



Turner Contemporary

TURN. TO COLOUR

45 Colours painted on doors and windows, LED lighting

Commissioned by Turner Contemporary, U.K.

Curated by Miria Swain

Margate Pier, Margate, UK. 2007

NORBERT FRANCIS ATTARD





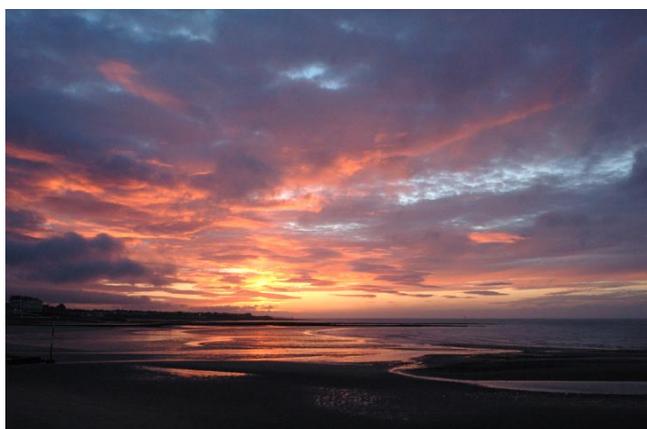


J.M.Turner (1775–1851)

Joseph Mallord William Turner was an English Romantic landscape painter, watercolourist and printmaker. Turner was considered a controversial figure in his day, but is now regarded as the artist who elevated landscape painting to an eminence rivalling history painting. Although renowned for his oil paintings, Turner is also one of the greatest masters of British watercolour landscape painting. He is commonly known as “the painter of light” and his work regarded as a Romantic preface to Impressionism.

FIGHTING TEMERAIRE, 1839 BY J.M.W.TURNER.

Along Margate Pier, a series of doors and windows were painted with bright colours. At night, these were lit up by means of LED lighting, a gesture which created an impression of the form of the pier through colour and light. This relationship between colour, light and their effect on form is what J.M.W Turner tried to achieve with his paintings. At night, the structure of the pier is rendered invisible, whilst the illuminated colours give the impression that they are floating in space. Their luminosity was reflected in the sea below.



SUNSET AT MARGATE, PHOTOGRAPHED BY NORBERT FRANCIS ATTARD, 2007



Central to the above is the role of horizons in Turner's work which can be alternatively idyllic and distant, or immediate and threatening. And horizons are both 'material/visual' and 'metaphorical/conceptual' – of space, of time, windows to memories and anticipations. In Margate, I was struck by the Pier, which appears to be a boundary of the town – a boundary which may sometimes be accepted without much reflection, although this is also a *lieu de memoire*, and thus a site for which projects abound, projects that would re-locate Margate in the national geographical art consciousness. I wish to highlight this architectural bracket and armature of both the town and of the elements which have made Margate what it is: a haven of safety, a source of succour, a backdrop to Dreamland, a memory of the past, and a resentful accusation of the present. The Margate Pier is both a pointer, and index to the horizon, and also constitutes it, indeed materializing the horizon when it appears to be absent.



TURN. to colour, 2007

Commissioned by Turner Contemporary

The new building for Turner Contemporary, designed by David Chipperfield Architects, opened in Margate in April 2011 to enormous critical acclaim. Since then the gallery has gone from strength to strength; we have attracted large audiences, run an exciting programme of historical and contemporary art and supported the regeneration of Margate. However, the prospect of the gallery had first been mooted in the early 1990s. Since 2002 a small team had built the organisation and developed a number of projects with artists of which TURN.to colour was one.

TURN.to colour by Norbert Francis Attard was part of a programme called Arrivals>Art from the New Europe. Developed in collaboration with Modern Art Oxford in 2006, this project encouraged cultural exchange with the ten newly accessioned countries to the EU. Curators from Turner Contemporary and Modern Art Oxford travelled to each of the countries and met with artists and curators there. Both institutions then hosted an exhibition or off-site project by an invited artist.

At this time the emerging organisation, Turner Contemporary, operated from offices and used various different sites for its activities. We commissioned work in the public realm, we ran a programme of talks in the local Media Centre and we had a small-scale building located adjacent to our construction site which we used as our Visitor Information Centre. Optimistic that we would eventually have a purpose-built gallery, we were keen to develop audiences for contemporary art in advance of our opening.

