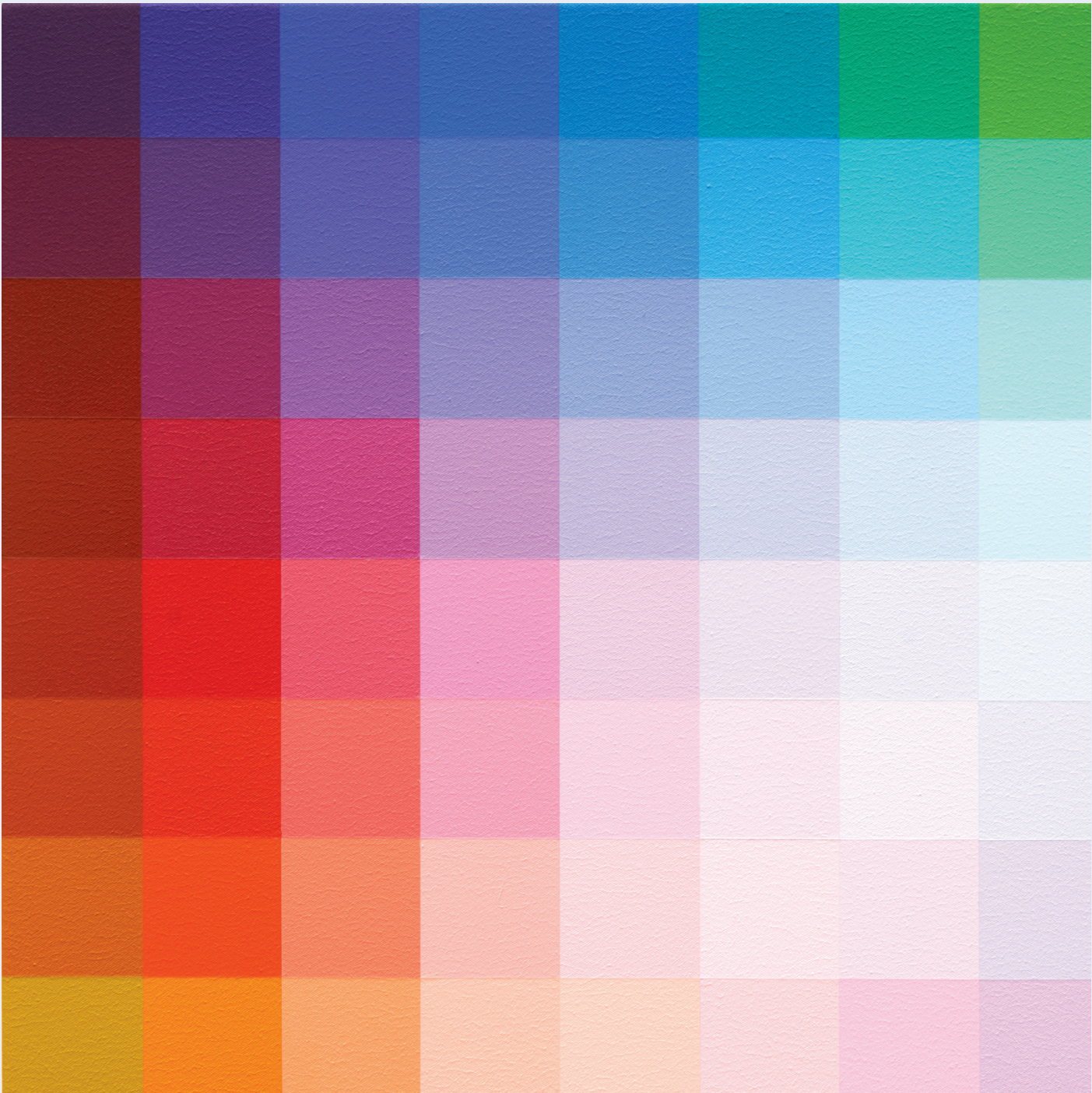


COLOR SYNTAX | RECENT PAINTINGS

ROBERT SWAIN
May 7 - November 9, 2018

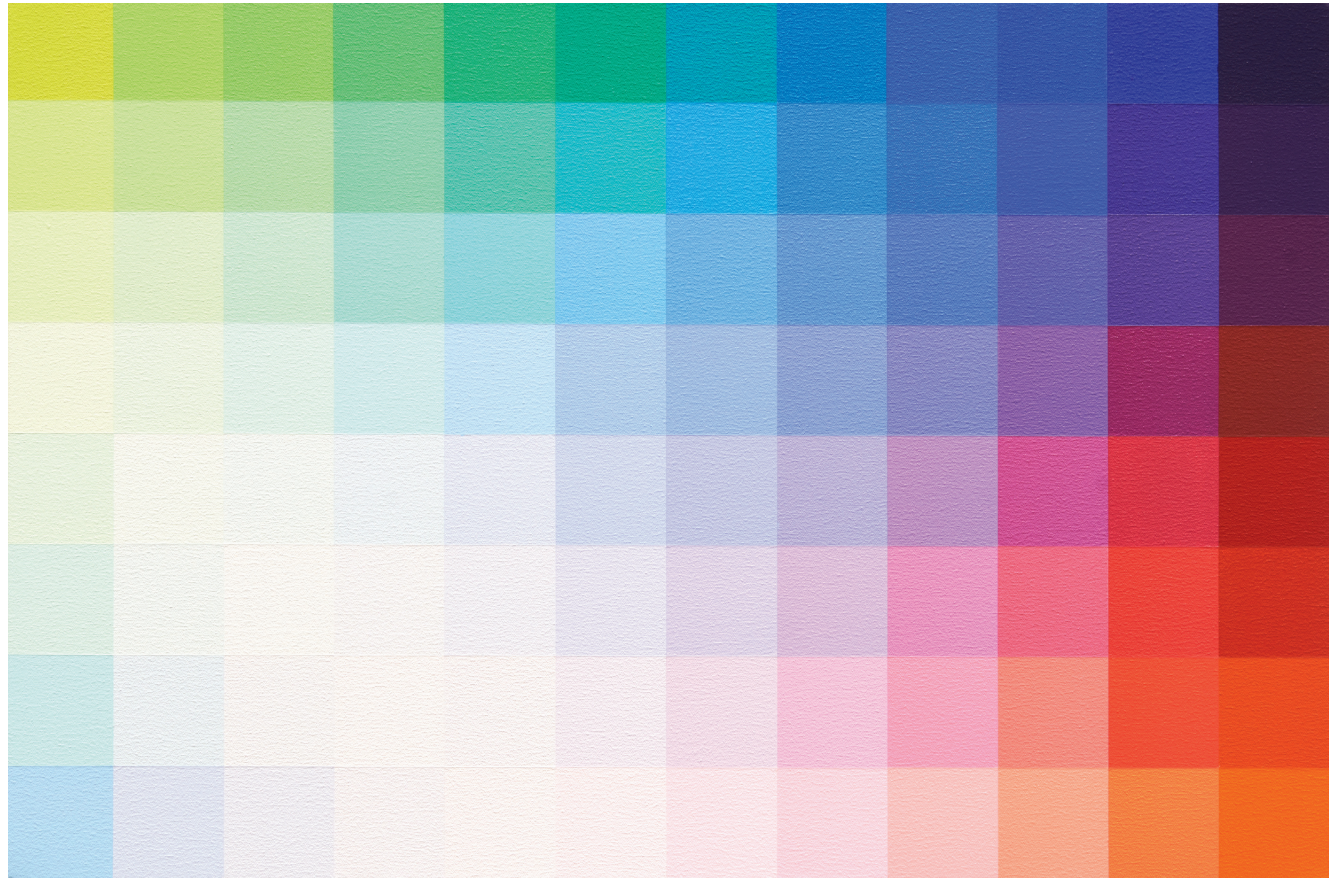


Robert Swain | Sensation

Color is light. But it's not a physical substance as we might think, like paint on a canvas, but rather a sensation we first see and then experience in our minds. Our physiology is what allows us to see color as an optical stimulus as light enters our eyes and reaches our retinas, which house microscopic photoreceptors called rods and cones. There are approximately 120 million rods and 6 million cones positioned at the back of our eyes that help us detect the differences between light and dark, and to distinguish between the innumerable colors of the visible spectrum. Our retinas in turn send electrical signals over our optic nerves – interestingly part of our central nervous system – directly to our brain, which labors to make sense of what we're seeing. Not surprisingly, light can also have a tremendous effect on our health and emotional state. Think no further than how you feel on the shortest, darkest days of winter. Countless studies have proven how light directly impacts our biorhythms, such as our brain activity, blood pressure, and ultimately our mood. We are, in other words, directly affected by the light and color we see in our environment and we are physiologically hardwired to respond to it.

