

Why
are
all
the
chairs
at
Konstfack
red?

Sam Kennedy IA M2
2012/03/21



When they ask me what my Master thesis project is about I will ask them

"Why are all the chairs at Konstfack red?"

"So why are all the chairs at Konstfack red?" they might then ask

Well first of all, all the chairs are not red. Some of them, the ones with wheels in the computer rooms and studios, are grey. But the ones in the seminar rooms are red, the ones in the library are red, in the student kitchens they're red and in the cafeteria they are red too. The floor is generally not red, it is mainly grey, apart from in the toilets where both the floor and the ceiling are red and where the chairs are white and have holes in their seats. The walls are not red they are white. In fact you could say that Konstfack is generally pretty white, but the chairs they are red.

"Why do you want to know why the chairs in Konstfack are red anyway?" they might ask.

I want to know why some of the floors are grey and why all the walls are white. I want to know why the floor and the ceiling in the toilets are red and why the seats here are white and have holes in them. I want to know why the chairs in our studios are grey, why we each have a flat white table on which to write, why the departments are organised in the way they are and why our professors sit upstairs while we sit downstairs. Most of all I really want to know why all the chairs at Konstfack are red.

"Why are all the chairs at Konstfack red?"

One answer to the question is that the chairs are red because the architect who designed Konstfacks interior likes red. I suspected this

might be the case and he told me this was the case when I went to speak to him. "Red goes well with white and black. I like red." But this is only one answer, one point of view. Of course there are many other answers to the question

"Why are all the chairs at Konstfack red?"

Hidden within the question of the red Konstfack chairs is another question. A question that is equally large and has just as many answers as the question of the red Konstfack chairs. That question is

"Why are things the way they are?"

"So why are things the way they are?" they might ask.

They want the answer just like I want the answers. I would love to give them the answer to the question but I don't think I can, so instead I direct our attention back to the red Konstfack chair and I tell them we might begin by looking here for answers. At the very beginning of this project I had the feeling that the answers to the question are hidden within the world we inhabit, they are in the things around us and the relations we make with these things. They are right next to us, in front of and behind us, over our heads and underneath us. This is when I remembered the red Konstfack chairs.

I heard all the chairs at Konstfack are red because the floor is grey and the walls are white and red goes well with white and black and because red is so strong, so dominant, so predominant that we no longer see it as a colour. I heard that all the chairs at Konstfack are red because of lightness of Ellen Key and the red and white and black in the paintings of Carl Larsson, because of The Law of Ripolin and Le Corbusier and because of Kulturset and Peter Celsing, because of Love Arben and Gert Wingårdh, because love is red and so are hearts. I heard all the chairs at Konstfack are red because of

[illegible]

Within this essay I will argue for the importance of embodying our knowledge, of being clear on where we are looking from. I will also argue that it is important to try to learn what it looks like from other positions, from the point of view of others. Acknowledging where one is looking from and trying to look from somewhere else is what Donna Haraway has called a 'feminist objectivity' and it is a strategy I have tried to make use of throughout this project.¹ What

we can see depends on where we are positioned but also on the direction we are facing, on how we are orientated. As Sara Ahmed has argued, our orientation can explain the presence of the objects which we have around us and the objects which we have around us orientate us further.² If I wasn't orientated towards chairs I wouldn't have encountered the red Konstfack chair. If I wasn't orientated by the red Konstfack chair I wouldn't have turned around to face it now.

To take up a chair as a student at Konstfack is to orientate ourselves

2 "What you come into contact with is shaped by what you do: bodies are orientated when they are occupied in time and space. Bodies are shaped by this contact with objects. What gets near is both shaped by what bodies do and in turn affects what bodies can do." Sara Ahmed, A "Phenomenology of Whiteness" in *Feminist theory* vol 8(2) p.152

3 For a short summary of the history of the chair see: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chair> 2012/03/15

towards learning, and also to open ourselves to re-orientation.⁴ When I sit in the red Konstfack chair I exhibit my readiness, my willingness to open my mind and have new thoughts put into it. If I didn't want to learn I would not be sitting here in a red Konstfack chair. As a member of the institution I know there is a red Konstfack chair with my name on it. I need not turn around to face it, I need only face out from it. Sitting on a red Konstfack chair within the walls of Konstfack I have come to feel at home, I know that my body is allowed to be here, I even have a tag with which I can open doors to prove it. I have been selected by interview on the strength of a portfolio at the expense of others. I have been recruited to be part of the institution.

