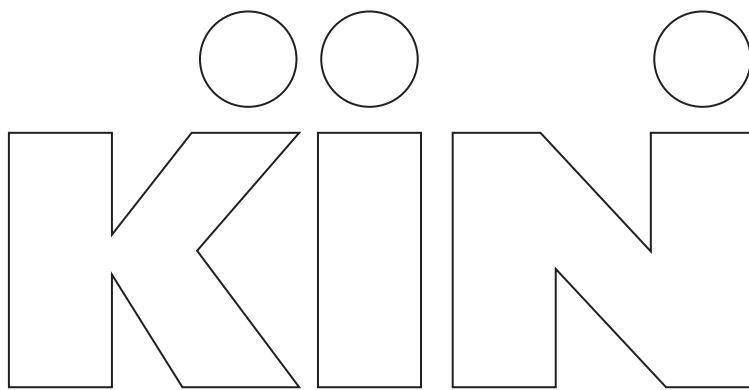


Years

Richard Sides

23/01/25, 6 pm - 15/03/25



Purple

The English word for purple comes from a Latin word which comes from a Greek word.¹ The Greek word comes from a fish that excretes a dye that is purplish in tone. A rarity in antiquity, it was sought after by Greek royalty who yearned for a purple tunic, perhaps a trouser. When the time came to name the colour the Greeks, faithful to the fish, gave the colour the scientific name of the purple fish: *porpura*. Once Latin surfaces, the story of fish is gone, but the adjective survives as a reference to pure colour.

Nevertheless, the Greeks remained committed to their story and their hunt for purple. Their devotion was so pronounced that they formulated a unique verb for the search: '*kalkainen*', to search for the purplefish. And though the hunt was perhaps long and lonesome, the qualities that came to define the hunt for purple became lodged in the verb itself. Rather than referring to the search for fish, the verb started referring more to a brooding state: to darken, to become vexed and gloomy.

In the first act of Sophocle's play *Antigone*, we meet an embattled Antigone confronting her sister Ismene. The sisters take the stage mid-conflict at odds with how to proceed after the death of their brother Polynices who has been denied a proper burial at the hands of the Athenian state. Early on in the action, Ismene asks her sister: "What's the matter?...you sound so dark, so grim." Antigone's reply is opaque: "why not?" In this version of *Antigone*, the translator opts to underline Antigone's sound or the essence of her word choice. Ismene's purpose is to unlatch her sister's unease which she is opposed to but has ignited after calling her moody. Antigone's mood is so important because it is the petrol that pushes the rising action forward.

In the original Greek, Ismene's line would have read something like: "you seem to colour a reddish-purple word or to dye your words red-purple."²

Once the line is translated into standard English it reads as: "you are obviously growing dark in the mind, brooding deeply." Antigone's opposition is the expression of her moral, moody standing. She is elementally purple.

The purple verb is a vexed point for many translators. The question of how to render a mood verb across a new idiom is a complicated challenge. In Anne Carson's version, the line reads as: "what's the matter, you have your thunder look." In Friederich Hölderlin's translation it lands as: "You are, Antigone, capricious and very stormy / In your anger you have no measure, and life is denied to us in excess." In another version I found online, her mood is a storm that haunts the inside of her body.

Whatever the result, the operative mode of translation is to address and convert old or analogous values into the freshest vernacular available. Words that are fixed in diction are pileups - a storage solution for ideas. Words that don't make it past their adolescence are paved over.

