



SMART MUSEUM OF ART
THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

Monochrome Multitudes

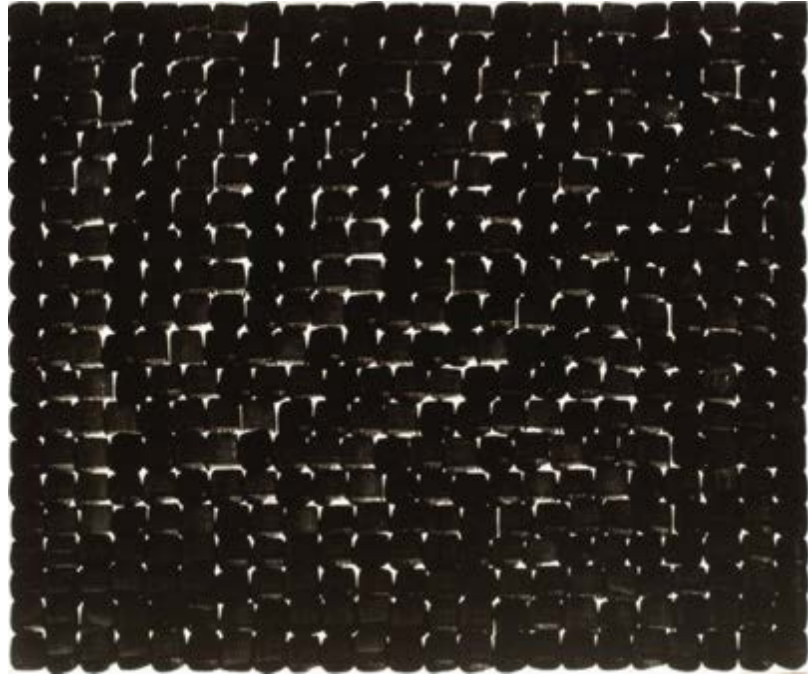
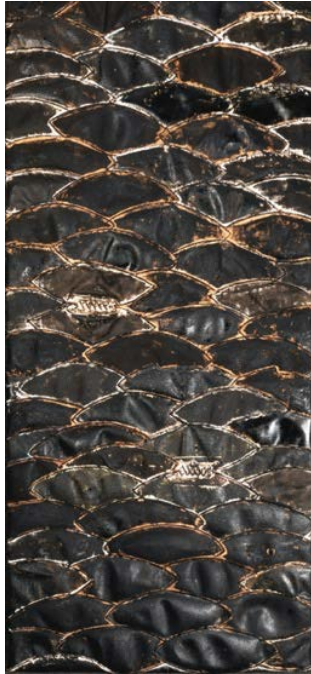
September 22, 2022–January 8, 2023 | Opening reception: Thursday, September 22, 5:30–7:30 pm

New exhibition at the University of Chicago offers expanded history of modern monochrome through more than 100 works of art made with a single color



CHICAGO—From yellow thread to blue pixels to red pigments to silver-painted shoes, an array of monochromatic art will be on display this fall at the University of Chicago’s David and Alfred Smart Museum of Art. ***Monochrome Multitudes*** (September 22, 2022–January 8, 2023) traces “the monochrome” as a fundamental if surprisingly expansive artistic practice. Revisiting classic modernist ideas about flatness, idealized form, and colors, the exhibition opens up this seemingly reductive art to reveal its global resonance and creative possibilities while working toward a more expansive narrative of 20th and 21st century art.

The exhibition features more than one hundred works by 91 modern and contemporary artists. Alongside quintessential monochrome works, such as those by **Ellsworth Kelly**, **Yves Klein**, and **Robert Ryman**, are artists who challenge the form’s canonical understandings and highlight new points of significance, such as **Theaster Gates**, **Carmen Herrera**, **Sheila Hicks**, **Derek Jarman**, **Jennie C. Jones**, **Yayoi Kusama**, **Gerhard Richter** and **Palermo**, **Lee Ufan**, **Amanda Williams**, and **Claire Zeisler**. *Monochrome Multitudes* engages North American art in a global dialogue and explores media ranging from weaving to video to footballs to Vinylite. As part of both the exhibition and the ongoing Threshold series of site-specific installations in the lobby, the Smart Museum has commissioned **Haegue Yang** to create a large-scale artwork.



