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Colour Samples: the Use of Coloured Paper in Belgian Avant-Garde Circles After 1917

Coloured paper was omnipresent in artworks, periodicals, pamphlets, and catalogues produced by the Belgian avant-garde.

Proof prints for magazines like *Het Overzicht* were made on coloured paper (mostly yellows and reds).

Remarkably, some proof linocuts by Jozef Peeters and other (inter)national artists featured in *Het Overzicht* were even printed on gold leaf stock papers. These prints were marked by a 'luxe-uitgave' or 'luxury' stamp, which indicated that these prints were collector's items.

The eccentric farmer-artist Felix De Boeck consistently used coloured paper as the mount for his monochrome drawings. This choice of material as an alternative passe-partout or frame is an interesting practice, which might indicate his high esteem for drawings as autonomous works of art.

In the same vein as the Theo Van Doesburg's Dadaist magazine *Mécano* with its red, yellow, and blue issues, Belgian Dadaist and Surrealist periodicals made significant use of a coloured support. In every issue of the review *Correspondance* (instigated by Paul Nougé, a Surrealist poet, artist, and theorist who was greatly admired by Magritte), a colour code was included, which matched the colour of the pages. One was even called 'Nankin', a type of pale yellow.

The Belgian avant-garde also did not consider paper solely as a support for other media. At times, the material was able to transcend its 'materiality' to become a medium. The draughtsman, painter, and collagist Paul Joostens created practically three-dimensional sculptural collages, where the coloured material served as a 'building component'.

By looking at these examples and others, the main objective of this paper is to explore the versatility of the use of paper in Belgian avant-garde circles. In doing so, it hopes to highlight the importance of art on paper in the quest for experimentation in this highly colourful period in art history.

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