Following a visit to Malta and Gozo, we commissioned Attard to make a work in Margate. We were impressed with his practice which included sculpture, installations, video and photography and in particular his large-scale architectural interventions. Attard considered Margate and its very particular history and decided to make a piece which responded to that. Attard's visit coincided with a difficult time in Turner Contemporary's history, an initial architectural scheme had been abandoned because of concerns over spiralling costs. During the summer of 2006, however, David Chipperfield Architects was appointed to develop a new scheme but at this point we didn't know when the gallery would be completed.

Attard decided to focus his attentions on JMW Turner (1775-1851) and the Stone Pier in Margate. In fact, Attard's piece clearly articulated our mission – to combine the historical with the contemporary.



The impetus for the establishment of the gallery developed out of a desire to celebrate Turner's links with Margate and to support the regeneration of the area which had gone in to decline as a seaside resort following the Second World War. Turner spent time in Margate and Thanet as a child and again later in his life. Many of his key works were inspired by the coast near Margate and the quality of the light. He is said to have remarked to the critic, John Ruskin 'that the skies over Thanet are the loveliest in all Europe'.

In TURN.to colour, Attard's intervention was to have a long lasting effect. He chose as his site the Stone Pier which is a key structure on Margate's seafront. No longer used as a busy thorough fare for people and boats, Attard decided to paint the wooden doors an array of different colours to draw attention to the structure and to encourage the use of this space. The striking palette of colours was selected by studying Turner's works.

For the opening of this piece, Attard created a wonderful light installation for one evening. This animated the pier and started to get local residents to see the town in a different way, and to understand the impact that artists could have on regeneration.

The majority of Attard's piece remained in situ for a long period of time and was critical in changing perceptions about the gallery. The intervention made an impression on local residents and persuaded many that the gallery, and artists, could and should play a role in Margate's future.

Attard's sensitive approach to the commission ensured that the Stone Pier was refreshed making it once again a feature of the urban environment. The work encouraged investigation and the colours carried across the bay creating a much more upbeat tone to this area of the town.

The intervention was relatively modest and appeared effortless but in reality it required intense study of the locality and Turner's work. Attard was thoughtful and considered in his approach. He took on board that some individuals in the town were not supportive of the gallery and through his positive approach to this work he changed the minds of many.

VICTORIA POMMERY

Director of Turner Contemporary, Margate, UK.

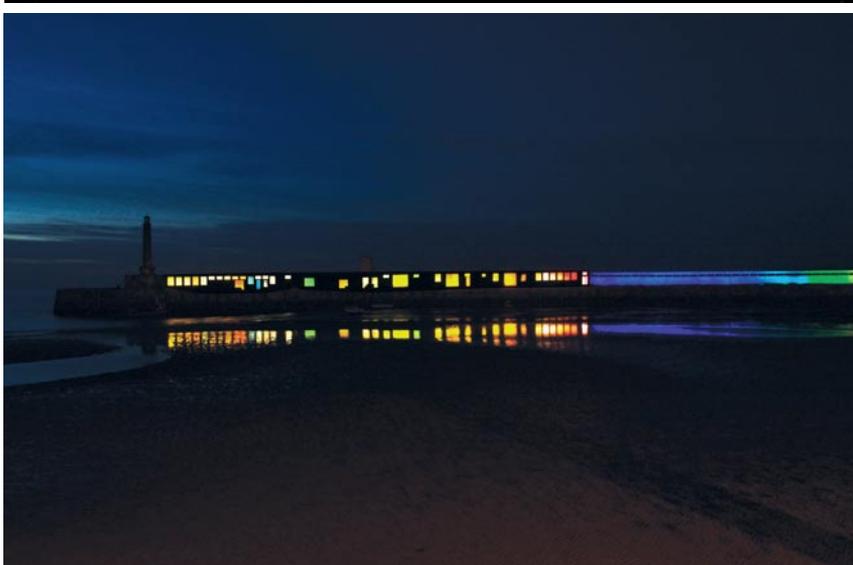
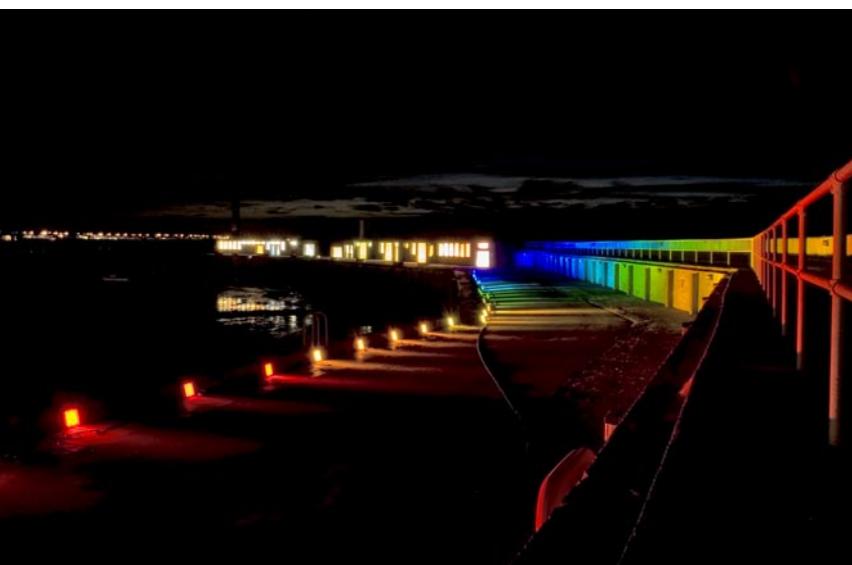