The institution Konstfack needs bodies to survive. Every year new bodies are brought in, other bodies leave and the student body is refreshed. An institution will always recruit those who they hope will 'fit in' and this means those who share its' likeness. How could it not? As a member of the student body I agree to fit within that body. When Konstfack shouted "Hey You!"⁵ I realised they were shouting at me. Not everyone could hear that shout, not everyone had the opportunity or the things in their background which would allow them to respond. Now here I am sitting (relatively) comfortably, looking out from a red Konstfack chair. I have come to feel at home here, sitting and talking, sitting and writing, sitting and listening. If I need to get up from my chair I can do this without thinking. I can walk down corridors, get a coffee in the cafeteria, bump

4 "It is no accident that such recognition is symbolically given through an item of furniture: to take up space is to be given an object, which allows the body to be orientated in a certain way. The philosopher [student] must have his seat after all." Sara Ahmed, A "Phenomenology of Whiteness" in Feminist theory vol 8(2) p..160

5 "To recruit can suggest both to renew and to restore. The act of recruitment, of bringing new bodies in, restores the body of the institution which depends on gathering bodies to cohere as a body....The 'hey you' is not just addressed to anybody: some bodies more than others are recruited, those that can inherit the character of the organisation, by returning its image with a reflection that reflects back that image, what we would call a good familiarity." Sara Ahmed, A "Phenomenology of Whiteness" in Feminist theory vol 8(2) p..158

into a friend and never be confronted by the presence of my body in a space where it should not be. When I move around the institution my body trails behind me, I am not forced to think about my body I can think about other things.⁶

Institutions do not come out of nowhere, neither do interiors. They are formed around some bodies and the routines and habits of those bodies. Those bodies are the somebodies who have been recruited to 'fit' in the institution. The space we occupy at Konstfack is an extension of our bodies and it extends our bodies. The chairs we sit on are made for us to sit on them, they are tools which allow us to do things we would not otherwise be able to do. Looking into the smooth red surface of the red Konstfack chair we might see reflected our own image. Looking at the way its back curves, the way its seat is formed we might notice the curves of the body of the institution we are part of.⁷ It is not by chance that the parts of the chair, the legs, the arms, the back, the feet, have come to be named after the body. Why can I sit so comfortably on the red Konstfack chair while others can not? Why does it fit me so well?

What does it mean to sit uncomfortably in a chair? What would I

6 "A system of possible movements, or 'motor projects' radiates from us to the environment. Our body is not in space like things; it inhabits or haunts space. It implies itself to space like a hand to an instrument and when we wish to move about we do not move the body as we move an object." Merlau-Ponty in Sara Ahmed p.53

7 "To be comfortable is to be so at ease with one's environment that it is hard to distinguish where one's body ends and the world begins. One fits, and by fitting the surfaces of bodies disappears from view. White bodies are comfortable as they inhabit spaces that extend their shape. The bodies and the spaces 'point' towards each other, as a 'point' that is not seen as it is also 'the point' from which we see.... We can think of the chair beside the table. It might acquire its shape by the repetition of some bodies inhabiting it: we can almost see the shape of the bodies as 'impressions' on the surface." Sara Ahmed, A "Phenomenology of Whiteness" in Feminist theory vol 8(2) p.158

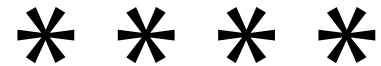
gain from taking my chair and placing it in a position where I might feel uncomfortable, where I might notice my body again? What might I learn from doing this? I might learn how comfortable I am in my body in everyday life. I might learn how in Konstfack and in the other places that I sit in or move through I generally do this in free and easy way, while paying very little attention to my body. I might remember that my comfort in these situations is not shared by everyone but is the result of my body being privileged in the environments I occupy. I might take a step back, or a step to the side and see my own position from another angle.⁸

Of course I would only be sitting in a red Konstfack chair in a place where you don't normally sit in red Konstfack chairs. I wouldn't be in danger, I wouldn't be under threat, I would only be sitting down. If it all got too much I could always get up and move away from it, leaving the chair behind, standing alone, and return to my former position. If someone asked about it I could always make a joke, say something like "its always good to bring your own chair with you", or maybe say that I had just bought it and was on my way home, or claim that it wasn't mine and I was just sitting on it. It is not everyone that can take a red Konstfack chair out of Konstfack in order to claim a different position.⁹ To claim to see from another position is always

