



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## **LIVING COLORS**

Josef Albers, Thomas Downing, Matthew Feyld, Dorothy Fratt, David Headley, Helene Herzbrun, Howard Mehring, Terry Parmelee, Kimber Smith, and Vivian Springford

PFA-Kensington M.D.

March 9 – May 18, 2024

Opening reception: Saturday, March 9, 6 - 8 PM

Pazo Fine Art is thrilled to present **Living Colors**, a unique exhibition highlighting paintings by Josef Albers, Thomas Downing, Matthew Feyld, Dorothy Fratt, David Headley, Helene Herzbrun, Howard Mehring, Terry Parmelee, Kimber Smith, and Vivian Springford. Join us for an opening reception on Saturday, March 9, from 6 to 8 PM. The exhibition will remain on view until May 18, 2024.

“Living Colors” delves into the transformative period of 20th century abstractionists whose artistic dialogue underscored an important shift, among pioneers of the avant-garde, into the Color Field movement; often of the variety Clement Greenberg described as “Post Painterly Abstraction.” This conceptual shift signaled a departure from the inwardness and subjective mysticism inherent in second-generation expressionist, gestural abstraction, a legacy of the WWII period. Instead, these emerging painters sought to distill art to its essential elements: color, texture, form, scale, and composition — echoing, in certain aspects, the principles of the Minimalists.

At the heart of the artistic evolution embodied by this cohort of painters lay the Washington Color School; a movement fundamentally interested in exploring color relationships, contrasts, and harmonies. Inspired by the discoveries of the leading modern color theorist Josef Albers, whose seminal “Homage to the Square” series epitomizes his lifelong investigation of color, this exhibition prominently features works reflecting Albers’ resounding impact on the Color Field movement. Throughout the development of this movement, some Color Field artists retained a loose facture of color and contour, while others found more hard-edged styles, but all seemed to share “a linear clarity and physical openness of design,” as well as a new tendency to stress contrasts of pure hues, and a “rejection of the tactile application of paint.”

This “post painterliness” is expressed among “Living Colors” in a diverse array of material and technical innovations that became a critical feature of the Color School throughout the 60’s and 70’s, in large part because the exploration of the impact potential of color interactions led the paintings to increase so much in scale that artists could no longer afford their painting materials. Thus emerged a tendency to rely on materials such as Magna and house paint, catapulting painters to double as chemists, mixing and experimenting to devise material solutions that were low cost, dilutable and versatile, rich in terms of color payoff, and durable over time.

Technical innovations ranging from Thomas Downing’s meticulous acrylic dot paintings to Vivian Springford’s groundbreaking stain technique to Howard Mehring’s speckling of oils on unprimed canvas to David Headley’s “cool whip” molding paste represent the cohort’s determination to refine their expertise and discover the full vocabulary of paint’s physical possibilities to create smooth or uniform surfaces for compositions.

To this day, the insights gleaned from Albers and his square studies continue to influence emerging artists like Matthew Feyld, showcased in this exhibition, and breathe fresh vitality into the latest works of established painters such as David Headley. The “Living Colors” exhibition not only invites viewers to immerse themselves in the meticulously crafted experiences of color and hue by the 20th-century color masters but also encourages them to appreciate the enduring legacy of the Color Field movement and its profound impact on the modern art landscape.

An essay by art historian and professor Vittorio Colaizzi will accompany this exhibition.

## Artist Bios

**Josef Albers** was born in Bottrop, Germany in 1888. He trained in arts education at Königliche Kunstschule zu Berlin, moved to Munich to study painting under Max Doerner and Franz Stuck at Königliche Bayerische Akademie der Bildenden Kunst, and trained in stained glass and architecture at Weimar Bauhaus in 1920. He went on to be considered one of the most influential art educators of the 20th century, training the likes of Ruth Awawa and Robert Rauschenberg. Throughout his career, he had solo shows at J.B. Neumann's New Art Circle (1936), MoMA (1969-70,) and The Metropolitan Museum of Art (1971-72) in Manhattan, and showed work in group shows in Kassel, (1955, 1968) the MoMA (1967). Posthumously, his work has been exhibited at the MoMa (1976, 1988, 2016), Pinakothek der Moderne in Munich (2010), Centre Pompidou, in Paris, and Palazzina dei Giardini in Modena, (2011), Elliott Museum, Florida (2014), The Guggenheim Museum (2017-18), and David Zwirner Gallery, New York (2021).