“This project began with revisiting the Smart Museum’s permanent collection of abstract art—from rarely shown works to recent acquisitions—and a spirit of collaborative questioning that’s central to our role as the University of Chicago’s art museum. The result is an exhibition that strives to complicate the conventional and limiting framework of ‘the monochrome’ as just a strand of painting in North American art at midcentury. The story is so much richer. Taken together, the works in *Monochrome Multitudes* celebrate color, craft, and materiality and showcase the many ways in which artists across the globe have focused on single colors to test cultural, political, racial, gender, and other meanings,” said exhibition co-curator Orianna Cacchione, Curator of Global Contemporary Art at the Smart Museum.

“‘The monochrome’ is a quintessential art form but also one that makes many people pause and ask, ‘why is this art?’” said exhibition co-curator Christine Mehring, Faculty Adjunct Curator at the Smart Museum, Mary L. Block Professor in the Department of Art History and the College, and Affiliate Faculty in the Department of Visual Arts at the University of Chicago. “As an art historian, I love the challenge of engaging students in a process of looking, research, and discussion that helps them build models for understanding such difficult material. *Monochrome Multitudes* is a public extension of that commitment, where, say, entire rooms with artworks made from the same, single color will readily convey different artistic approaches, or where rooms with dramatically different-looking artworks reveal shared themes and interests, such as sound!”

The opening of the exhibition will be celebrated with a reception at the Smart Museum on Thursday, September 22, from 5:30 to 7:30 pm, featuring in-gallery talks from UChicago students.

About the exhibition

Monochrome Multiples builds on classic modernism—“essentialist” flatness, idealized form, and color theories—while opening monochrome art up to culturally resonant color, a range of media and materials, and global contexts. Thematically, the exhibition seeks to enrich and expand existing histories of the monochrome by articulating cultural, political, racial, or gendered meanings of monochrome art; emphasizing the significance of materials and media; and engaging North American art in a global dialogue.

Monochrome Multitudes begins in the Smart Museum’s lobby with a new large-scale work by Haegue Yang, *Sol LeWitt Upside Down onto Wall – Modular Wall Structure, Expanded 20 Times* (2022). Consisting of a monumental grid of white Venetian blinds suspended in front of a soaring monochromatic blue wall, the site-specific installation is the artist’s first major museum project in Chicago.

Throughout the Museum, art is presented in monochromatic groupings—rooms of blue, white, yellow, gray, black, and red works respectively—alternating with thematic sections where single colors engage concerns with the body, urban space, sound, and other topics. Switching between these two types of spaces, the exhibition suggests that works that look alike are often quite different, and that works that look different can share historical, thematic, or conceptual propositions.

