

STEVEN AALDERS
YELLOW GALLERY JUNE 2026 Leiden

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Perfect Order brengt *Two Colours*, *Shade* en *In Between* van Steven Aalders samen in één ruimtelijk en conceptueel veld waarin kleur niet decoratief is, maar structureel. In Yellow Gallery in Leiden ontvouwt de tentoonstelling zich in een context die historisch geladen is met wetenschappelijk onderzoek naar licht, optica en de aard van kleur.

De locatie aan de Jan van Goyenkade, op het terrein van 't Kasteeltje, maakt deel uit van een bredere Leidse traditie waarin natuurkundig onderzoek naar licht en waarneming centraal stond. In de omgeving waar wetenschappers als Heike Kamerlingh Onnes en Hendrik Lorentz werkten aan fundamentele inzichten in thermodynamica en elektromagnetisme, werd ook het gedrag van licht en kleur in toenemende mate onderwerp van studie. Deze historische laag vormt een impliciete achtergrond voor de tentoonstelling.

Binnen deze context krijgt Aalders' praktijk een extra resonantie. Zijn schilderijen vertrekken consequent vanuit de primaire kleuren; rood, geel en blauw; maar blijven daar nooit in vaststaan. Elk werk ontstaat via een intensief proces van mengen, afstemming en intuïtieve calibratie, waarin kleur een relationele conditie wordt: bepaald door nabijheid, contrast en perceptie.

In *Shade (Yellow)*, 2021 wordt geel opgesplitst in bijna identieke, maar subtiel verschoven vlakken, in lijn met Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's idee dat kleur ontstaat op de grens tussen licht en duisternis. In *In Between (Yellow)*, 2025 worden drie kleurvelden geordend volgens de logica van de kleurencirkel, waarbij elke toon alleen betekenis krijgt in relatie tot zijn burens. En in *Two Colours (Yellow, Blue)* verschijnt geel tegenover een blauw dat richting turquoise verschuift, in dialoog met Josef Albers's inzicht dat kleur nooit autonoom is, maar voortdurend verandert door context.

Naast deze werken waarin geel domineert, bevat de tentoonstelling ook schilderijen waarin blauw en rood de boventoon voeren en geel volledig ontbreekt. Deze werken functioneren als tegenhangers: andere chromatische systemen waarin dezelfde logica van verhouding, menging en waarneming zich op een verschoven manier herhaalt.

In al deze werken is kleur geen vast gegeven maar een systeem van relaties. Binnen de specifieke historische en wetenschappelijke atmosfeer van Leiden, waar licht en waarneming eeuwenlang onderwerp van onderzoek zijn geweest, wordt Aalders' werk een hedendaagse vertaling van optisch denken in schilderkunstige vorm.

"Perfect order" blijkt hier geen vaste toestand, maar iets dat telkens opnieuw ontstaat in de precieze instabiliteit tussen kleuren, waar kijken zelf het materiaal wordt.

English

Perfect Order brings together *Two Colours*, *Shade*, and *In Between* by Steven Aalders in a single spatial and conceptual field where color is not decorative, but structural. At Yellow Gallery in Leiden, the exhibition unfolds within a context historically charged with scientific research into light, optics, and the nature of color.

The location on Jan van Goyenkade, on the grounds of 't Kasteeltje, is embedded in Leiden's broader intellectual history, where fundamental research into light and perception played a central role. In the vicinity where physicists such as Heike Kamerlingh Onnes and Hendrik Lorentz developed foundational insights into thermodynamics and electromagnetism, the behavior of light and color also became an increasingly important subject of study. This scientific legacy forms an implicit backdrop to the exhibition.