⁸ "These are lessons I learned in part walking with my dogs and wondering how the world looks like without a fovea and very few retinal cells for colour vision but with a huge neural processing and sensory area for smells." Donna Haraway, "Situated Knowledges: The science question in feminism and the privilege of partial perspective" in *Feminist Studies* p.583

⁹ "One cannot "be" either a cell or molecule - or a woman, colonized person, laborer and so on - if one intends to see and see from these positions critically. "Being" is much more problematic and contingent. Also, one cannot relocate in any possible vantage point without being accountable for that movement. Vision is always a question of the power to see - and perhaps of the violence implicit in our visualizing practices. With whose blood were my eyes crafted?" Donna Haraway, "Situated Knowledges: The science question in feminism and the privilege of partial perspective" in *Feminist Studies* p.585

a power move. However, maybe in making this move, in taking the chair outside of Konstfack and away from its other red friends, the chair would become a little redder. And maybe while sitting on this redder Konstfack chair, I might feel a little redder. And maybe I would have some conversations I wouldn't otherwise have or see things I wouldn't otherwise see. And the world might become a little rounder and I might see a few more shades of red amongst all these red chairs.

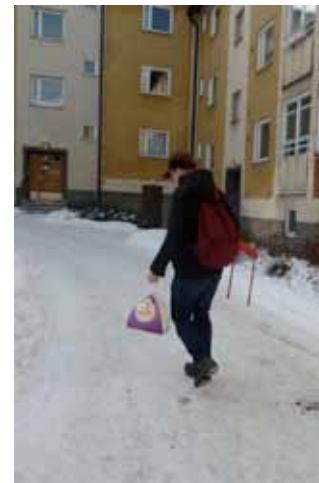




And maybe I would have some conversations I wouldn't otherwise have or see things I wouldn't otherwise see....

Normally the conversations would begin with a little joke about how practical it was to bring your own chair with you on the underground or around town. Many times it was elderly people who would make this joke and I began to wonder if they weren't at least a little serious.

I carried this red chair around with me for 4 weeks at all times outside of school. It was both fun and exhausting. I felt a little red at times and I felt like the chair became redder. Taking this chair outside of Konstfack I also realised that my project must also relate to the outside world. I got some new ideas about where to take it next.













chair discussions
Samuel Kennedy

Sent: 21 March 2012 14:26

To: Vesa Honkonen; Anna Odlinge

Cc: Helena Söderberg

Dear Vesa, Anna and Helena

This is Sam again...

In my project "Why are all the chairs at Konstfack red?" the red chair of my school is used as a tool for looking. It is about looking at a chair and looking through a chair. About taking this chair and placing it in different positions and looking from those positions. Within Konstfack the red chair is a supportive tool. To take up a red Konstfack chair at Konstfack is to open ourselves to learning and to re-orientation. If I didn't want to learn I wouldn't be sitting here in a red Konstfack chair.

I would like to continue using the chair as a tool for learning. There will be two elements to my degree project. Firstly I will invite a number of institutions dealing with learning to contribute to a collection of chairs held in Konstfack during the time of the spring exhibition. Around these chairs I hope to organize a series of events, which aim to open up a dialogue around the question "Why are all the chairs at Konstfack red?"

One of the events in this series will be a panel discussion to which I hope to invite 4 or 5 speakers from different areas of the field to contribute. These speakers will also be asked to bring their own chair with them or to nominate a chair on which they will sit. The audience will take up position on the chairs collected from other institutions. Through this discussion I hope to bring up a number of key questions:

- * An institution might acquire its shape by the repetition of some bodies inhabiting it. How do we shape the environment of the institution we work in?
- * A body might be reshaped through its contact with an institution. How does the environment of Konstfack shape our bodies?
- * What are the values which are reflected in the current design of Konstfack's interior and are these values present in the institutions program?
- * How might we reach new places from which to see?

I have the names of some people I would like to invite to participate. One of these, Celine Condorelli, is an architect based in London. I think it would be great if she could also give a lecture in the morning and then participate in a panel discussion in the afternoon. The other people I am thinking are based in Stockholm. They are Katarina Bonnevier (KTH), Brady Burroughs (KTH), Markus Degerman (Uglycute). I would also like to invite Vesa or Anna to take part. I hope this discussion can happen during the degree show possibly on Friday 18th of May, in which case Celine Condorelli could maybe give a Friday lecture.

