

Obituary: Don Pavey (1922-2015)

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Don Pavey (1967)

DON PAVEY ARCA, artist, historian, author and lecturer, cofounder of the National Art Education Archive, cofounder of the Royal College of Art Colour Reference Library, founder of the Junior Arts and Science Centres, co-director of Hayward, Mitchell & Pavey Design Associates, and deviser of Art Arena Games and the ProMICAD System for Empowerment.

Donald Adair Pavey: born Surbiton, Surrey, July 25, 1922; died Kingston upon Thames, Surrey, May 10, 2015. Throughout a life exploring education through art, and the psychology of colour, Don Pavey's practical interests extended into portraiture, stained-glass, design consultancy, writing and collecting. Further interests included the methodology of art, design and advertising, psychological aesthetics, heraldry, genealogy, the theory of games and the history of colour and its literature.

Don Pavey was born on July 25, 1922, in Southfields, south London. His father, Leslie Pavey (1892-1963), was publishing director at Amalgamated Press Ltd. In 1939 he studied briefly at Watford School of Art before transferring to Kingston School of Art (1940-43). While there, Pavey worked for the RAF Department of Experimental Synthetic Navigation under Barnes Wallis, preparing 'Air Ministry Colours' for training navigation maps, which were moved under static cockpits to help new pilots assess flying-height. In 1943 he won a scholarship to the Royal College of Art, and set off for its temporary, wartime campus at Ambleside in the Lake District. He took an active part in the college's theatrical life, and wrote and produced *Ghoul's from the Lakes* for its 1945 Easter Review, in which 'ghosts' of De Quincy, Southey, Ruskin and Wordsworth were encased in pillars, with heads and shoulders whitened to appear as busts. A year later he played the cardinal in Peter Bucknell's RCA production of Webster's *Duchess of Malfi*, for which he received a favourable review in *The Stage* (7 March, 1946). He graduated as an ARCA on his 24th birthday with a Medal of Special Distinction and prizes in painting and architecture. His only sibling, Stuart Pavey (1925-92) had won a Queen's award but suffered war-induced schizophrenia and was committed to a Surrey asylum.

In January 1950, after three years teaching at St Lawrence College, near Ramsgate, Pavey was appointed part-time lecturer in art history at Kingston School of Art. He began collecting books and manuscripts on colour, joined the Physical Society's Colour Group, and studied part-time at the University of London (1954-59), writing extensive essays on colour expression and iconography, the third of which, 'Colour and Humanism', the first history of colour in art and literature, was awarded a Distinction and later edited for publication by Roy Osborne (2003). In 1959 he briefly corresponded with Carl Jung and translated several German texts relating to personality diagnosis by colour preference. In 1960, with Marjorie Hayward OBE and Audrey Mitchell, he established a design consultancy. Hayward had introduced the coloured zip to Elsa Schiaparelli and was now designing colour schemes and lighting for factories and offices. Pavey had met Mitchell at Kingston in 1940 and she later worked with Francis Wilson at the British Colour Council. The partnership was incorporated in 1963 and for 20 years 'Pavonis House' in Castlebar Road, Ealing, became the hub for commissions for murals, stained-glass windows, interior designs, graphics and sculpture, as well as for training courses and the production of educational filmstrips. Pavey was now employed full-time at Kingston, teaching drawing, basic design and complementary studies, including history of art and degree dissertations. He also developed a prototype 'colour dictionary' and convened a BCC meeting of ink

manufacturers to discuss the subject. Coincidentally he accepted an invitation from Methuen to edit a similar colour-order system compiled by Andreas Kornerup and Johann Wanscher and published in Copenhagen in 1961. Their *Farver i farver* was rewritten and reissued as the *Methuen Handbook of Colour* two years later.