Artists

Monochrome Multitudes features works by Magdalena Abakanowicz, Mary Abbott, Josef Albers, Alphonse Allais, Lynda Benglis, Ernő Berda, Mark Bradford, Alexander Calder, Enrico Castellani, Alan Cohen, Bethany Collins, Barbara Crane, Carlos Cruz-Diez, Jaime Davidovich, Walter De Maria, José de Rivera, Roy DeCarava, Beauford Delaney, Laddie John Dill, Charles and Ray Eames, Lucio Fontana, Helen Frankenthaler, Theaster Gates, Frank Gehry, Felix Gonzalez-Torres, Wade Guyton, Irena Haiduk, David Hartt, Arturo Herrera, Carmen Herrera, Sheila Hicks, Jörg Immendorff, Lotte Jacobi, Derek Jarman, Rashid Johnson, Jennie C. Jones, Samuel Levi Jones, Ellsworth Kelly, Byron Kim, Lyman Kipp, Yves Klein, Yayoi Kusama, Tadaaki Kuwayama, Kwon Young-woo, Lee Ufan, Marilyn Lenkowsky, Ma Qiusa, Sally Mann, Allan McCollum, Manfred Mohr, Linda Montano, Mun Pyung, Louise Nevelson, Barnett Newman, Jules Olitski, Palermo, Palermo & Gerhard Richter, Dan Peterman, Francis Picabia, John Plumb, Avery Preesman, Tobias Rehberger, Ad Reinhardt, Dorothea Rockburne, Ugo Rondinone, Robert Ryman, Fred Sandback, Joe Scanlan, David Schutter, Richard Serra, F.N. Souza, Ted Stamm, Jessica Stockholder, Hiroshi Sugimoto, Hiroyuki Tajima, Tony Tasset, Anne Truitt, Naama Tsabar, William Turnbull, James Turrell, Raoul Ubac, Günther Uecker, Günter Umberg, Wolf Vostell, H. C. Westermann, Amanda Williams, Karl Wirsum, Haegue Yang, Yang Jiechang, and Claire Zeisler.

Expanding Narratives

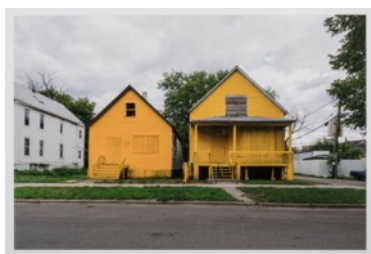
Monochrome Multitudes is part of the Smart Museum’s ongoing “Expanding Narratives” series that mobilizes collection installations to reevaluate canonic histories and curatorial strategies. The

majority of the works on display are drawn from the Smart Museum's collection. They are supplemented by a number of loans from UChicago alumni, Chicago-area collections, and beyond.

A multitude of voices

To make this notoriously challenging art form more accessible and inclusive, *Monochrome Multitudes* features audio commentary by a diverse range of voices—including UChicago students, faculty, conservators, Museum staff, and other members of the Museum's expanded community—to promote close looking or activate select artworks with a sound experience. Guests can access the web-based audio guide through their personal device.

The exhibition also engages the University of Chicago's intellectual community through object labels authored by faculty, students, and alumni with expertise ranging from astrophysics, neuroscience, and mathematics to law, literature, and theater.



Monochrome everywhere

Additional examples of monochrome art are on display across the University of Chicago's campus. In conjunction with *Monochrome Multitudes*, visitors are invited to explore a wider world of monochrome through works of public art and unexpected groupings in the Harper Center headquarters of the Booth School of Business, the Harris School of Public Policy's Keller Center, and other locations. Featured artists include Sarah Canright, Chryssa, Eduardo Consuegra, Willie Doherty, John Henry, Jene Highstein, Matthew Metzger, Olivier Mosset, Charlotte Posenenske, Cameron Rowland, Valerie Snobeck, Danh Vo, Michael Wilkinson, and Yui Yaegeshi.

Related programs

In conjunction with the exhibition, the Smart Museum and partners across the University of Chicago present an array of free public programs, including a weekly lecture series featuring exhibiting artists **Arturo Herrera**, **Sheila Hicks**, **Tobias Rehberger**, **Amanda Williams**, **Haegue Yang**, and others to be announced, as well as "Color Corrections," an evening of films engaging with the monochrome presented by the Film Studies Center. Additional programs include hands-on family days, gallery tours, and a UChicago student symposium.

A complete list of programs will be posted later this summer to the Smart Museum's website at smartmuseum.uchicago.edu/calendar.

At the University of Chicago

The exhibition serves as the sole classroom for the Art History seminar “Monochrome Multitudes,” co-taught by the curators in Autumn quarter. As part of the class, UChicago students have the opportunity to contribute their research and writing to the exhibition’s web-based audio app, a research symposium, and more.

