient genesis of the image, through the productive potential of illusions.

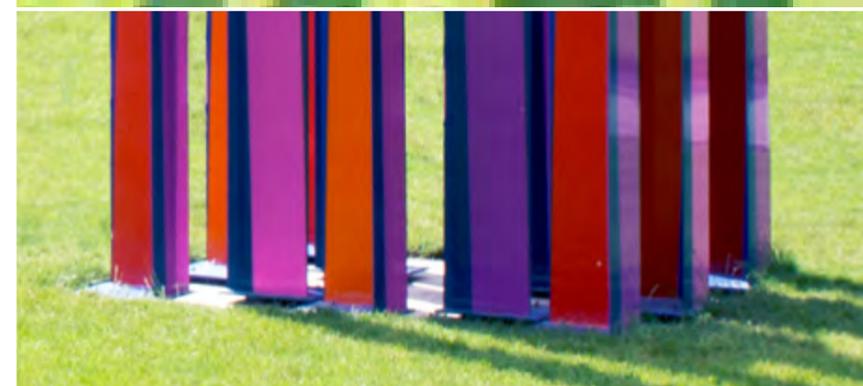


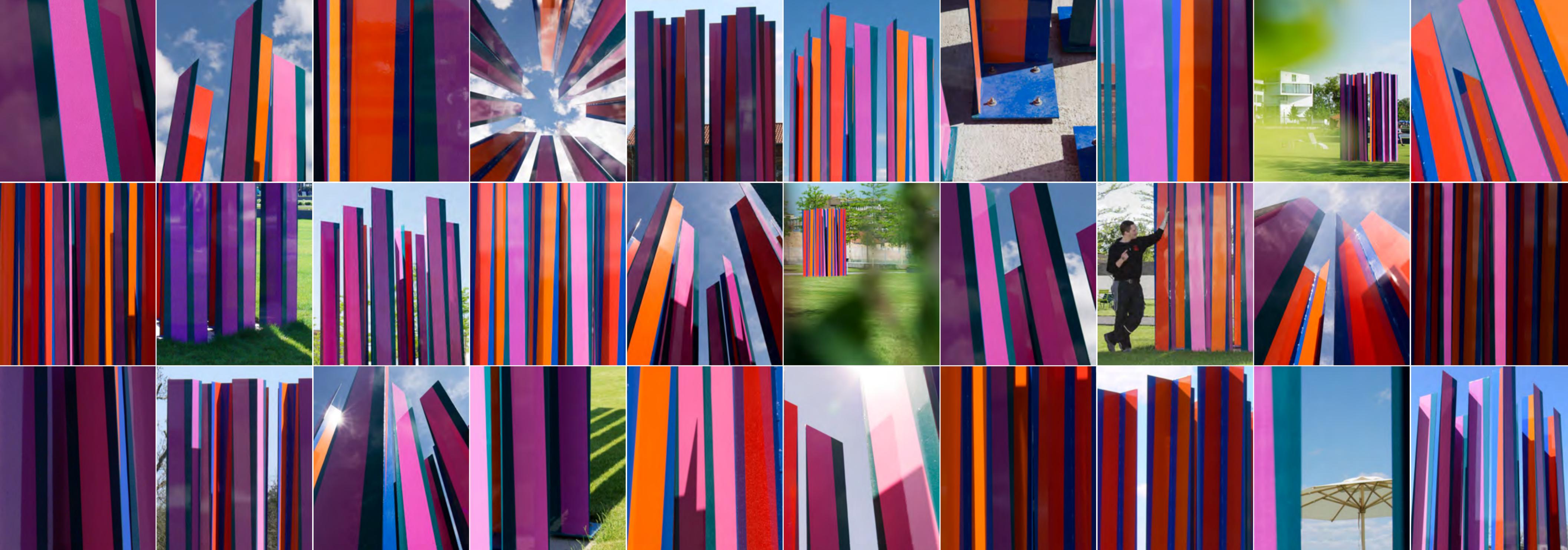




The first illusion arises from the three-dimensional shape of the elements. They look like four-sided stelae, yet are only L-shaped profiles and therefore open, or “half” of a four-sided shape. This fact is difficult to perceive, and is further veiled by the positioning of the elements: the L-shapes are seen partly from outside, partly from inside. They are arranged in a simple grid, which is not, however, apparent to the beholder. The film-like movement constantly conveys an impression of irregularity. Not even the number of stelae can be ascertained clearly, although there are no more than twelve.