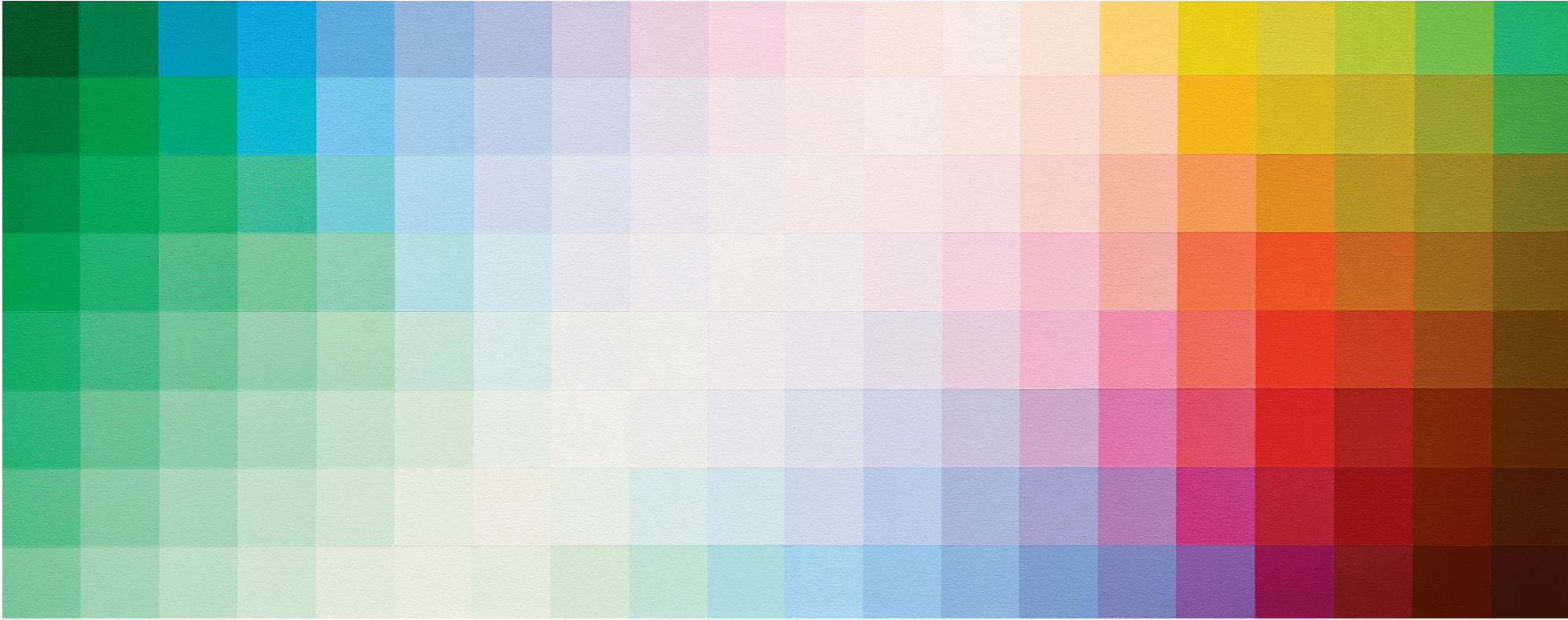
For artist Robert Swain, color has been the primary focus of his painting practice for more than 50 years. It is both the content of his paintings and a relentless problem to be solved. Swain is currently one of the leading standard bearers of color research worldwide. Color has been studied since the time of the ancient Greeks. For more than 2,000 years, artists and non-artists alike have examined and attempted to systematize color and its attributes. A key milestone for the development of Swain's work actually took place three centuries earlier when physicist Sir Isaac Newton first held a glass prism up to sunlight and observed it reduced into a brilliant spectrum of 7 separate colors – the ROYGBIV that children still know by heart today. Newton organized his color system according to the concerns of his age, namely the pursuit of a universal law relating the arts to nature.