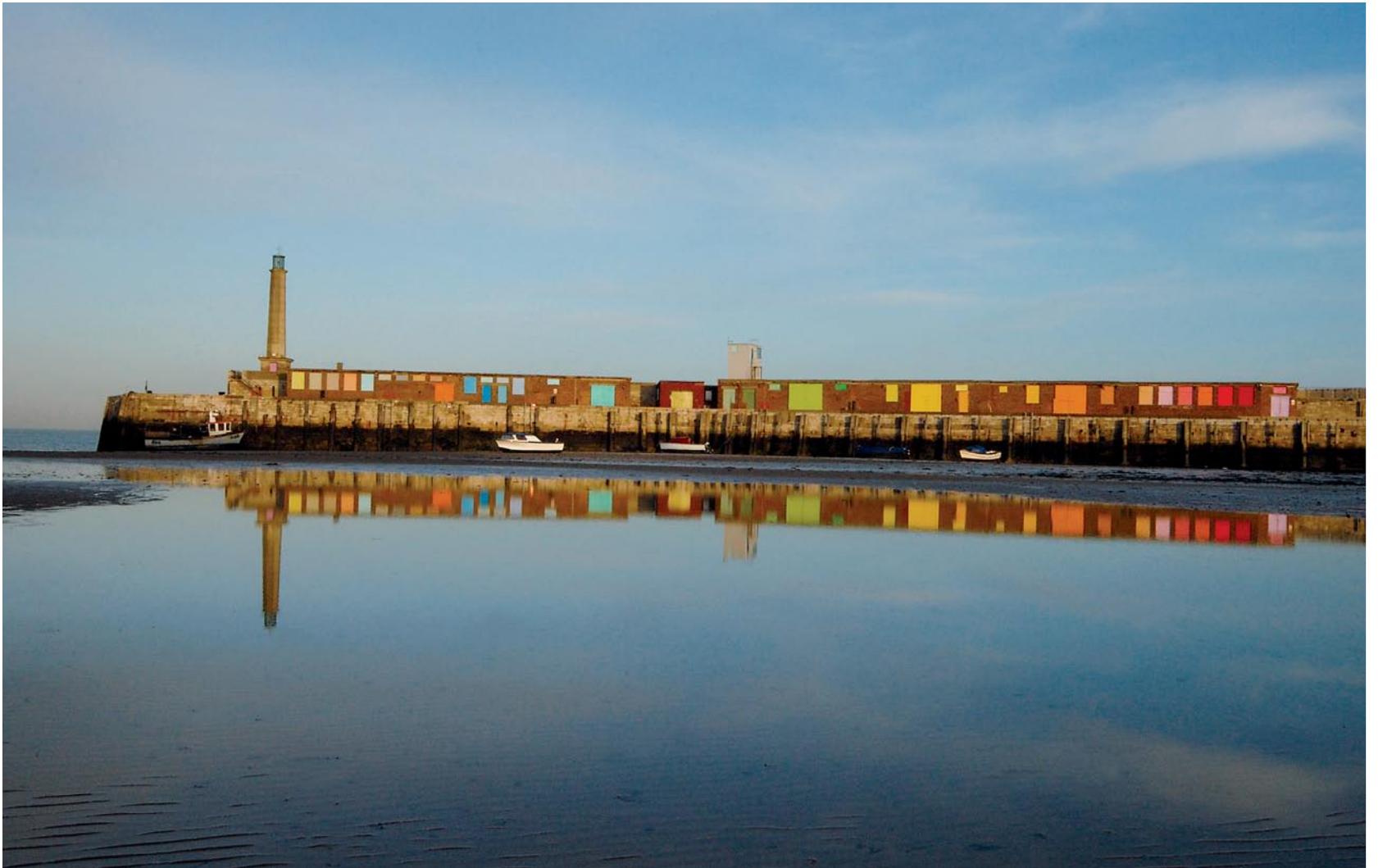
45 COLOURS

1. VELVET RIBBON 6
2. AMETHYST SHOWERS 3
3. FOREST LAKE 3
4. JUNGLE DRUMS 3
5. BRACKEN SALTS 2
6. SAMATRAN MELODY 3
7. JAVAN DAWN 4
8. CLOUDED STATE 2
9. MINERAL HAZE 1
10. NATURAL TAUPE 1
11. NUTMEG CLUSTER 2
12. SULTANA SPICE 1
13. SUMATRAN MELODY 2
14. HOLIDAY BLUES 2
15. HOLIDAY BLUES 1
16. AZURE FUSION 6
17. VELVET TOUCH 3
18. AMAZON BEAT 4
19. PORTUGESE BLUE 3
20. HOLIDAY BLUES 4
21. GRECIAN SPA 2
22. GRECIAN SPA 4
23. FOREST LAKE 2
24. LABRADOR SANDS 2
25. WOODLAND PEARL 3
26. WOODLAND PEARL 2
27. GRECIAN GARLAND 3
28. LIME ZEST 1
29. GRECIAN GARLAND 1
30. TARRAGON GLORY 6
31. BANANA DREAM 3
32. CALIFORNIAN SANDS 1
33. BUTTERCUP FOOL 1
34. BUTTERCUP FOOL 4
35. CALIFORNIAN SANDS 2
36. NIGERIAN SANDS 5
37. GOLDEN BARK 3
38. WHOLEMEAL HONEY 4
39. FLAMINGO FUN 4
40. SALSA MELT 6
41. BONGO JAZZ 2
42. BONGO JAZZ 1
43. FIRE CRACKER 4
44. RUSSIAN VELVET 5
45. AMETHYST SHOWERS









If Turner was interested in the shifting boundaries between day and night in his sunrises and sunsets, dusks and dawns, he was also interested in the shifting relationship between light and colour. Indeed one could say that he was interested in how one made the other.

This is a central theme I would like to explore in my project on Margate Pier: the use of light to “see”/realise colour in the day, and the use of colour to “see”/realise light in the night (and therefore to realize architectural profile as matter). I am also interested in the inverse, too. In the process I hope to be able to redefine the materiality and the public perception of the pier.

Norbert Francis Attard, *Artist's Statement*