Of course to bring these people to a discussion in, and about, Konstfack, I would need financial support. I want to ask if the department is able to support me in making this project happen. I will begin the process of contacting participants but it would be good to know as soon as possible if the department is able to contribute.

Look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sam

Dear friends: A request for help!

In my project “Why are all the chairs at Konstfack red?” the red chair of my school is used as a tool for looking and learning. It is about looking at a chair and learning through a chair. About taking this chair and placing it in different positions and looking and learning from those positions.

Now in the next stage of my project, I would like to continue using the chair in this way. There will be two elements to my degree project. Firstly I will invite a number of institutions dealing with learning to contribute to a collection of chairs held in Konstfack during the time of the spring exhibition. Around these chairs I hope to organize a series of events, which aim to open up a dialogue around the question “Why are all the chairs at Konstfack red?”

Please help me to make a list of institutions which you think deal in some way with learning and are based in Stockholm. Of course learning is a very broad subject and I would like this to be reflected in the choices I make of which chairs to bring to Konstfack. I see these chairs, perhaps romantically, as strangers which will infiltrate the schools walls and tell us something about the world outside the white walls of the institution. I hope that you can help me by suggesting a few names of institutions which I can add to the list. And if you have the name and contact details of someone working or studying within that institution then this will help even more.

Please forward this email to people you think might be able to contribute

Thankyou so much

sam

(The contactless list so far- if you know someone let me know...)

KTH, Mejan, Dans och Cirkus Högskolan, Stockholm Universitet, Södertorn, Swedish for Immigrants, Teaterhögskolan, Lärarehögskolan,

Samuel Kennedy

Actions

To:

Sent Items

27 February 2012 11:01

hi Moa

I am a student at Konstfack in the final year of the master programme in Interior Architecture. The project I am doing for my master thesis is about the red chairs in Konstfack. It takes its starting point from the question "Why are all the chairs in Konstfack red?", which is, for me, a way of asking "Why are things the way they are?" (in Konstfack, in interior design, the world in general).

I saw your work at last years degree show and also on your website and would love it if you would be interested in making a book for my project. The project I am doing is a research project and I would like to document this story in a book which asks and frames the question "Why are all the chairs at Konstfack red?"

At the moment I am working on a lecture which has two strands. One is from the perspective of sitting down on a chair, it will talk about what I have learnt during this research. The other is from the imagined position of a Swedish architect in the rationalist, functionalist tradition. The argument is given while standing up on a red Konstfack chair. These arguments might switch positions and be complicated at some points.

In addition to this I have been carrying a red Konstfack chair with me, now for three weeks and documenting its journeys. You can see this on my blog alltheredchairs.wordpress.com which was set up to try and keep track of this project.

For me this project is about looking. To acknowledge that we are always looking from somewhere, facing in a certain direction, and that we should always try to get to other positions from which to look. So I would be very happy to have you look at this in the form of a book. If you have the time and are interested then we could talk more about how this could work. i would ideally like to show this book at the spring exhibition. I think you are studying in London now? so perhaps this could make life difficult. But let me know what you think anyway.

Thanks a lot and I hope to hear from you soon

Best

sam

Moa Pårup []

Inbox

29 February 2012 18:48

Hi Samuel,

Thanks for your email! Sorry for my late reply, this week has been absolutely mental in terms of work.

I've had a look at your blog and also managed to find your project description. Your project really appeals to me and I would love to collaborate with you. Yes, I do live in London but I don't think that would be a problem.

I will not be able to start with this until the end of March as the following weeks are gonna be just as mental as this one. But if you want we can have a Skype meeting at some point during next week and discuss this more in detail?

Best Wishes

//

Moa

Samuel Kennedy

Sent Items

01 March 2012 12:18

hej moa

fantastic! i'm really happy that you are interested to collaborate on this project.

A skype conversation is a good idea, how about sunday evening are you about? Evenings are better for me but let me know when would suit you. My skype name is: samkennedy2184

I've been thinking in the last few days about trying to initiate a chair exchange scheme to happen during the spring exhibition. Konstfack would loan out some of the cafeteria chairs to different institutions around Stockholm and would receive one chair back from each of those institutions. These would then be put into service in the cafeteria for the week of the show. How does a KTH chair look like, or one from Beckmans or Mejani. I feel that the furniture of an institution often reflects its values and that when working in an institution we are often too close to see what these values are. I hope that this would generate conversations, both at Konstfack and in the participating institutions.