**Thomas Downing** was born in Suffolk, Virginia in 1928. He received his Bachelor of Arts at Randolph-Macon in Ashland, VA, went on to study at Pratt Institute, Brooklyn NY, and continued into the Académie Julian in Paris on a grant from the Virginia Museum of Fine Art. In the 50's, Downing moved to Washington DC to study under Kenneth Noland, a founding member of the Washington Color School. Downing shared a studio with fellow Color Field artist Howard Mehring. By 1965, Downing began teaching at Corcoran College of Art and Design, influencing the next generation of Color School painters such as Sam Gilliam. Throughout his career, he had a series of successful solo exhibitions in the DC area. His work was featured in The Responsive Eye at MoMA, NY (1965), Systemic Painting at the Guggenheim, NY (1966), The Phillips Collection and Addison Ripley Gallery in Washington DC. Notably, several of his dot paintings were featured alongside Mehring, Noland, Stella and Frankenthaler in Clement Greenberg's traveling exhibition, Post Painterly Abstraction, in 1964. His work can be found in multiple public collections, including the National Gallery of Art, the Phillips Collection, and the Norton Simon Museum of Pasadena.

**Matthew Feyld** was born in Saskatchewan, Canada in 1985. He started painting from a young age and attained a Neon Summer Residency, in Brösarp, Sweden in 2010. His work, strongly influenced by the pictorial minimalism of Agnes Martin and Frank Stella, explores subtle relationships between light, material, surface and color. He invites viewers to engage in slow and close looking, a break from an era characterized by image over-consumption. Feyld's work has been exhibited nationally and internationally, and has been included in solo and group exhibitions at venues such as John Berggruen Gallery, San Francisco, CA (2020); Geukens & De Vil, Antwerp, Knokke, Belgium (2019); Lange & Pult Gallery, Zurich, Switzerland (2017); Alexander Berggruen, New York, NY (2021); Koki Arts, Tokyo, Japan (2018); Sunday-S Gallery, Copenhagen, Denmark (2022); L21 Gallery, Palma de Mallorca, Spain (2021); Birch Contemporary, Toronto, ON, (2015) and Galerie RenéBlouin in Montreal, QC (2019).

**Dorothy Fratt** was born in Washington, DC in 1923. She began her artistic career at 15, winning a scholarship to study at the Corcoran School of Art under American Cubist painter Karl Knaths. She went on to study at Mount Vernon Seminary and College and the Phillips Memorial Gallery Art School, graduating in 1943. An early student of the Washington Color School who left Washington during the movement's heyday, Fratt's independent mastery of color set her apart from her contemporaries. She held her first solo exhibition in 1946 at the Washington, D.C., City Library and went on to have solo shows at the Tucson Art Center (1964), the Phoenix Art Museum (1964), Yares Gallery, Scottsdale (1965, 1966, 1982, 1984, 1987, 1989), and a major retrospective exhibition, "Dorothy Fratt: 1970-1980," Scottsdale Center for the Arts (1980)-all in Arizona; Thomas Babeor Gallery, La Jolla, California (1985); and others. Her work is in many private, public, and corporate permanent collections, including the Phoenix Art Museum, Arizona; Tucson Museum of Art, Arizona; Museum of Northern Arizona, Flagstaff; Arizona State University, Tempe; Burlington Northern, Seattle, Washington; IBM; General Electric; and many others. Her work is currently on display in a retrospective solo exhibition at the Scottsdale Museum of Contemporary Art; Dorothy Fratt: Color Mirage.

**David Headley** was born in Washington, PA in 1946. He received his BA in Literature from Washington & Jefferson College in 1968, and was subsequently drafted by the US Army to serve in South Vietnam from 1968-70. After the war, he moved to New York City to live and work. Notably, he worked several years at the Golden Artist Color Factory, where he systematically improved and refined his technical expertise regarding color mixing and color interactions, going on to become a highly influential player in the Color Field movement. Headley's attraction to color in its own right was part of a larger search for an approach to painting that offered a new, alternative pathway from the burgeoning of imagistic, identity based art of the 70's. Interested in particular by Wylie Sypher's ideas articulating the 'loss of self' in modern art, Headley claimed, "I wanted color and drawing to do whatever color and

drawing could do with as little intervention from me as possible.... To explore, without restriction of signature style, the totality of possibilities for color and drawing.” His work was exhibited at the Corcoran Gallery of Art in Washington DC (1976) and at DM Contemporary in New York City (2015.) the University of Arizona Museum of Art in Tucson, AZ, and BRIC in New York City.