The second illusion relates to the precision of the verticals. The impression of a tilt is dominant, and determines the first perception. We are accustomed to seeing the vertical as the dominant coordinate in all buildings. The further the advance of civilisation, urbanism and technical progress, the more dominant are the verticals. In organic nature the vertical exists as a principle; in what is built by humans, by contrast, it is an exact measurement. Every deviation from it is experienced as an irritation, a fault. It is perceived with great sensitivity. The Colour Forest counters this with an onslaught of sloping lines – sloping lines that do not exist physically, because the twelve stelae stand exactly upright. Their edges are strictly parallel. The sloping line exists only in the layer of paint. It forms an intentional camouflage.







The Colour Forest takes itself as its theme. It is a forest. And it is colour.

The colour dominates the material substance and turns the stelae into pure bearers of colour. This constitutes the third illusion. The simplicity of the construction of the stelae, their similarity and their positions in the grid is matched by the simplicity of the colour arrangement. A reduced colour scale is distributed according to a strict scheme on the outer and inner surfaces of the L-profiles. However, the viewers do not recognise this scheme and do not recognise the simplicity. They experience a complex play of colours that also changes continually. There are very few – rare – viewing positions that produce a simple colour image. And such an image disappears with the very next step, so that the beholder does not realise it was seen.

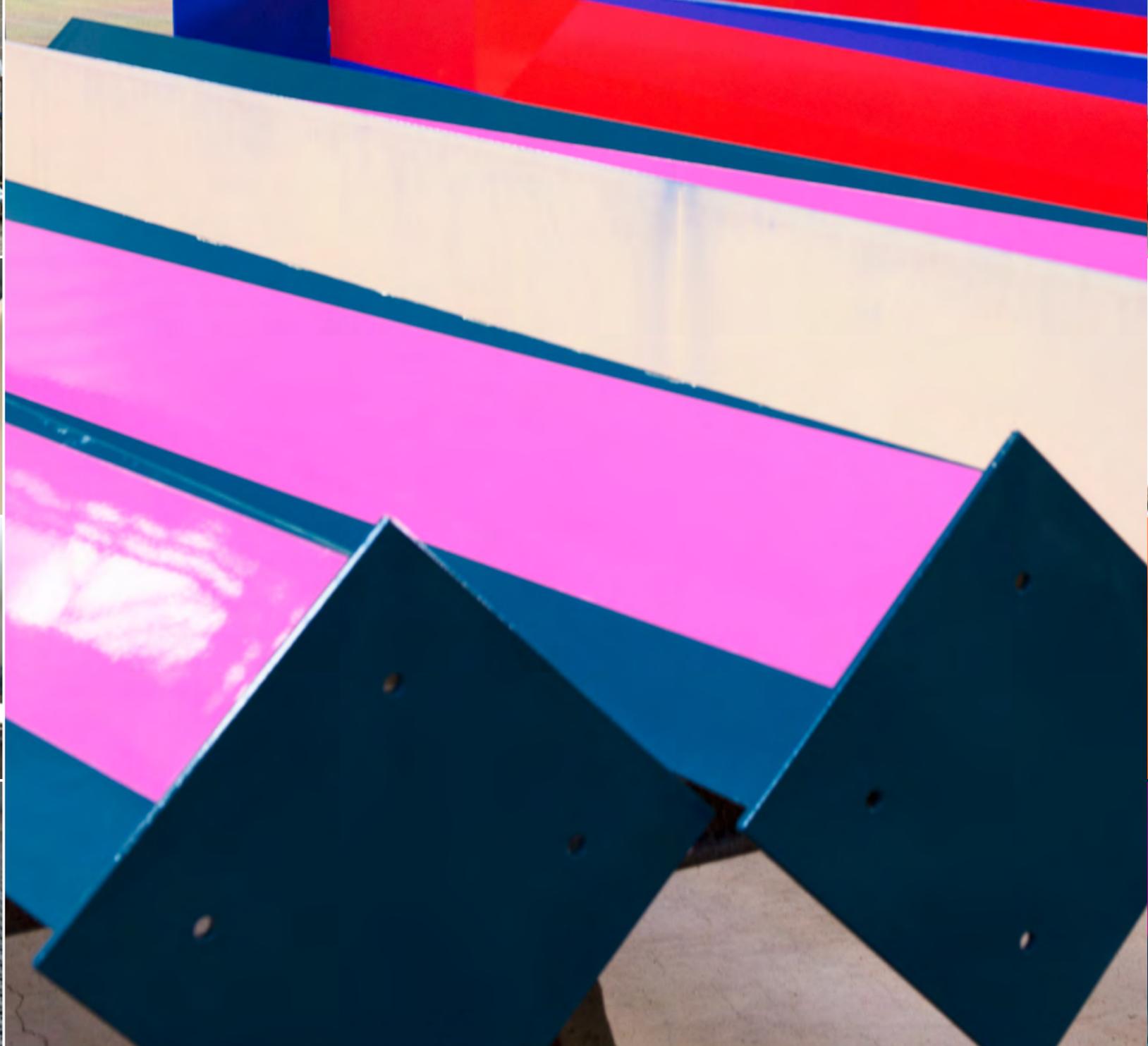
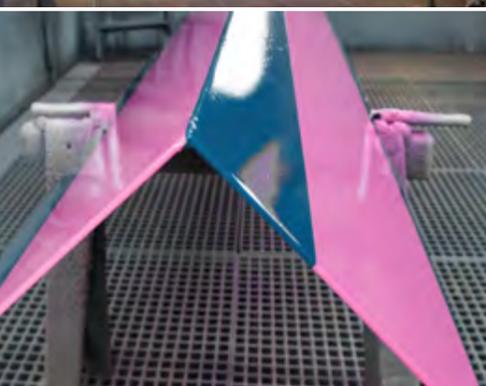
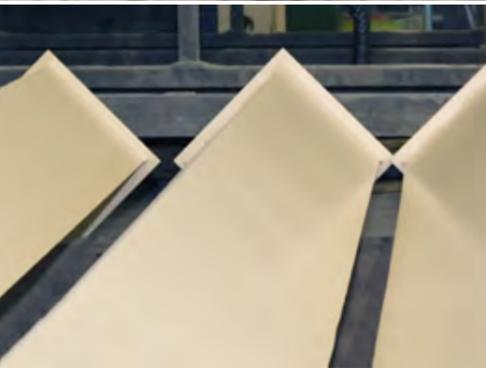
The play of colour surfaces, changing incessantly, corresponds to the play of intermediate spaces that open and close, producing their own narrative.

