

On Seeing: Color!
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We may know how a grey afternoon or blue sky affects us, but how much do we really know about color's impact on our mind or relationships beyond reaching for a sweater in that just-right shade of a favorite color for a quick pick-me-up? On January 23, 2011, Los Angeles-based artist Mary Younakof set out to explore the intricacies of color in relation to feelings, interactions, mood, identity, community, and whatever she might discover along the way. The multi-hued sojourn began with a single dress that Younakof designed and then sewed, 343 times to be exact, in 49 shades of each prismatic color. The project, 343 Dresses, embraces design, performance, video, photography, social networking, and the elusive but exciting fusion of art and life that has inspired artists from ancient Greece to Dada to street art.

The dress is made of a style somewhere between working girl shift and school uniform for an academy of dolls; Younakof aimed for a garment with dramatic flair that could be worn daily, and wear it daily she would -- for 343 days. After finding fabric in 49 shades of each color, starting with red, she began to sew. Selecting for hue over material, she ended up with cotton, velvet, satin, and more. After stitching 343 dresses -- a feat in itself, not to mention the seven matching coats and petticoats -- Younakof donned the first one and began a marathon of color that would take her through the next 343 days.

As the artist went about her daily life, the dresses and related videos (one for each color) went on view at the Pacific Design Center (PDC) with support from the PDC and Design Loves Art. Wearing a new shade of the same dress each day, whether lounging or lunching, gallery hopping or grocery shopping, Younakof transformed and reframed the city on an intimate scale for the neighbors and friends, clerks and workers, wonderstruck toddlers and inspired teens that saw her and stopped to chat, ask a question, or pose for a picture.

Currently, Younakof is wearing the last of the colors, violet, and on January 19, 2012, the Pacific Design Center will exhibit all of the dresses together for the first time in a culmination of the 343-day rainbow revolution. Visit the exhibition or learn more about 343 Dresses on facebook or on the soon-to-be-launched website.