**Helene Herzbrun** was born in Chicago, Illinois in 1921. She attended Beloit College and then University of Chicago, receiving a BA in English while taking courses at the Art Institute of Chicago. In the 1950's, she moved to Washington DC and studied at American University under Jack Tworkov, Robert Gates and Joe Summerford, going on to have a long career as a professor at AU, while also administering the university's Watkins Gallery. Herzbrun was a second generation abstract expressionist whose style differentiated her from the Color School movement of her time. A founding member of the Jefferson Place Gallery, she also exhibited in New York City at Stable Gallery, New York (1958), and Poindexter Gallery New York, (1960). In Washington DC, her work was shown at Whyte Gallery, Washington DC (1952,) the Corcoran Biennial, Washington (1953), Watkins Gallery, Washington DC (1956), Jack Rasmussen Gallery, Washington DC, (1978). She also had a solo exhibition at the Corcoran in 1959.

**Howard Mehring** was born in Washington, DC in 1931. He earned his MFA from Catholic University in 1955, where he met Kenneth Noland and Thomas Downing, going on to New York where he studied the likes of Mark Rothko and Helen Frankenthaler. Upon his return to Washington, he went on to become one of the more influential players of the expressionist branch of the Washington Color School, uniting Color Field painting with stark, geometric forms and hard-edge compositions. His drawings were exhibited at the Phillips Collection in Washington DC, concurrently with a painting retrospective at the Corcoran Gallery of Art in 1977. His works can be found at the Smithsonian American Art Museum, Whitney Museum of American Art, the Tate Gallery, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, Museum of Modern Art, Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, National Gallery of Art, and the Los Angeles County Museum. Notably, his paintings were featured alongside Downing, Noland, Stella and Frankenthaler in Clement Greenberg's historic, traveling exhibition, *Post Painterly Abstraction*, in 1964.

**Terry Parmelee** was born in Madison, Wisconsin in 1929. She studied at Washington University, St. Louis and University of Kansas, Lawrence, where she discovered her interest in oil painting. In 1955, she relocated to Tokyo with her family and studied woodblock printmaking under Unichi Hiratsuka. She worked as a printmaker until her return to the US, where she developed interest in Abstract painting, and earned a painting MFA from American University in Washington DC. She went on to become a professor at Montgomery College, Maryland and the Corcoran School of Art in DC. Parmelee broke barriers as an innovator within the male-dominated Washington Color School. She has participated in several exhibitions, such as *The Ukraine-American Graphic Arts Symposium* (1995) and *The National Museum of Women in the Arts* (1996). Her original woodcuts and paintings are included in the following collections; The University of Delaware, IBM, the First National Bank of Chicago, Smith, Kline Corporation, the Corcoran Gallery, Georgetown University and the National Museum of Art, Washington, DC. As of 2022, she continues to work and a retrospective of her is held at Pazo Fine Art gallery. In 2003 the book, *Terry Parmelee Prints, 1966-1999: A Catalog Raisonné* (edited by Patricia La Liberte), was published.

**Kimber Smith** was born in Boston, Massachusetts in 1922. Shortly after the end of World War II, he went on to study painting at the Art Students League of New York. He would subsequently move to Paris, France in 1954, where he befriended fellow American ex-patriate painters Sam Francis and Joan Mitchell. Upon his return to New York in 1966, Smith had gained significant critical acclaim, and began teaching at the Dayton Art Institute in Ohio, where the museum mounted a solo exhibition of his work, garnering a Guggenheim Fellowship in 1971. Today, Kimber Smith's work can be found in the permanent collections of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; the Art Institute of Chicago; the Los Angeles County Museum of Art; the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; the Dayton Art Institute; Guild Hall Museum, East Hampton; Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam; Kunstmuseum Winterthur, Winterthur, Switzerland; Kunsthaus Zurich, Zurich, Switzerland; Museum Moderner Kunst Stiftung Ludwig Wien, Vienna, Austria; Musée des Beaux-Arts de Reims, Reims, France; among others.

**Vivian Springford** was born in Milwaukee, Wisconsin in 1913. She received her education at New York City's Spence School under Robert Brackman and Jon Corbino, and went on to join the Art Students League of New York. She participated in multiple facets of the New York art world; exploring Abstract Expressionism, Color Field, and East Asian arts and lettering traditions. The Chinese-American painter Walasse Ting influenced her towards the idea of one-shot paintings, and by the 70's she had developed a manner of stain painting that was distinctively her own, using thinned paint on raw canvas. Her approach aligned



with the Colour Field painters' exploration of stain painting as a primary mode of mark making. From the 1950's-70's, she had solo and group exhibitions at the Great Jones Gallery, the Preston Gallery, Women in the Arts, Dorothy Yopez Gallery, and the Visual Arts Coalition. Posthumously, her work has been shown at the Taka Ishi Gallery in Tokyo (2021), as well as Almine Rech in Brussels, Paris, Aspen, Shanghai, and New York.