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**THE CORCORAN PRESENTS WASHINGTON COLOR AND LIGHT**  
**Reinstallation June 25 – August 14, 2011**

**WASHINGTON, D.C.** – This summer, the Corcoran Gallery of Art will reinstall *Washington Color and Light*, an exhibition of major works by artists associated with the Washington Color School and their contemporaries. *Washington Color and Light* will showcase highlights from the Corcoran’s permanent collection of painting and sculpture.

Living and working in Washington, D.C., Gene Davis, Thomas Downing, Morris Louis, Howard Mehring, Kenneth Noland, and Paul Reed first showed their work together in a 1965 exhibition at the Washington Gallery of Modern Art called *The Washington Color Painters*. While these six artists never thought of themselves as a group, the Washington Color School title became synonymous with local abstract art and artists. The energy around this group promoted Washington as a center for innovative abstraction and gave rise to a younger set that included Sam Gilliam, Rockne Krebs, and Ed McGowin.

Spanning four galleries – including galleries dedicated to monumental paintings by Gene Davis and Thomas Downing – *Washington Color and Light* explores the inspirations and artistic innovations that defined this group of Washington artists.

“One of the great strengths of the Corcoran’s collection exists in this body of work,” said Beatrice Galton, associate curator of contemporary art at the Corcoran and curator of the show, along with Curator of Contemporary Art Sarah Newman. “The Washington artists sought to conceive their art almost exclusively in terms of color, light, and scale. They explored abstraction, experimented with new techniques and materials, and pursued color and



light as the most relevant of expressive elements. In addition to this, a number of these works were shown for the first time in the Corcoran's galleries, and we are delighted to present them again, some four decades later."

## ABOUT THE EXHIBITION

Drawn exclusively from the Corcoran Collection, four galleries are dedicated to Washington artists. The exhibition begins with paintings by Morris Louis, Howard Mehring, and Sam Gilliam that investigate the soak and stain technique developed in the early 1950s.

In 1953, Morris Louis and Kenneth Noland visited the New York studio of artist Helen Frankenthaler. It was there that they saw her seminal painting *Mountains and Sea*, made with thin washes of oil paints poured onto unprimed canvas. Back in Washington, Louis and Noland experimented with Magna - a fast-drying acrylic paint invented in 1947 - to develop their own style of staining unprimed, unsized canvases. Louis' *2-69*, on view in the exhibition's first gallery, is from the artist's stripe series, his last project. With its asymmetrical composition and harmonious colors soaked into the canvas, the work reflects the major elements of the artist's work. Sam Gilliam's 75-foot draped canvas work, *Light Depth*, 1969, also explores stained painting techniques and blurs the line between painting and sculpture.

Along with Morris Louis, Kenneth Noland is considered a founding member of the Washington Color School. It was during his studies at Black Mountain College in North Carolina that he met Josef Albers, Ilya



Bolotowsky, Helen Frankenthaler and the art critic Clement Greenberg, who fostered his interest in radical painting. Signature shape motifs came to define Noland's work, including the circle or target, the chevron, and stripe. *Brown Stretched*, 1966, located in the second gallery, is one of

the few diamond paintings by the artist. The show's second gallery is devoted to artists who, like Noland, were exploring expression through color, shape, and scale through "hard-edged" abstraction. Three works by Anne Truitt - *Essex*, 1962, *Arundel XI*, 1974, and *Flower*, 1969 - showcase the artist's interest in color, while Rockne Krebs' plexiglass structure *Ice Flower* combines his concerns with transparency and opacity, lightness and solidity, and the intersection of science and natural phenomena.

The third gallery is devoted to ten paintings by Gene Davis, a self-taught artist is best-known for his vibrant, monumental stripe paintings. At almost 19 feet long, *Junkie's Curtain*, 1967, is shown alongside rarely

exhibited paintings including *Red Rectangle*, 1958, and *Fire Chief*, 1978. An adjacent gallery is devoted to the work of Thomas Downing, whose work— including *Ring Three*, 1969, reflect the artist’s longstanding interest in music, notably jazz. Downing was a central link between older and younger artists in Washington. He shared a studio in the 1950s with Mehring, and was a professor at what was then called the Corcoran School of Art.

*Washington Color and Light* reflects the Corcoran's long-established position as a unique center for education and presentation of the visual arts. Downing, Davis, Gilliam, Reed, and Truitt all taught at the Corcoran School of Art (now the Corcoran College of Art + Design), and many of these artists were represented in groundbreaking exhibitions at the Corcoran Gallery of Art. The museum’s collection reflects the Corcoran's ongoing role as a vital place for dialogue and collaboration between artists, students, curators, educators, and visitors.

*Washington Color and Light is made possible in part by the D.C. Commission on the Arts and Humanities, an agency supported by the National Endowment for the Arts.*



### **EXPLORING WASHINGTON COLOR AND LIGHT**

In conjunction with the reinstallation of *Washington Color and Light*, the Corcoran will showcase *Six-Forty by Four-Eighty, 2010*, an interactive installation piece created by Ziegelbaum + Coelho Design Studio on view starting June 29. As a means to explore the fascination with color and light in the 21st century and complement *Washington Color and Light*, *Six-Forty by Four-Eighty* will invite visitors to rearrange the magnetic pixels and create new patterns by the simple touch of a finger, using the human body as a conduit for digital information. Composed of pixels – the interface through which most people understand computers – the installation is made to be redesigned by its audience and recontextualize our perceptions of technology.

