

Rothko Chapel Reopening Spurs an Art Moment — Getting Into Color Field

In an ode to the reopening of the Rothko Chapel, Catherine D. Ansporn curates contemporary artists who dialogue with the great Color Field painter Mark Rothko. The artworks available exclusively from Texas' new online art commerce site, Culture Place.

Through Monday, November 30, 2020, a portion of all Culture Place art sales Give Back to Contemporary Arts Museum Houston in honor of the museum's 30th anniversary of Another Great Night in November.

This season, Mark Rothko is in the air. The unveiling of Houston's Rothko Chapel restoration is the first phase of a transformative \$30 million campaign that adds the Suzanne Deal Booth Welcome House, subtle new landscaping by Nelson Byrd Woltz, and, upcoming, a program center, admin/archives building and guest house.

Thanks to thoughtful modifications in the Chapel lighting system, Rothko's suite of 14 large minimalist paintings — his magnum opus, according to his son, Christopher Rothko — can now be savored the way that patron Dominique de Menil and the artist envisioned a half century ago. In that spirit, we bring you our picks for the best of the new Color Field: seven works that speak to Rothko's legacy.

Here's what to covet now.

We begin with arguably Texas' most important 20th-century painter. That would be Dorothy Hood, available through McClain Gallery in Houston, which collaborates with the Art Museum of South Texas, Corpus Christi, on selling works not in the museum's permanent collection to fund programs devoted to the late Houston artist's scholarship, as well as conservation of AMST's trove of paintings from the estate.

Texas-born Hood, whose life and art propelled her from a Rhode Island School of Design scholarship to the heart of the Mexican avant-garde, was the subject of a compelling 2016 volume and accompanying AMST blockbuster, written and curated by Susie Kalil: “The Color of Being / El Color del Ser: Dorothy Hood, 1918-2000.” At McClain, a classic canvas from the height of Hood’s prowess, *Untitled*, 1980s, is a mid-sized (60 x 60 inch) work that doesn’t require a vast wall to install.



Dorothy Hood’s “Untitled,” 1980s, at McClain Gallery

Hood’s depths of fluid color are in evidence: organic, limpid pools — in this case crimson and ultramarine — balanced by deft passages of her signature, tightly controlled frottage technique. The resulting image resembles floating landscapes set against a deep void. Hood’s subliminal use of red, white and blue, as well as black, evokes a patriotic metaphor as dark clouds encircle primary colors. While this may have been unintended on the artist’s part, this abstract canvas bears a powerful conceptual reading, a hallmark of Hood’s oeuvre and talent.

Also creating enigmatic space in the language of Color Field, Houston painter Kristen Cliburn has honed her work down to its most reductive and pure. The artist's soaring four-panel *Take Me to That Higher Place*, 2020, is a compelling offering available via Cris Worley Fine Arts, Cliburn's Dallas dealer. Cliburn writes about her ambitious 104 x 36 inch canvas: "This quadriptych could be a prayer, or a meditation, representing our spiritual selves going beyond our physical limitations, seeking higher realms of understanding and truth."



Kristen Cliburn's "Take Me to That Higher Place," 2020, at Cris Worley Fine Arts

At Houston's Moody Gallery, two Texas talents tango with the construct of Color Field: Pat Colville and Michael Kennaugh. Colville adds a touch of mystery to her canvas *Other Skies and Earth*, 2020, imbuing it with Surrealism via a shocking tangerine field bisected by a snaking line in a pumpkin hue. In contrast, Kennaugh's brand of Color Field, as seen in the epic (76 x 114 inch) canvas *Big Wave*, 2020, is complex and harkens to a mid-century aesthetic. Its dancing forms channel the Pacific Coast/Native American iconography of totem poles, paired with a palette reminiscent of another age.



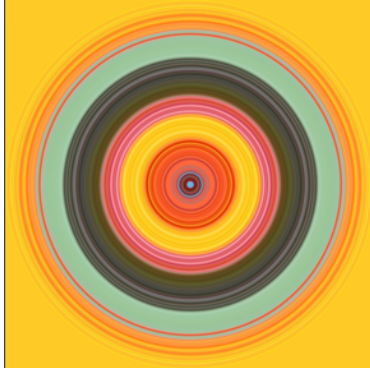
Michael Kennaugh's "Big Wave," 2020, at Moody Gallery

San Antonio- and NYC-based gallery Ruiz-Healy Art features a conceptual artist informed by Color Field principles: Jesse Amado's *Philosophical Painter*, 2019, crafts a hybrid painting with 3D components employing acrylic, glass beads, and industrial tape. The resulting work bears planes of color with varied surfaces that call the viewer to touch and contemplate.



Jesse Amado's "Philosophical Painter," 2019, at Ruiz-Healy Art

Fort Worth standard-bearer William Campbell Contemporary Art features a pair of painters who contribute contemporary takes on the Color Field movement. Target-obsessed John Holt Smith's *Wildflower Oculus #31*, 2020 possesses an exuberant sci-fi vibe as it depicts a psychedelic wildflower.



John Holt Smith's "Wildflower Oculus #31," 2020, at William Campbell Contemporary Art

Then Lloyd Martin's syncopated blocks of pigment in the canvas *Red Breach*, 2010, are positively jazzy with top notes of carmine, ochre, orange, burnt sienna, and cerulean.

All images courtesy the artists and their respective Culture Place galleries.

- Catherine Anspou