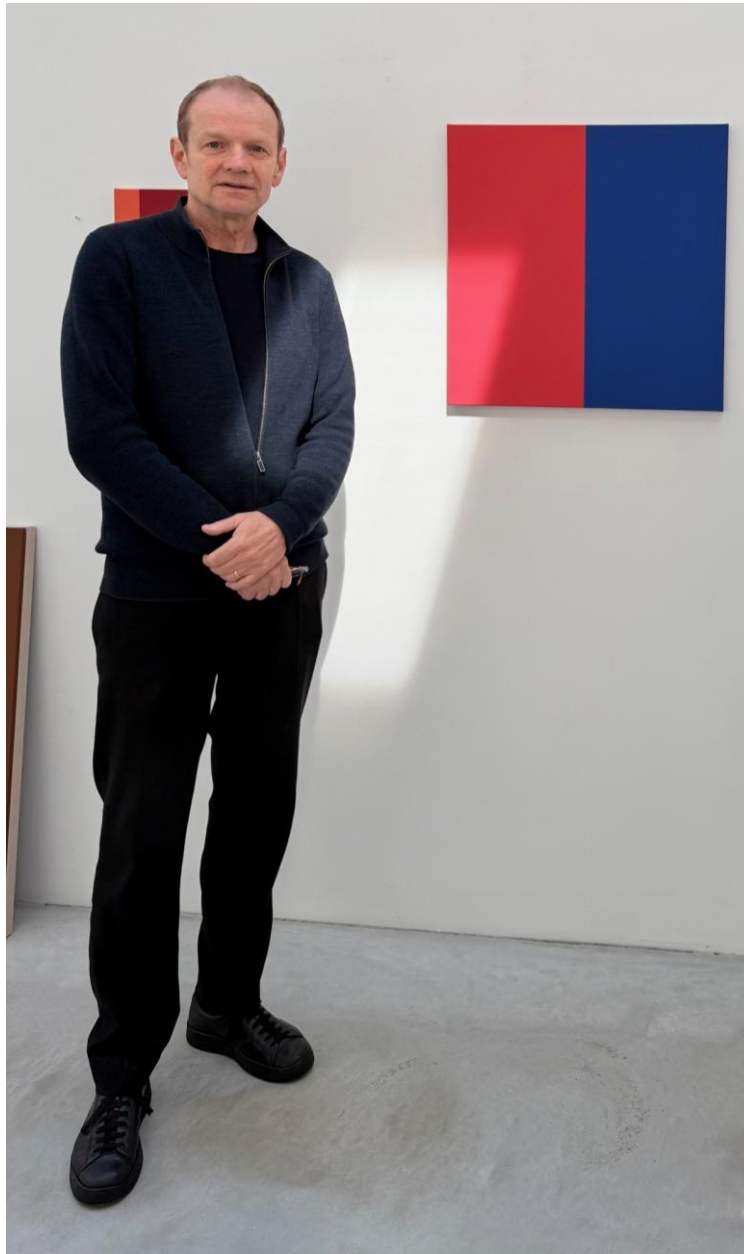
Within this context, Aalders' practice gains additional resonance. His paintings consistently begin from the primary colors; red, yellow, and blue; yet never remain fixed within them. Each work emerges through an intensive process of mixing, calibration, and intuitive adjustment, in which color becomes a relational condition defined by proximity, contrast, and perception.

In *Shade (Yellow)*, 2021, yellow is split into nearly identical yet subtly shifted fields, echoing Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's idea that color arises at the threshold between light and darkness. In *In Between (Yellow)*, 2025, three chromatic fields are organized according to the logic of the color circle, where each tone only gains meaning through its relation to its neighbors. And in *Two Colours (Yellow, Blue)*, yellow is placed against a blue that shifts toward turquoise, in dialogue with Josef Albers's insight that color is never autonomous, but constantly altered by context.

Alongside these works in which yellow dominates, the exhibition also includes paintings in which blue and red take precedence and yellow is entirely absent. These works function as counterpoints: alternate chromatic systems in which the same logic of relation, mixing, and perception is reconfigured in a shifted register.

Across all works, color is not a fixed property but a system of relations. Within the specific historical and scientific atmosphere of Leiden; where light and perception have been studied for centuries; Aalders' practice reads as a contemporary translation of optical thinking into painterly form.

