

Site-Specific Art Installations Bring Splashes of Color to the Whatcom Museum's Lightcatcher Building

By LocalTalk Contributor



Submitted by [Whatcom Museum](#)

This summer, the Whatcom Museum's Lightcatcher building will feature an exhibition that will bring bright colors, texture, and three-dimensional site-specific artwork to the space. In the exhibition "Colorfast: Vivid Installations Make Their Mark," guest-curated by Amy Chaloupka, artists Ashley V. Blalock (California), Elizabeth Gahan (Washington), Damien Gilley (Oregon), and Katy Stone (Washington), respond to the unique configuration of the museum with dazzling patterns of color. The exhibition will be showing June 5 through September 18, 2016.

Using a wide range of media and processes, the four artists in this exhibition will express how color and improvisation fuse with intuitive response and space in a comingling of movement, light, shadow, and striking hue. Viewers will be able to walk through, around, over, and under active fields of color.

During the past year, the artists visited the Lightcatcher building to develop their design concepts in relationship to the architectural spaces. Each artist has selected an area in which to work, including the first floor Markiewicz Gallery, the end of the Lightcatcher passageway, and the exterior entrance to the building. "Colorfast" marks the first time that site-specific installations fill the Lightcatcher's entire gallery space and spill out into prominent non-gallery areas. Visitors will be able to experience the artists' varied processes of creating their work during open hours prior to June 5 from the second-floor gallery, passageway, and entrance.

Originally from the Pacific Northwest, and having curated exhibitions for nearly a decade with the Kohler Arts Center in Sheboygan, Wisconsin, Chaloupka relishes the opportunity to work closely with artists from this region for "Colorfast."

"One of the most exciting aspects of curation for me is working directly with artists as they envision new artworks," she says. "With site-specific installation this often leads artists to take risks with their work and seek out new pathways and concepts as they problem solve in response to the space."

Chaloupka adds, "For the four artists in this exhibition, color, with all its emotional punch, is front and center in their work, but another commonality is the use of materials and processes of familiar or humble means which they all employ with surprising

results. Whether walking under an archway of 16-foot crocheted, blood-red doilies, or meandering through a room-sized architectural diagram composed of neon green string that morphs with one's shifting perspective, visitors will have ample opportunity for discovery as they explore each installation."

The artists in this exhibition understand the elemental impact of color and wield it in their work with striking effect. Color does not always behave. It amplifies, it spills, and it stains. Foundationally, color field painters of the 1940s through 1960s came to view the expressive power of color as a primary mode of communication in their work. Artists like Mark Rothko, Barnett Newman, and later Helen Frankenthaler, Morris Louis, and Frank Stella, among others, abandoned figuration in their painting in favor of employing large swaths of color in harmonious combination and electric contrast in attempts to achieve the sublime. Color became both the subject and the object in their work.

The contemporary artists gathered here continue in this vein, likewise seeing color as elemental to their work, expanding the conversation to include painting, as well as, sculptural form, light, movement, texture, and shadow to amplify and transform the space.

"Colorfast: Vivid Installations Make Their Mark" will be on exhibition June 5 through September 18, 2016, in the Lightcatcher building, 250 Flora Street. The member preview reception takes place Saturday, June 4, 5:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. in the Lightcatcher. Guest curator Amy Chaloupka will lead an exhibition tour on Sun., June 5, 12:30 p.m. in the Lightcatcher building. The tour is a \$3 suggested donation/Museum members free. Amy will also present slides and discuss the exhibition concepts at the Museum's brown bag program on Thursday, July 21, 12:30 p.m. in Old City Hall. For more information about the exhibition, related events, and a schedule of installation viewing opportunities visit www.whatcommuseum.org.