TURN. to colour, the title of Norbert Francis Attard's intervention visible along the stone pier in Margate directly responds to the architectural physicality of the pier while drawing on Margate's historical connection with JMW Turner. Taking certain characteristics of Turner's painting as a point of departure for the work, namely his use of colour and his fascination with light, the sea, storms and clouds, Attard's work re-engages with Margate's seafront to explore the nature of boundaries and the intangibility of horizons. Originally trained as an architect, Attard now focuses on a contemporary art practice that incorporates sculpture, photography, video and installation. Often working with physical sites, Attard introduces new elements – sometimes found and sometimes made in order to invite participation and change the way people view a particular space. With his piece for Margate, Attard's intervention consists of painting the doors and windows of the old fishermen's stores along the pier with a choice of colours inspired by his own view of Margate, Turner's paint palette and the colours of the spectrum. The economy of this gesture is captivating – redefining the pier as a focal point for the town. Attard has spoken of his interest in the pier as embodying the notion of an arm that both shelters the town from the encroaching sea and points like a finger to the horizon. Also informing the work is the sense of a tidal clock determined by the sea; of the shifting relation between light and colour; between the boundaries of night and day, sunset and sunrise. This concept is further enhanced by a one off light installation conceived especially for the pier and presented during the opening. By highlighting the negative spaces articulated in the painted doors and windows, this installation makes visible at night, that which is seen by day.

MIRIA SWAIN











Turner Contemporary

Computer controlled LED lighting by Techniques Light and Sound CIC, Ramsgate, Kent, U.K.
Painting of doors and windows of pier by Paul Smith Decorators, Margate, U.K.
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