

August is the new October for color

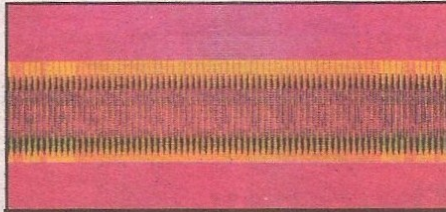
Three new exhibitions in Des Moines examine color from different points of view. Less (color) is more in Steven Vail Fine Arts current exhibition "Selective Color in Printmaking." Curator Breianna Cochrane talked about the show's forefather.

"Barnett Newman, a color field painter, came under fire when the National Gallery of Canada bought one of his works for \$1.8 million in 1989. A nearly monochromatic piece of blue and red, it was mocked for its simplicity and extravagant cost, to the point where it was slashed with a knife by an angry viewer. Without innovations like that, the path to selective color might never have been explored."

The Vail show, which explores minimal uses of color, has drawn attention from the New York City art media and includes works of such pathfinders from five different countries, some with big names: Rita Ackermann, Kamrooz Aram, Carlos Amorales, Donald Baechler, José Bedia, Ross Bleckner, Robert Cottingham, Eric Fischl, Wayne Gonzales, Antony Gormley, Beverly Semmes, Josh Smith, Pat Steir and Donald Sultan. They demonstrate how restrained use of just black, white, gray and the primary colors can have major dramatic impact in reductive art. Using a variety of print media, their works communicate more through texture, pattern and balance, avoiding the use of color as their primary expressive tool.

"The simplicity inherent in primary colors is often reflected in the pieces themselves," Cochrane explained.

Less (volume) is also more as the Des Moines Art Center's "Iowa Artists 2011" continues with just two works by Matt Coronos- large-scale "stained glass" windows in the museum's lobby and Pei wing. These were each built with three patterns, based on photographs of flowers, and digitally-created patterns influenced by Middle Eastern decoration and by "Matisse Camouflage," — brightly colored riffs on the Modernist master's cut-paper collages. Each pattern was printed on large sheets of transparency film, which were then layered on top of one other and adhered to the glass. The effect is anything but minimal color wise — it dazzles entire rooms. These windows will be on exhibit through Oct. 2.



"Deeper into Movies II," by Matthew Kluber at DM Art Center.

In a separate exhibit under the "Iowa Artists 2011" umbrella, Matthew Kluber presents a series of abstract "paintings" that also reference Barnett Newman. They profess an additional debt to the color studies of Joseph Albers, in which one color changes by its association or proximity with another. Kluber fuses color, line, digital formations and projected light to create dramatic visual spaces with more of an embrace of new technologies than the works at Vail. His exhibition continues through Oct. 2. Coronos and Kluber will both speak at the museum on Sept. 1.

Road trips to two Iowa art museums offer far more traditional experiences. Mason City's MacNider Art Museum is exhibiting 40 original photogravure prints by Edward S. Curtis, through Oct. 29. That selection provides an overview of Curtis's legendary "The North American Indian Collection." Famous images like "Geronimo" and "Cañon de Chelly — Navaho" mix it up with lesser known but equally intriguing images like "Bear Bull — Blackfoot" and "Wichita Grass-House." Cedar Rapids Museum of Art is preparing for a Sept. 3 opening of its exclusive showing of "An American Masterpiece: Charles Wilson Peale's George Washington." Commissioned by John Hancock, this was Peale's first portrait of Washington to portray him as commander in chief of the Continental Army. America's daddy will hang around until New Year's Eve.

Notes: Ames artist Peter Goché's "Water Hutch," has been on exhibit this summer in Omaha's Bemis Center for Contemporary Art... Moberg Framing plans a September opening of the their new shop on Ingersoll... Frank Hansen will auction several of his paintings at The Mansion Sept. 24 in a "Paint It Black" event. Any painting that does not receive a minimum bid will be painted black and recycled. The Snacks will play. CV