I am waiting to hear from Ivar, the rektor, if this would be possible and something they would support. In this case I think the book would be crucial in framing this conversation. How did we get here? Why are all the chairs at Konstfack red? Why is it important to ask this question? But lets talk more on Skype about this when you have the time.

I'm really glad you're interested in working on it.

Vi hörs

Sam

“Rethink Everything”- A short story

“The walls are white, the floors are grey but the chairs, they are red.”

He liked to put things simply. He liked to tell it how it is. He'd come to Stockholm to study design, at the school of art and design, a year and a half ago. Then sixteen weeks ago he had taken on the project of redesigning the interior of his school as the final assignment of his Master program. There were still four weeks to go but he'd finished ahead of schedule and now, here they were sitting around the corner of a table in front of his model. It was scale 1:100, constructed from foamboard, colored card, paper and plastic, and complete with classrooms, corridors, seminar rooms, a cafeteria, library and other rooms with other functions. He'd also made a large number of red chairs, 800 to be precise. There were 300 hundred in the cafe, 15 in each of the 15 seminar rooms, 20 in the lunchrooms of each of the 8 departments, 40 in the library, 40 in the offices of the administration, and 35 spares. Now here they were, him and his professor, sitting in front of his model.

“Why are all the chairs red?” she asked

Of course she couldn't see colours. She'd never been able to. Achromatopsia, a condition she'd had from birth meant that her world was greyscale, monochrome, colour-less. She took the job as a tutor on the Interior architecture program ten years ago and recently she had acquired the title of professor. It's not like she'd needed to try hard to hide her colour blindness, it didn't even seem to cross her students minds that she couldn't see the colours in their work. Her style was direct, forthright, sometimes verging on antagonistic. She was, much of the time, the most prominent voice in the room.

Her method was to ask why, regularly and repeatedly. She thought of herself as an object standing in front of her students, forcing them to define their paths and their goals around the things she threw in their way.

“It's an accent colour” he said

“An accent colour” The three words sounded, when she spoke them, like bricks being thrown into a lake. “An. Accent. Colour”

He'd used colours a lot in his work before. Red was his favourite. He'd colour the legs of chairs he designed, or handles of cupboards he'd drawn. He'd used it in interiors too, on walls at the end of corridors or on the facings around doors. He'd tried it in various shades and then he'd found this red, his red. Actually his red wasn't that different from orange. Sometimes in some lights it could even look pink. The point was it was strong and it made his furniture stronger. Of course he knew she couldn't see colour, somehow he'd suspected it right from the beginning. Perhaps this was why he'd begun using it more and more frequently, he knew that she couldn't see it and wouldn't pick up on it or criticise it.

The more red he used the better things seemed to get for him. People understood why he used it, they got it. It had become a bit like a signature for him, a critical moment in all of his designs. When he'd taken on the assignment of the school he knew straight away he would use it as an accent colour on the chairs. Positioning of walls, floors, other colours had all followed afterwards, had been made to fit around the red chairs.

In one way it had been easy. He knew well enough the position of the students, what they needed and what they wanted, he was after all one of them. Once he'd divided up the spaces with central corridors and rooms leading off them it was just a matter of fitting

everything in. What had been more difficult, hugely difficult, was the production of the scale model he'd undertaken and he'd worked like a dog to get it all done. He wanted people to be blown away by the scale of his ambition and audacity of his efforts. Early on his desk had been the site of production. There was a certain irony in his mimicking of factory production to make miniature chairs for the interior of his school which, after all, used to be a factory. He'd learnt as he went along, becoming faster and more efficient in his methods. And then there were 865 and he'd finished and the rest had been easy. Now here they were sitting in front of his model, looking in.

"Why?" he heard her ask "why red?"

He thought about confronting her with it, coming straight and blurting

"But you can't even see colour!!"

But something in her voice was troubling him. It was clear that she hadn't been blown away by the scale of his ambition or the audacity of his efforts but what wasn't clear was why she was asking about the chairs, or even if she really was asking about the chairs. Something about the question wasn't right, the answer seemed so obvious, so straightforward and yet it couldn't be.

"Rethink everything" she said.

The door clicked closed as they walked out of the classroom and into the model.



