

NOCTURNE, QEII METRO BRIDGE, NEWCASTLE/GATESHEAD

Artist: Nayan Kulkarni
Client: Nexus, Tyne & Wear PTA
2007

Between Newcastle and Gateshead the Metro is carried across the Tyne Gorge by the Queen Elizabeth II Metro Bridge. The bridge span between the concrete piers is 168 metres, it carries the Metros 25 metres above the River Tyne, and the full length of the bridge is 360 metres.

The artist Nayan Kulkarni was commissioned to design a new paint scheme and an interactive light artwork, determined by the form of the bridge itself. The dominant structural form is painted in a mid tone blue which unapologetically places the bridge into the sequence of structures which span the Tyne Gorge.

Nayan Kulkarni has described how, *'the three colours (blue, white and dark brown) seek to emphasise the primary shapes and place in shadow, or background, other less important elements. The white areas within the steel trusses have a dual purpose; firstly they create the simple pattern I wanted to expose in the bridge. Secondly they provide a surface onto which subtle colours can be projected at low power.'* The areas painted white also exploit the multiple viewing possibilities for people seeing the bridge, as from certain angles more of the white areas appear to influence peoples' perception of the bridge.



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Bands of colour flow through the structure of the bridge, gently animating and illuminating it against the night sky. The patterns of colour that *Nocturne* displays are determined by two sources: the tidal movements of the River Tyne and photographs supplied by members of the public through *Nocturne's* dedicated web. *'Each day Nocturne streams colours from donated photographs as a series of abstract 'messages' across the structure. It is very much like painting by numbers in strips. Each day a single image, digitised into its own distinctive colours, generates the colour messages that, like the trains, pass backwards and forwards across the Tyne. The colours in the photographs create subtle and complex relationships on the bridge, so that a 'message' created from a photograph of a glowing sunset will look very different to one derived from a wedding portrait.'*

The intensity of the white light modelling of the bridge structure, and the speed at which the colour message travels across the bridge, is determined by the rise and fall of the tide – the tidal algorithm. When the tide is in, and the water levels within the river are high, the luminosity of the white light is at its most intense. Similarly, the ebb and flow of the tide influences the speed at which the colour messages travel, as the tide meets its ebb the messages gradually move more slowly across the bridge and as it flows their speed gradually increases.

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