Swain's concerns are, of course, vastly different in 2018. Starting in the



8' x 12' - *Orange Red*, 2018, Acrylic on canvas, 96 x 144 inches

Robert Swain



8' x 20' - 26 Green, 2018, Acrylic on canvas, 96 x 240 inches

Robert Swain

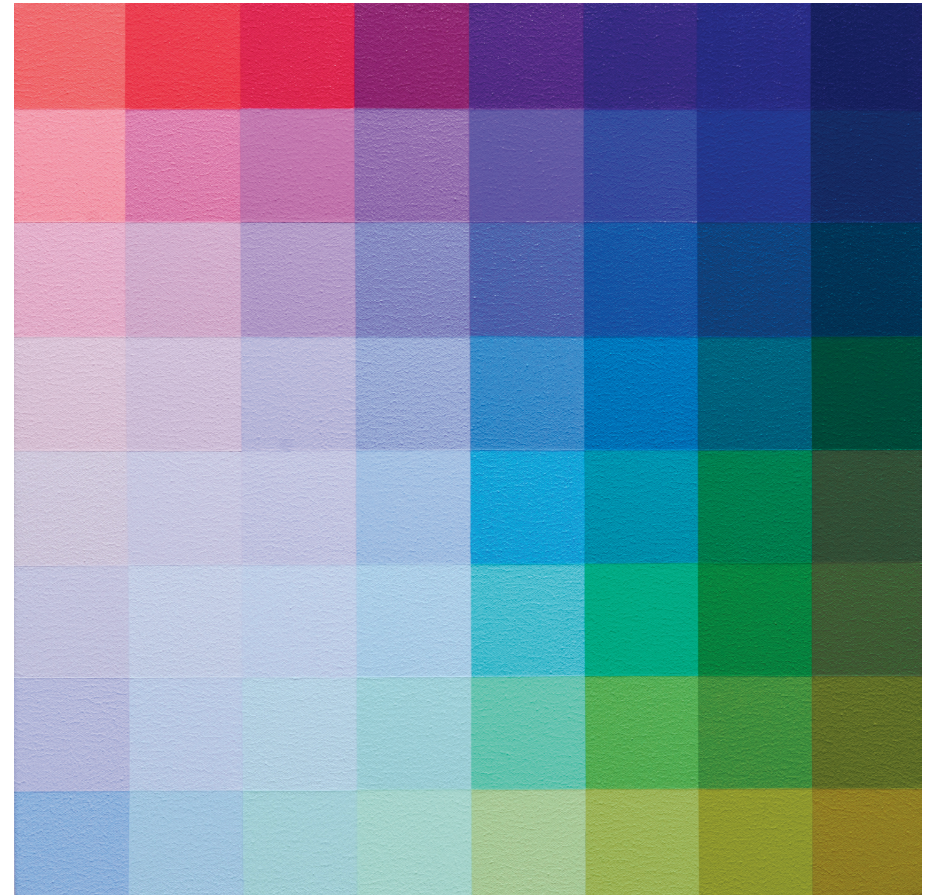
late 1960s, he began to conceive his own singular color system. The pillars of his system are hue (a pure color), value (lightness/darkness of a color), and saturation (the intensity of the pure color), three characteristics originally articulated by another physicist, Ogden Rood, at the end of the 19th century. It's key here to think about the use of color in painting, regardless of the style or epoch, as a multi-dimensional structure organized around these three distinct attributes. The color system Swain envisioned decades ago consisted of 30 distinct yet interrelated colors organized in incremental steps around a circle with no beginning or endpoint. He then ran each of those colors across a kind of Cartesian coordinate system of up to 33 incremental steps in value in one direction and 9 degrees in saturation in the other, yielding an exhaustive color library of 4,896 distinct hues, each calibrated by eye and mixed by hand, an extraordinary feat to contemplate.

Every color Swain uses in the six paintings on view in this exhibition – and there are literally hundreds of hues – can be mapped according to these three criteria. Take the dark green in *8 x 20 - 26 Green*, for instance. The color modulates – a key term for Swain – in incremental steps as it paces across the surface of the canvas, becoming more or less saturated, darker or lighter in value, and subtly different in hue. Swain is investigating a three-dimensional problem on a two-dimensional surface. Modulation is the alchemical element here and transforms the mechanics of hue, value, and saturation into pure color sensation, creating both an undulating pictorial space and a dynamic sense of movement in the work.

The paintings on view, created specifically for this gallery, are utterly immersive in scale and present us with pure sensation, transitioning from the pristinely visual into the viscerally emotional. After five decades, Swain is focused now more than ever on the distinct sensations produced when unique colors are paired, rather than appearing individually. With each color emitting its own distinct spectral energy and emotional content, colors that are grouped yield vastly more complex and nuanced sensations than they would on their own.

It's exceedingly rare in our digital age to have a pure, unmitigated color experience, the closest parallel in nature possibly being the aurora borealis. I strongly encourage you to slow down and look actively at Swain's paintings. Spend as much face time with these handmade objects as possible. Your eyes definitely will need time to calibrate to the energy they emit and extended looking will impact your perception of them. Color is experiential, and by witnessing it through Robert Swain's unique lens and temperament, we truly understand its limitlessness, approaching the sublime. Color is life.

Matthew Deleget, 2018



8' x 8' - 1 x 29-19V, Acrylic on canvas, 96 x 96 inches

Cover: 8' x 8' - 1x13-19V, 2018, Acrylic on canvas, 96 x 96 inches

375 HUDSON STREET/LOBBY GALLERY

375 Hudson, NYC 10014, between Houston and King Streets

Hours: Monday – Friday, 8:00 am – 6:00 pm

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

375 Hudson Street, through its exhibition program, actively contributes to the cultural community as an expression of its ongoing commitment to excellence in the visual arts and architecture.

We thank the artist, **ROBERT SWAIN**, for the loan of the paintings in this exhibit and the use of the images in this brochure.

Curators **JAY GRIMM**, Jay Grimm Art Advisory; **LENORE GOLDBERG**, Hines

Essay **MATTHEW DELEGET**

About Matthew Deleget

Matthew Deleget is an artist, writer and founder of MINUS SPACE, Brooklyn, NY.

About Jay Grimm Art Advisory

Jay Grimm is an independent arts professional with over 25 years of experience in the New York gallery world. For more information about this exhibit, please contact jgrimm@jaygrimm.com.

