

# **The Colour of Words**

## **Jane Bustin**

A read performance in 6 parts, 5 minutes. Words and images from the outbuildings of the 19th century fortress in Daugavpils, Latvia, birthplace of the painter Mark Rothko, a place of former Russian empirical glory, a cavalry storeroom and dining hall, a prison camp, a soviet Russian aviation engineering school, an illegal squat and rave venue and now a local Latvian craft and antique gallery.

## VI

### Brown

Even the notebook from Rimi is brown, the bed sheets are brown, the curtains are charcoal grey, the wood is walnut and the light only comes across diagonally from the corner window.

Is it a cell? a special Rothko cell? womb like, warm, dense and dark.

The kind of darkness that comes from within, when you wake at night and your heart drops to your stomach for no apparent reason.

### White

The egg man came today, his van was white, he wore beige, he handed me white foods, titanium white eggs, ivory white yogurt, zinc white cottage cheese. I put them on the pale Davy's grey table, white goods from the east, so proud of its paleness and whiteness.

### Red

In this place (not that place) this place that deep rusty, russet crying red, not what lies beneath the skin, but that spills and stubbornly stays insisting on itself letting you know, it's Mark. A promise of a past, a sign that spat life out, scratching itself amongst the closed doors -

It wants to stay until it burns from oxide red, to deep maroon through to darkest burnt umber, where it hums at the very base of your heart refusing to move, refusing to leave and just as the ox's blood bled onto leather, staining a skin of one dead animal to another, we are all touched by these unknown dyed finger tips.

### Blue

It's that kind of blue, cerulean blue mixed with emerald green and titanium white, so fresh that you can taste the wet coldness on your lips. The kind of blue that you need pored over your body as you suffer the mean Rothko reds. It's pigment needs to clarify, to wash through the heavy burnt umbers, magenta's, maroons and Bordeaux's to try and take away that muddiness and just be there like a window, exposing a small secret that has become quietly public, a light transparent breath that is cold and steady. A kind of soviet blue.

### Green

Virago's tears, viridian green, a female warrior or sufferer of foiled vanity, even her tears of failure are illuminated, for failures are precious, selfless acts displaying small neon warning signs.

### Yellow

Walking the length of the wall, we witness "*le Petit pan de mur Jaune*," Bergotte's yellow enlightenment, that type of astonishment when we realise something so obvious, so missed, so imperfectly perfect in its beauty, we stare in disbelief as we realise we have spent most of our lives missing it. Vermeer with his outstretched arm knew a thing about the light and Proust the master of a missed opportunity.