In Fall of 2014, I received a Faculty Development Grant to fund the printing of two copies of my artist’s book titled *Sensation of Color: A Painter’s Inquiry*. This project is made up of 120 individual inkjet prints of original color investigations that I made in gouache on paper in 2013-2014. My grant award funded one full-scale, 7 x 10” copy for exhibition and a smaller, 5 x 7” “studio set” for my personal use. The grant also funded the materials for 2 archival boxes that I constructed to house the prints.

Color relationships that appear to generate light energy are central to my painting. This project began in 2013 as a series of informal gouache sketchbook exercises exploring color gradations in particular. It grew into a focused and systematic investigation numbering over 120 gouache paintings. Midway into the project I realized its potential beyond sketchbook exercises, and that I wanted to be able to arrange the charts in combinations for use when planning my larger paintings. My solution was to reproduce the images as a set of individual prints.
This was my first experience with professional inkjet printing. The preparation of the digital files took many more hours of labor than I anticipated. The limitations and difficulties of color matching was another problem. The most fundamental challenge was in finding the right use of digital tools that would translate the painted images into printed ones while retaining their essential painterliness. I was fortunate to have the support of a graphic designer, Kerrie Peterson, and advice from my printer at POEVealing Fine Art Printing, Lauren Opaciuch, as well as support from the staff in the Otis Computer Lab where I worked every Sunday for 10 weeks getting the files ready for printing.

This project got me to think about things that as a painter I’m not used to thinking about, like fonts, font color, the way paper feels in your hand, the design and construction of a slipcase, the acidity of book cloth, and how to maintain concept continuity across so many different elements. I was continually challenged and pushed in new directions and I learned a lot.

My understanding of digital color and inkjet printing processes and aesthetics has grown immensely since I began this project, which will enhance my teaching of Color and Design at Otis. I plan to share this project with my students as it applies to color mixing, simultaneous contrast effects, color space, optical color and digital color. In my painting studio, I now have a new resource for developing color palettes for my work, which I’m beginning to explore. The digital files are print-ready and I plan to print a limited edition in the future. I would welcome the opportunity to share this project at Academic Assembly.
I’m very grateful for the financial assistance provided by the Faculty Development Grant because it has allowed me to take a body of work in a whole new direction, which has been exciting and invigorating.

-Cathy Lightfoot
Adjunct Associate Professor, Foundation
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