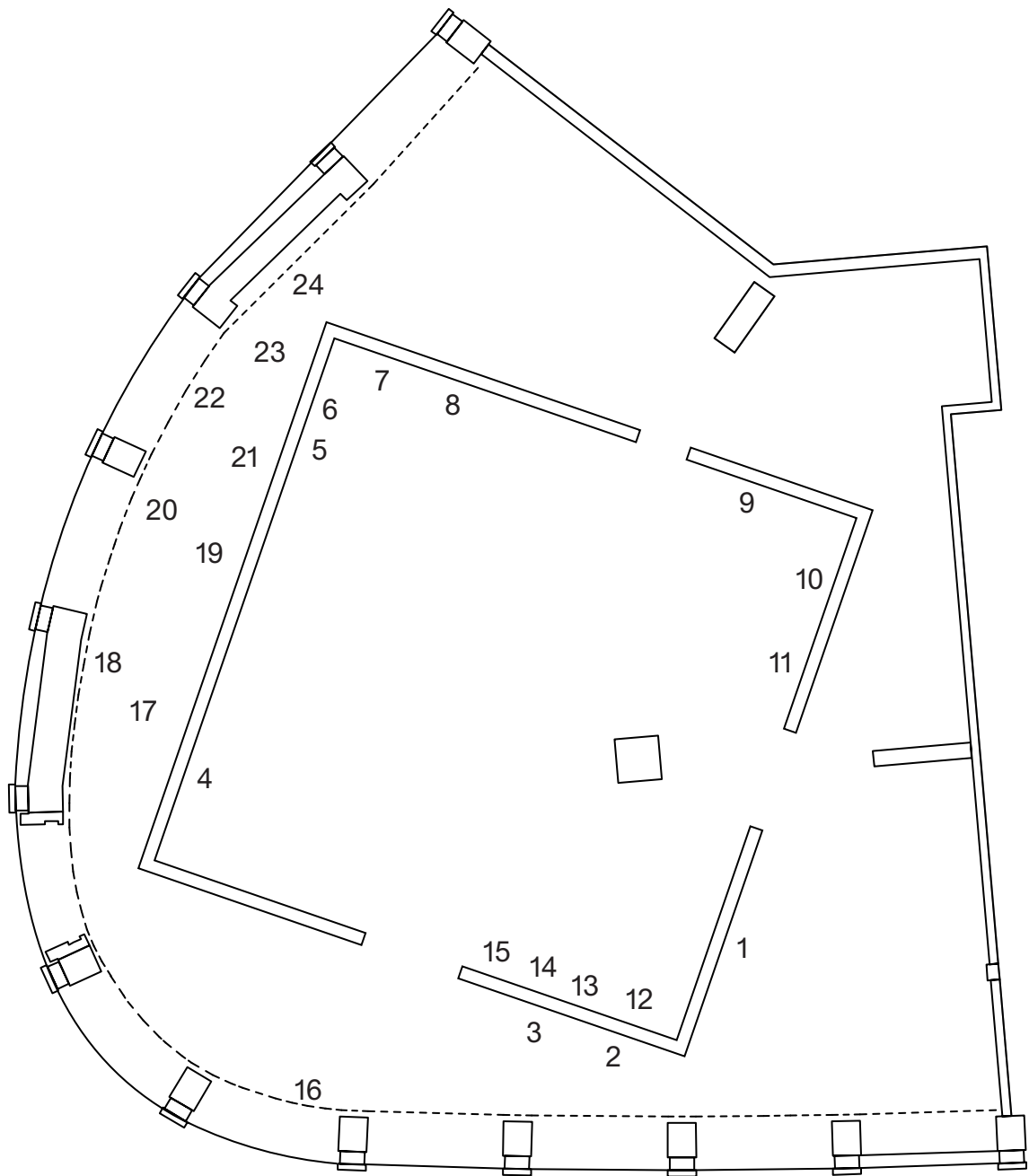
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In *Years*, Richard Sides makes use of the notion of *technics* popularised in 1994 by Bernard Stiegler. In Stiegler's view, the technical object is made in-between nature and human intention. It exists as an access point to a temporality that dissolves the distinction between subject and object, between the human and the technical. It is through this logic that Sides arrives at images of cave drawings, quantum computers, and extraterrestrial life. These are connected as the necessary tools needed to operate back and forth across time - not so much in body but in mind. The paintings, on the other hand, develop through a process of accumulating past compositions and previous artworks, and eventually overpainting them with layers of a monochromatic colour.