It was some time before he realized what was different. First of all there'd been the smell to overcome. The whole place reeked. Of course it was the glue he'd used on the chairs. He'd bought it the other day, the kind which can be dripped precisely out of a small bottle and which sets almost upon contact. He'd used it to stick the small black rubber feet onto the legs of the chairs and to stick the legs to the bodies. Now the whole place was stinking of it. In the minute or so he'd been standing there at the intersection of the two corridors outside his classroom, the smell had begun to shift to the back of his consciousness, becoming like background noise. It was then that he noticed it. This world was different. This was a world without colour, a world before colour, a world of shadows, desaturated halftones.

After his nose had grown accustomed enough to the reek of the model to allow his legs to move, she'd accompanied him up the corridor. Seminargatan he'd called it. He liked the idea of fashioning his school after the metaphor of a city. Gridded streets with names like seminargatan, verkstadsgatan, bibliotekgatan made up the city that the students would occupy and live in. He'd heard about the work of Baron Hausmann during the nineteenth century in Paris and liked the idea of making his corridors as wide and tall and high as boulevards. There would be no winding paths or narrow lanes in this new school.

The corridor as they walked down it depleted of its colours and accents seemed to him dull and repetitive. Overhead was all structure. The construction that he'd imagined to hold up the roof and hold the glass in place seemed to follow their movement like the ticking of the second-hand

in a clock. When he'd designed the corridor he'd imagined it as a place where people would meet, sit for a while, perhaps bringing out some of the red chairs from the seminar room. Now that he was walking up it he thought only of getting to the end, reaching his goal. The corridor seemed less street and more highway.

He was surprised to see people occupying the model. He'd been focusing so much on the architecture and the smell that he'd not noticed the signs of life about the building. Now as they approached a girl who was moving fast in the other direction he couldn't decide whether to maintain eye contact or look past the girl into the distance at the end of the corridor. He settled on the half solution of a barely noticeable nod in her direction. The girl seemed to resort to the same.

In the wall he'd cut a number of openings. Doors, windows, ventilation shafts. They finished at the same height on the walls, their tops forming horizontal lines which ran down the corridor. He was pleased with how even at this scale the openings in the wall were clear cut and accurate. Some of the upper windows had already been covered with something that looked like grey paper, perhaps already the rigorous standards of the building were beginning to be overthrown. He noticed some people sitting in front of a projector screen listening to someone talk in one of the darkened rooms. As they reached the end of the corridor they came to a big, open space that he'd imagined functioning like a public square. Vita havet he'd called it.

"Shall we have a seat?"

It seemed less like a question than a command but anyway he answered “yes” and they crossed to the other side of the square. They entered the cafeteria and took a table in the corner, the only round table amongst a lot of rectangles. This had been the table he’d most wanted to sit at when making the model. It felt sheltered in the corner and he gratefully took a seat that allowed him to face the whole space. The rubber feet of the chairs had bumped uneasily along the concrete floor, as they’d pulled them out, causing vibrations to travel up through the legs and come out of the board of the seat, as a loud deep sound. All around them the air was full of the noise of chairs farting in and out of conversation.

The next sound that was heard in the grey world was

"redredredredredredredredredredredred...."

The word was repeated so rapidly and so many times that it seemed to lose its meaning, becoming only another sound in the room.

"Why are all the chairs red?" she asked again, this time not looking at him but looking instead at the chairs around the table and the chairs occupied and unoccupied stationed all around the cafe. Hesitating and without knowing what he would say he began,

"Well..."

Each dot marked the beginning of a new cycle in the activity of his brain, an activity returning again and again to its point of origin. He tried to think about the colour scheme and about his red, but then he remembered that the chairs weren't red anymore. He tried to think how red made his furniture strong and how it made him feel stronger, but then he remembered the furniture here wasn't red. He thought about how to tell her that the chairs were red because the floor was grey and the walls were white but then he remembered that the chairs were not red, they were grey. Each time he came upon an explanation which had made sense to him before, the immediate environment in which they were seated, seemed to contradict him, stalling his thoughts.

"But the chairs, they're not red. At least not here, not to me!" he exclaimed

And when he said it he had the feeling that this is why she'd brought him here, brought him into her world. And the answers that had before seemed so rational, so straightforward, no longer matched up to the reality. Here things were different and as soon as he realised it, he began to see how. It wasn't just that the colours were missing, this was only the most obvious shift. The whole balance of perception had altered. Sounds sounded louder, they were more noticeable and more part of their conversation than before. His elbows, feet and buttocks as they touched the table and the floor and the chair seemed to contribute more to his experience of space than he had previously recognised. And the smell. Oh the smell.