They allow the surroundings – the world – to penetrate the image.

Because the Colour Forest is in reality an image, not an object. It is in no way a sculpture, but is pure painting, an offering to the senses that is not about form and mass but about imaginary space and imaginary light. In this it fits into the dominant impressions of the surroundings, which are oriented to human contemplation. It fits into a consistent overall image and shows that gardeners are to a large extent painters – and painters are gardeners.







The Colour Forest was conceived for the State Garden Show 2015 in Landau in der Pfalz, and chosen as one of twelve contributing artworks.

Design:

Burghard Müller-Dannhausen

Project coordination:

Galerie Katrin Hiestand, Landau/Pfalz

Technical coordination:

hausgemacht Architekten, Landau/Pfalz

Structural engineering:

imagine structure, Frankfurt/Cologne

Metalwork and installation:

Blesinger & Ohmer Metallbau, Landau/Pfalz

Wet painting:

FW Lackhaus GmbH & Co KG, Bornheim

Technical data:

12 L-shaped steel profiles, galvanised and painted,  
Thickness: 4 mm, width 300 mm, height 4,000 mm

The Colour Forest was possible

thanks to the support of the following:

FW Lackhaus GmbH & Co KG

Sparkassenstiftung Südliche Weinstraße

imagine structure

hausgemacht Architekten

Galerie Katrin Hiestand

Text and design of this publication:

Burghard Müller-Dannhausen

German-English translation: John Sykes

Photos: Burghard Müller-Dannhausen  
and Stephanie Heß (Caro-S.)

Pre-press: creative republic, Frankfurt/Main

Printed by: ColorDruck Solutions GmbH, Leimen

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