

[Kenneth Noland website](#)[Noland at Pace Gallery](#)

[Noland spoke with Guggenheim curator Diane Waldman](#) in 1977 about the conceptual and formal development of his practice, sculpture, and color in conjunction with their collaboration on this installation of Noland's [inaugural retrospective](#) at the New York museum, which traveled to the [Hirshhorn Museum](#) and Corcoran Gallery in Washington D.C. "Thinness reveals color. There are two things that go on in art. There's getting to the essential material and a design that's inherent in the use of the material, and also an essential level of expressiveness, a precise way of saying something rather than a complicated way," he told Waldman. "If you get involved with color, the factors can become just as actual as those of weight and density. It's just as real. The slight difference of transparency in colors can be the difference of a thousand pounds of actual material." Waldman and Noland were also interviewed for the tv program [About the Arts](#), in which they reflected on Black Mountain College and American abstraction.

"Artists are involved in the nature of creativity, the nature of skills, the processes of the makings of things, the revelations of making things, actually executing things. Artists are not people that come by this as intellectuals, necessarily, or upper-class people, but as workers," Noland reflected in an [oral history conducted in 1987](#) for the Smithsonian Archives of American Art, which traced the artist's career in Washington D.C., perspectives on artistic influence, material practice, innovation and creativity, and working in series.



Noland at Black Mountain College, ca. 1946

Tate Modern's digital feature *In Focus* took Noland's 1961-62 painting, [Gift](#), as inspiration for an in-depth [collection of essays](#) on the painting's history as a gift to art critic Clement Greenberg, and relationship to post-war abstraction and American socio-politics and culture in the 1960s.

Noland's first decade of mature work, during which he developed his circles, stripes, and chevrons color-centric canvases, was the focus of an exhibition at [Mitchell-Innes & Nash](#) in 2011.

A suite of Noland's iconic and innovative shaped canvases graced [the walls of Kasmin Gallery](#) in New York in 2016, giving life to his output in the 1970s and a question that occupied him for decades: "what would something be like if it were unbalanced?"

[Almine Rech's](#) first presentation of Noland's work in 2019 brought the artist to Paris, where he is rarely shown, with a comprehensive survey of his mature years and late work encompassing paintings from the 1960s to 2006.

Pace Gallery showcased Noland's rarely-seen *Flares* series in its [New York space](#) in 2020. The innovative plexiglass "paintings" will travel to [Palo Alto](#) in 2021, returning to the California home where they first developed in 1990s.



Noland at work in New York, 1978



Kenneth Noland (American, 1924-2010)

Blue Song, 1970

Acrylic on canvas

On view May 26 – August 29, 2021

Private Collection; L2021: 78.1

In 1953, the young artist Kenneth Noland joined friend and fellow painter Morris Louis (also on view at the JSMA now) and critic Clement Greenberg in a visit to the studio of Abstract Expressionist painter Helen Frankenthaler. Entranced by her work, Noland and Louis returned to their respective studios in Washington D.C. and began implementing Frankenthaler's technique of allowing paint to soak and stain unprimed canvas. Their expressive, experimental investigations in color and tonal contrasts grew to embody the American Color Field Movement in the late 1950s and 1960s. Noland's approach sought to explore the range and impact of color through shaped canvases and pattern such as chevrons and targets that employed concentric circles, diamonds, and stripes. In 1967, Noland began a series of horizontal striped paintings, such as **Blue Song**, which centered color as the sole subject matter and medium. "I wanted color to be the origin of painting," he reflected in 1971. "I was trying to neutralize the layout, the shape, the composition . . . I wanted to make color the generating force."



Kenneth Noland (American, 1924-2010)

Mysteries: Indigo, 1999

Acrylic on canvas

Private Collection; L2020:118.1

A giant of postwar American modernism, Kenneth Noland was a leader of Color Field painting in the 1950s and 1960s, celebrated for his exploration of the relationships between colors and simple patterns derived from circles, stripes, and chevrons. Noland developed his sensitivity to color and affection for non-objective art while attending Black Mountain College on the GI Bill after WWII. Following a visit to Helen Frankenthaler's studio in 1953, he began adapting her technique of applying thinned paint to unprimed canvas. Noland's late *Mysteries* series returns to the motif of his earliest works from 1950s. Like its predecessors, the concentric rings at the center of the vividly dark **Mysteries: Indigo** have a penumbral quality that appears to radiate and pulse with energy, evoking an eclipse at its totality. Just on the edge of blending together, the formally distinct yet subtly defined hues disrupt sensations of depth and flatness to bring attention to the rhythmic relationship between color and geometry.

On view January 13 – April 18, 2021