About

Monochrome Multitudes is curated by Orianna Cacchione, Curator of Global Contemporary Art at the Smart Museum of Art and Lecturer in the Department of Art History; and Christine Mehring, Faculty Adjunct Curator at the Smart Museum of Art, Mary L. Block Professor in the Department of Art History and the College, and Affiliate Faculty in the Department of Visual Arts at the University of Chicago.

Major support for *Monochrome Multitudes* has been provided by the Terra Foundation for American Art. Principal support has been provided by Art Bridges, Robert J. Buford, Gay-Young Cho and Christopher Chiu, Bob and Joan Feitler, the Carl & Marilyn Thoma Foundation, and the University of Chicago College Curricular Innovation Fund. Additional support has been provided by the University of Chicago’s Committee on Environment, Geography, and Urbanization; Mansueto Institute for Urban Innovation; UChicago Arts; and the Museum’s SmartPartners.



In-kind support for *Monochrome Multitudes* has been provided by Art Bridges, Suzanne Deal Booth, Chambers Fine Art, the Helen Frankenthaler Foundation, Amy Gold, Kasmin Gallery, Lisson Gallery, Volatile [redux], and Yugoexport LLC.

Support for the *Monochrome Multitudes* artist lecture series is provided by the Goethe-Institut and the following University of Chicago partners: Center for East Asian Studies, Center for Latin American Studies, Center for the Art of East Asia, Center for the Study of Gender and Sexuality, Department of Art History, Franke Institute for the Humanities, Institute on the Formation of Knowledge, Open Practice Committee in the Department of Visual Arts, and Wigeland Fund in the Division of the Humanities.



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Images (top to bottom, left to right)

Claire Zeisler, *Triptych*, 1967, Knotted and tied dyed wool. Smart Museum of Art, The University of Chicago, Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Joel Starrels, Sr., 1973.213a-c.

Samuel Levi Jones, *Black Artist*, 2018, Deconstructed footballs and asphaltum on canvas. Smart Museum of Art, The University of Chicago, Purchase, The Paul and Miriam Kirkley Fund for Acquisitions, 2018.13. Courtesy of the artist.

Lee Ufan, *From Point*, 1979, Acrylic on canvas. Smart Museum of Art, The University of Chicago, Purchase, The Paul and Miriam Kirkley Fund for Acquisitions, 2011.42.

Sheila Hicks, *Evolving Tapestry—Soleil*, 1984, Wound, tied and knotted dyed linen. Smart Museum of Art, The University of Chicago, Gift of the artist, 1995.45a-c. Courtesy of the artist.

Alphonse Allais, “Manipulation de l’ocre par des cocus ictériques” (“Manipulation of Ocher by Jaundiced Cuckolds”), from *Album Primo-Avrilesque*, 1897, Artist book. Hanna Holborn Gray Special Collections Research Center, The University of Chicago Library.

Amanda Williams, *Safe Passage / Currency Exchange*, from the series *Color(ed) Theory*, 2014–2016, printed 2017, Color photograph. Smart Museum of Art, The University of Chicago, Purchase, The Paul and Miriam Kirkley Fund for Acquisitions and Ann E. Ziegler, 2018.9.4. Courtesy of the artist and Rhona Hoffman Gallery, Chicago.

About the Smart Museum of Art

The Smart Museum of Art at the University of Chicago is a site for rigorous inquiry and exchange that encourages the examination of complex issues through the lens of art objects and artistic practice. Through strong community and scholarly partnerships, the Museum incorporates diverse ideas, identities, and experiences into its exhibitions and collections, academic initiatives, and public programming. The Smart Museum will celebrate its 50th anniversary in 2024. Admission is always free.

Smart Museum of Art

The University of Chicago
5550 S. Greenwood Avenue
Chicago, Illinois 60637
smartmuseum.uchicago.edu

Press contact:

C.J. Lind, 773.702.0176, cjlind@uchicago.edu