Micaela Dixon 2025

¹ Anne Carson, *Variations on the Right to Remain Silent*, (New York: Knopf, 2016), 7.

² Ibid, 7.



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|---|---|----|--|----|--|
| 1 | <i>The pleasures and delights...</i> , 2025 Vinyl cut handwriting, 76 x 160 cm | 9 | <i>1960s timeline (Sage Green) 2021-2025</i> , 2025 Mixed media, acrylic, gesso and enamel on wood, 61 x 74 cm | 17 | <i>"The Machine"</i> , 2025 Wood and acrylic, 90 x 70 x 38 cm |
| 2 | <i>Untitled (Bright Red)</i> , 2024 Mixed media, acrylic, gesso and enamel on wood, 68 x 99.5 cm | 10 | <i>Untitled (White)</i> , 2024 Mixed media, acrylic, gesso and enamel on wood, 67 x 123 cm | 18 | <i>Airblade VHUO2</i> , 2025 Foamboard, spray paint and gesso, 38 x 26 x 11 cm |
| 3 | <i>Untitled (Pale Blue) 2017-2024</i> , 2024 Mixed media, acrylic, gesso and enamel on wood, 90 x 75 cm | 11 | <i>Untitled (Lipstick Red)</i> , 2024 Acrylic and enamel on wood, 22 x 131 cm | 19 | <i>Non-bureaucratic zone</i> , 2023 3d printed plastic, acrylic, disco ball, chain, motor, dimensions variable |
| 4 | <i>The old way will come back when the new way gets boring (Mint Green) 2014-2024</i> , 2024 Mixed media, acrylic and enamel on wood, 84 x 48 cm | 12 | <i>Concrete inversion of life (Brown) 2023-2025</i> , 2025 Mixed media, acrylic, gesso and enamel on wood, 104 x 90 cm | 20 | <i>IBM Quantum System One / Google Quantum AI / Devs / The Dark Side of the Moon (1973)</i> , 2025 Inkjet print, acrylic medium, wood, 116 x 35 x 60 cm |
| 5 | <i>Untitled (Cream) 2018-2024</i> , 2024 Mixed media and enamel on Correx, wood, 44 x 48 cm | 13 | <i>Great speeches of the 20th century (Purple) 2021-2025</i> , 2025 Mixed media, acrylic, gesso and enamel on wood, 60 x 118 cm | 21 | <i>Untitled (Smoky White) 2016-2024</i> , 2024 Mixed media, acrylic, gesso and enamel on wood, 182 x 80 cm |
| 6 | <i>Boring (Deep Blue)</i> , 2024 Mixed media, acrylic, gesso, enamel on wood, 92 x 64 cm | 14 | <i>barratt schmooze (Deep Purple) 2015-2024</i> , 2024 Mixed media, acrylic and enamel on wood, 44 x 66 cm | 22 | <i>Shark dog</i> , 2023 Wood, card packaging, resin and acrylic, 60 x 123 x 30 cm |
| 7 | <i>Untitled desktop (Lime) 2022-2025</i> , 2025 Masking tape, acrylic, gesso and enamel on OSB, 65 x 205 cm | 15 | <i>Untitled (Ruby Red) 2017-2024</i> , 2024 Acrylic and enamel on wood, 34 x 92 cm | 23 | <i>Trash Atlas</i> , 2023 Wood, card packaging, resin and acrylic, 178 x 90 x 52 cm |
| 8 | <i>Stella Black study 1, Gestalt (Yellow) 2021-2024</i> , 2024 Acrylic, gesso and enamel on wood, 120 x 90 cm | 16 | <i>The blow is what it does</i> , 2025 SD video loop, 4 seconds | 24 | <i>Party Politics (Pink) 2015-2024</i> , 2024 Mixed media, acrylic, gesso and enamel on wood, 116 x 82 cm |