Pavey was a fellow of the National Society for Art Education, founded by the London Schools Inspector Alexander Barclay-Russell (1900-80), whose theories on child art had fundamentally influenced Herbert Read's *Education Through Art* (1943). Pavey was interested in the work of both Margaret Lowenfeld at London's Institute of Child Psychology and Margaret Branch, founder of the National Association for Gifted Children, and opened his first children's art workshop in response to a lack of facilities for local children. A small studio was set up at Pavonis House, and four early protégés were featured in a 1967 edition of ITV's *David Frost Show*. In January 1969 the 'Junior Arts and Science Centre' was registered as a charity and its activities featured in a BBC television programme, *The Gifted Child*, produced by Harry Levinson. When the JASC needed larger premises the comedian Max Wall (Maxwell Lorimer) offered to buy a building next to the Questors Theatre, but the LEA prevented its purchase as its basement ceilings were marginally too low. Instead, Pavey sold his colour-book collection to Alastair MacAlpine and bought a house in Sheen, where the ground floor and garden were set aside for painting and sculpture. Other JASCs then opened in Hanwell, Molesey, Kingston, Richmond, Teddington and Kew, and also at Pier Head in Liverpool (organised by John Webb). Following their discontinuation, their ethos was continued at Kingston Polytechnic's Experimental Design Workshop, where a series of 'Art Arena games' was initially offered to children aged 9-15. Pavey had travelled on a scholarship to Greece to study its ancient architecture and ceramics, and in 1973 published 'Objects of Colour in the World of the Ancient Greeks' in *Athene*, the journal of the Society for Education through Art, which Pavey edited for the next five years. He later contributed 'Colour and Stimulus', which outlined his theory of his 'colour-effects gradients' and their relation to Max Lüscher's theories, and 'The Meaning of Placement in the Visual Arts', on the significance of up-down and right-left placing of motifs in images, based on Emmanuel Hammer's theories. In 1975, with Hans Brill and Stuart Durant, Pavey was active in founding the Colour Reference Library at the RCA. Successful negotiations between bookseller Harold Landry, the ILEA, the Colour Group (GB) allowed the collection to remain intact and be added to the RCA's special collections. Pavey also enrolled as a postgraduate student to study ethics and game theory in the RCA's Department of Design Research. In 1978 he published 'A Painted Field of Play' in the TES, explaining his Art Arena games strategy and, after further research, Methuen published his Art-based Games in 1979. He then devised computer-based programs and colour tests intending to help students develop positive attitudes to their abilities and aspirations. Commissioned by ICL, *Genius* (1980) was followed by *Jobtel* (1985), programmed by Gary Dalal. In 1995, with Dalal and the businessman John Lord, *Virtual Genius* (later ProMICAD) was launched, and shown at London's Barbican Centre, where ICI's Sir John Harvey Jones described it as 'the first software attempt to cope with the national problem of lack of self confidence I have seen.'

In 1980, Pavey headed a team of editors to compile *Colour*, a large compendium published by Mitchell Beazley. Soon after retirement in 1983, he organised with John Morley *The Revolution in Child Art, 1930-1960*, an exhibition at the Royal Festival Hall of work selected from Barclay-Russell's collection. With Morley (who had set up an Aboriginal college in Australia) he then convened an RCA conference with the aim of establishing an Art Research Foundation. In the event, the meeting initiated what became the National Art Education Archive, built in the grounds of Bretton Hall, near Wakefield. They became Project Founder-members and Trustees of the archive, which still holds over 300 items lent by Pavey. In 1984 he published *The Artist's Colourmen's Story* (1984), a history of the paint manufacturers William Reeves, William Winsor and Henry Newton. Two years later, 'Micro Academy' was established initially with the intention of offering computer classes in computer-programming to school-age children. It later produced videos on art, design and, symbolic systems and games. In 1992, he extended classes to include students of the University of the Third Age. In 1997, for outstanding contributions to colour education and psychology, and research into the history and theory of colour, Pavey was awarded the Newton Medal of the Colour Group. Micro Academy then set up a colour-information website, initially as *ColorDome*, proposed by Carole Anne Ferris and designed by Nicholas Browne, and revised as *ColorAcademy* by Ben Adamson, who also worked with Pavey on an animated video, *Pandora's Globe* (2004), for the Japanese animators ArtHouse. Pavey

published his biography in 2009, assisted by Roy Osborne and David Lenartowicz, with whom he collaborated on *Buddhist Colour* (2009), *Colour Symbolism* (2009) and *Colour Engrained in the Mind* (2010).



Don Pavey teaching one of his U3A students at Studio House, London SW14 (c.1993).

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