### **FREE SUMMER SATURDAYS**

**May 28–September 3, 2011**

Come to the Corcoran on Saturdays this summer for FREE admission, plus Gallery tours, workshops, demonstrations, and performances for families and all ages! Beginning Memorial Day weekend through Labor Day weekend, enjoy summer exhibitions and programming free of charge. For a full list of programming, please visit [www.corcoran.org/freesummersaturdays](http://www.corcoran.org/freesummersaturdays).

**Saturday, July 9; 10:30 a.m.–2 p.m.**

**Edible Color Wheel**

**First Floor Café; Ages 4-12 with adult companion**

**FREE**

Use icing to discover how to mix primary colors into secondary colors and create your own edible color wheel.

**Saturday, July 16; 2 p.m.**

**Kid Pan Alley**

**All Ages**

**FREE**

Corcoran ArtReach students collaborate with Kid Pan Alley in a unique songwriting residency. Kid Pan Alley founder and professional songwriter, Paul Reisler, pairs with ArtReach students ages 8–18 for one week to write, compose, and perform original songs inspired by the Corcoran's current exhibition *Washington Color and Light*. The free concert for the community will feature ArtReach students with Reisler performing their color-filled songs at the Corcoran Gallery of Art. To learn more about ArtReach, visit <http://www.corcoran.org/artreach/index.php>.

**Saturday, July 30; 10:30 a.m.–12 p.m.**

**Colorful Collages**

**All Ages**

**FREE**

Participants will work together to reinterpret Alma Thomas' dazzling abstract paintings by creating colorful abstract collages made of tissue paper.

**Saturday, August 6; 10:30 a.m.–2 p.m.**

**Edible Color Wheel**

**First Floor Café; Ages 4-12 with adult companion**

**FREE**

Use icing to discover how to mix primary colors into secondary colors and create your own edible color wheel.

**Saturday, August 20; 10:30 a.m.–12 p.m.**

**Light, Color, and Paint, Oh My!**

**Family Workshop; Pre-registration is required, ages 5-7 with adult companion**

**\$8 per child, Corcoran Members at the Family level and above; \$10 per child, Public**

Journey into a world of fantastic color and luminous light in the *Washington Color and Light* exhibition. Return to the studio to experiment with the various techniques these artists used, including pouring paint onto canvas and using masking tape to make perfectly straight lines! To register, please visit [www.corcoran.org/freesummersaturdays](http://www.corcoran.org/freesummersaturdays).

## **VISITOR INFORMATION**

The Corcoran's hours of operation are as follows: Wednesday, Friday, Saturday, and Sunday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.; Thursday from 10 a.m. to 9 p.m.; closed Monday and Tuesday. Admission to *Washington Color and Light* is FREE on Saturdays in accordance with the Corcoran's FREE Summer Saturdays promotion. Admission Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, and Sunday is \$10 for adults, \$8 for seniors (62+) and students (with valid ID), children 12 and under, military (with valid ID) and Members enter for free.

## MEMBERSHIP

Corcoran Gallery of Art Membership offers special access to the Corcoran's renowned permanent collection, traveling exhibitions, lectures, films, concerts and an array of social events. Members also receive valuable discounts at the Corcoran Shop and the Corcoran College of Art + Design. Corcoran Members may visit *Washington Color and Light* an unlimited number of times for free.

## ABOUT THE CORCORAN

**The Corcoran Gallery of Art**, a privately funded institution, was founded in 1869 as America's first dedicated art museum and Washington's first and largest nonfederal museum of art. It is known internationally for its distinguished collection of historical and modern American art as well as contemporary art, photography, European painting, sculpture, and the decorative arts. In addition, a dynamic schedule of special exhibitions is complemented and enhanced by a range of educational programming, which together seek to enrich perspectives, support the local arts community, and encourage interpretation. **The Corcoran College of Art + Design** was founded in 1890 and stands as Washington's only four-year college of art and design, offering BFA degrees in Digital Media Design, Fine Art, Fine Art Photography, Graphic Design, Interior Design, and Photojournalism; a BA in Art Studies; a five-year Bachelor of Fine Arts/Master of Arts in Teaching (BFA/MAT); an AFA in Digital Media Design, Fine Art, Graphic Design, and Photography; and MA degrees in Art and the Book, Art Education, Exhibition Design, Interior Design, Master of Arts in Teaching, and New Media Photojournalism. The College's Continuing Education program offers part-time credit and non-credit classes for children and adults and draws more than 2,500 participants each year. For more information about the **Corcoran Gallery of Art and College of Art + Design**, visit [www.corcoran.org](http://www.corcoran.org).



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Page one: Howard Mehring, *Gemini*, 1965-1966. Acrylic on canvas, 85 x 70 1/8 inches. Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., Gift of the Woodward Foundation 1977.34. © The Estate of Howard Mehring, Courtesy of GARY SNYDER Project Space, New York.

Page two: Gene Davis, *Junkie's Curtain*, 1967. Acrylic on canvas, 115 5/8 x 219 1/8. Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., Gift of the artist, 1970.17. © Estate of Gene Davis, Smithsonian American Art Museum.

Page three: Alma Thomas, *Pansies in Washington*, 1969. Acrylic on canvas, 50 x 48 inches. Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., Gift of Vincent Melzac, 1972.9.1. © Estate of Alma Thomas.

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