And now when she spoke, it was clear where she was speaking from. And by bringing him here she was letting him know where she was speaking from. And it was clear to him that he had also been speaking from. And it was clear to him that he was speaking from and she was speaking from but that the from they were speaking from wasn't the same from. And all around in the cafe were stationed his 'red' chairs. And some of them were empty and some of them were full. And in the full ones were sitting people. And some of them were silent and some of them were speaking. And of the speaking ones some of them were speaking from here and some of them were speaking from there. And it was clear that though there was only one letter between the two positions, here was clearly different from there.

"Let's speak about freedom" she said "Have you thought about what you can say and can't say and how you can say it and can't say it and where you can say it and can't say it and how I can see it and can't see it. Have you thought about that?"

And he knew that he hadn't but he knew that he would.

"Did we speak about what is red and what is not? Are these chairs red? Perhaps it is just the light. After all colour is dependent on its surroundings and the eyes of the person who happens to be looking at it. Have you checked all the chairs to see if they are all red? They too depend on their position in the world and the direction in which they face from that position. Did we speak about what red is and what red is not?"

Now he was lost in the tangle of her words and the mess of his own thoughts. Where once had been clarity and sureness, now was only uncertainty. Where before she had asked why and he had answered, now she didn't even wait for an answer.

"Do you understand what I'm asking when I ask you 'why are all the chairs red?'? There's the question of red. What is red and what is not, what red is and what red is not. There's also the question of chairs. If I asked you 'Why chairs?' how would you answer? Then there's the question of 'all'. Why are ALL the chairs red? and this question too can be answered in many different ways. Perhaps what I'm trying to show you is that there are other ways to answer these questions. And perhaps the reason you're still sitting here is that, although you may not have known it before, you want to see these questions in a new light"

... Another three revolutions and before he was able to respond, she continued.

"And so I brought you here. And now you know that there are other ways in which to answer the question that I keep asking you. Your problem is now that you are lost, you don't know how to answer. I have taken away the tools which you were so reliant upon and replaced them with a slightly altered set. You will find, like I have found and like I still find, that it's not all about colour. The eyes are no longer the sharpest tools in the box." she said with a laugh before continuing on the tool theme. "There are other tools too which you can make use of and you need to learn how to make use of them. And you can hopefully see that it's not all about you and it's not all about me. There are other

answers. And I have other students and now, thank you, I should get back."

And she stood up, pushing out her chair with the back of her legs, the chair emitting a noise which he had now come to recognise as it bumped unevenly along the floor. She gave him a meaningful look and a little smile and then she said

"Why are all the chairs red?" and she left.

. . .

He sat. All around him was the background noise of the combined conversations of enough people, at distance enough that he couldn't make out a word. There were only pitches, tones and volume. He closed his eyes and tried to think of the sound as a material. With his newly tuned ears he tried to distinguish each individual sound and pin it to its source and to trace its path as it was reflected from surface to surface. The wall, the floor, the ceiling, the sound in its movement seemed to reach to the corners of the architecture, to give form to its interior. And he thought about all the colours of the rainbow that he knew how to name and wondered why he didn't know what to call colour in sound. And he tried to imagine how he would have designed this interior if he had used his ears a little more and his eyes a little less.

As he was walking back, back to the classroom and back to the old world, he varied the rhythm of the steps which took

him down the long corridor. He listened to the noise his shoes made as they tapped out a rhythm on the foamboard of the floor. He tried altering the point on his feet which reached the ground first and he listened as the slap they made upon impact echoed back off the flat hard floor. As he arrived at the door he was carrying one leg slightly heavier than the other causing him to walk at a peculiar angle and he was thinking about the things that we rely on, the things that we think are natural.



The door clicked closed as he walked out of the model and into the classroom. Somewhere inside him, unconsciously, during the time he'd spent in the model, he'd thought that when he came back, through that door, things would return to normal. But now looking around he saw that he wouldn't be going back, that this was how things would be from now on. The classroom was greyscale, monochrome, colour-less. He walked over to his model where they'd left it on the table and he sat down in one of the chairs they'd left empty. He eased forward in the chair, positioning himself to look down into the model and he began to work.