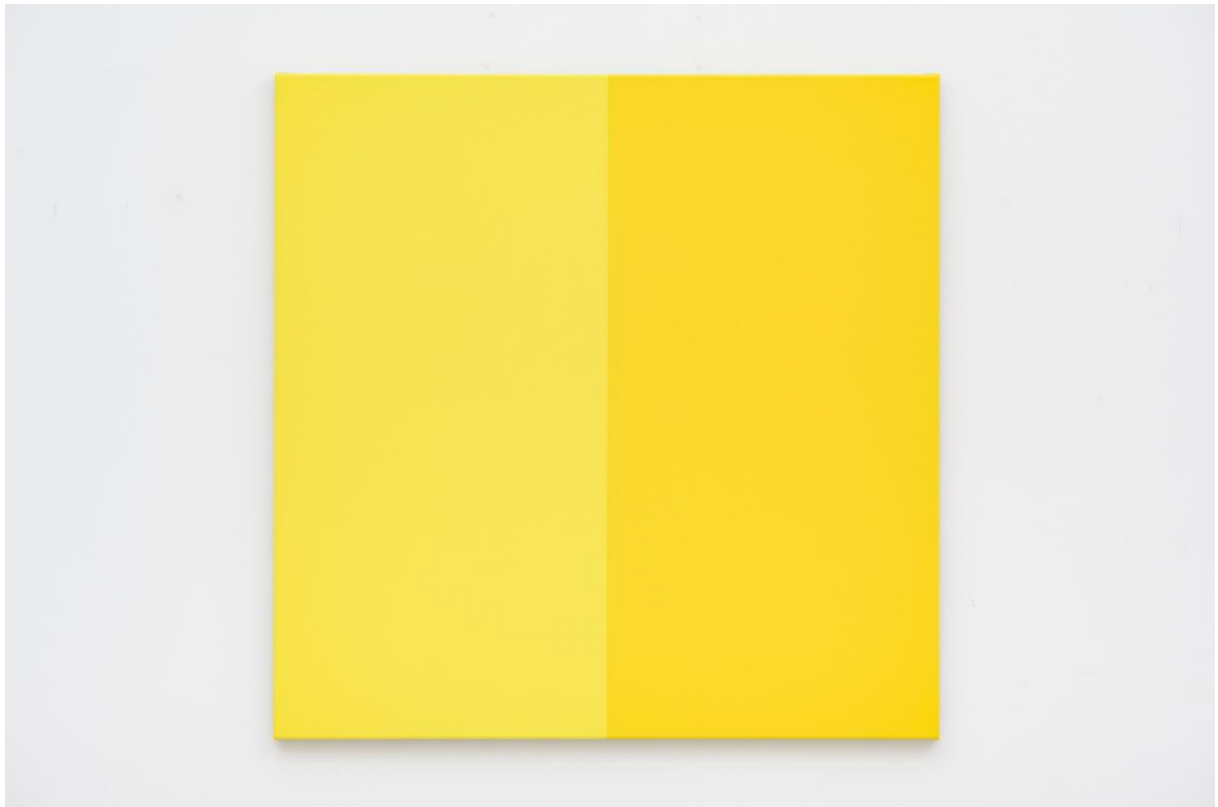
Here, "perfect order" is never a stable condition, but something that continually emerges within the precise instability between colors, where seeing itself becomes the material.



Steven Aalders with Two Colours (Red, Bleu) in his studio

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Shade (Yellow)
Oil on linen
80 x 80 cm | 31,50 x 31,50 in.



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In Between (Blue)

Oil on linen

30 x 30 cm | 11,81 x 11,81 in.



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In Between (Red)

Oil on linen

30 x 30 cm | 11,81 x 11,81 in.



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In Between (Yellow)

Oil on linen

30 x 30 cm | 11,81 x 11,81 in.



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Two Colours (Yellow, Blue)
Oil on linen
60 x 60 cm | 23,62 x 23,62 in.



STEVEN AALDERS

BIOGRAPHY

Steven Aalders, born in 1959 in Middelburg, lives and works in Amsterdam. He studied in London at Croydon College of Art and at Ateliers 63 in Haarlem. Aalders has developed a rigorous and sustained painting practice in which color, structure, and perception are central. Working primarily with the primary colors red, yellow, and blue, his paintings emerge through an intensive process of mixing, calibration, and intuitive adjustment. Rather than treating color as fixed, Aalders approaches it as relational; defined by proximity, contrast, and subtle shifts in intensity. His work engages with modernist abstraction while remaining grounded in the perceptual experience of looking, where color becomes both subject and system.

Over the past decades, Aalders has exhibited widely in the Netherlands and internationally. Selected solo exhibitions include presentations at Slewe Gallery, Amsterdam; the Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam; Kröller-Müller Museum, Otterlo; S.M.A.K., Ghent; and Museum Kurhaus Kleve. His work has also been shown in various European and international gallery and institutional contexts, often in dialogue with historical color theory and modernist abstraction.

Public Collections

Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam, NL
Museum Kröller-Müller, Otterlo, NL
Museum Kurhaus Kleve, DE
Museum Voorlinden, Wassenaar, NL
Schunck*, Heerlen, NL
ABN AMRO Art Collection, Amsterdam, NL
AkzoNobel Art Foundation, Amsterdam, NL
BPD Art Collection, Amsterdam, NL
Houthoff Buruma Collection, Amsterdam, NL
The Over Holland Collection, NL
Thoma Art Collection, Chicago, US

Aalders' practice is consistently rooted in a dialogue with historical color theory and modernist painting, in which painting becomes a precise yet open-ended investigation into how color constructs space, rhythm, and perception.

GALLERY INFORMATION

LEIDEN

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Opening times:

By appointment

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