

Color Play

In this activity, you can learn about color and experiment with adding color to the design for the artwork *Arrested Movement: Running Horse* by Rebecca Norton.



Rebecca Norton. *Arrested Movement: Running Horse*, 2017. Wood, vinyl, and glue.

As part of *Elevate at 21c*, there are thirty limited edition artworks by Louisville artist Rebecca Norton in the third floor guest rooms at 21c Museum Hotel Louisville. *Elevate at 21c* shares artworks by artists who live in our community with guests from other cities and Rebecca Norton shares not only her work, but a bit of Kentucky life in her two series, *Where is the Greener Green* and *Arrested Movement: Running Horse*.

“Horses and bluegrass are synonymous with Kentucky. They are part of this area’s cultural identity. As a native to the area, I want to welcome visitors to my home with lively artworks celebrating the attractiveness of the Bluegrass State. What better subjects than ones already populating our collective imaginations?” -Rebecca Norton

Arrested Movement:

Running Horse plays with the visual performances of color and light, materials and environments. The shiny, reflective vinyl assembles the horse figure in motion. Dark wood-cut lines (nearly imperceptible in low lighting) add accent to the gesture of a horse when highlighted in daylight. Colors shift as the work is viewed from different perspectives, alluding to movements of a horse's body as it strides forward along a flat plane.



Rebecca Norton.

Where is the Greener Green,
2018. Wood, vinyl, and resin.

Where is the Greener Green has a double meaning. It was important that the piece references the Kentucky landscape. But it is also about how experiences shape perceptions. Is there really a “greener green” or does it all depend on the circumstance in seeing a particular shade of green?

“I’ve struggled with sleep since an early age. Lying in bed, I assume those sleeping around me are resting heavily, enjoying deep rest,” says the artist. “This makes me envious. Life, it seems, is better on the other side of the bed, or in the beds of others. As they say, ‘the grass is greener’ on the other side. As a painter, I wonder what color green is greener than the other greens?” In a visual exploration of the concept of envy and an investigation into the “greenest” shade of green, each installation transitions from a composition dominated by yellow shades of green to one with blue shades of green—a subtle difference that calls into question our perceptions of the quality of our experiences as compared to others.

Color Theory

Artists may use several terms when discussing color theory.

Hue refers to the dominant color family. Primary and Secondary colors (Red, Yellow, Blue, Orange, Green, and Purple) are considered hues. Tertiary colors (mix of Primary and Secondary colors, in which neither color is dominant) are also referred to as hues.

Value refers to the lightness or darkness of a color. This indicates the quantity of light reflected. Dark values, where black is added, are called **shades**. Light values, where white is added, are called **tints**

Saturation refers to the intensity or brilliance of a color. When white or black are added to a color, it becomes **toned**

In the painted study for *Arrested Movement: Running Horse*, a large range of gray tones allowed the artist to complete a volumetric, yet abstract, tonal painting of a horse. The large-scale wood and vinyl horses fabricated for 21c integrate a mostly tinted palette (very light-colored pastels) with a selection of pure colors. With painting the artist could mix nearly any color needed for the object being represented. For the fabricated horses, the colors were limited to those available in adhesive vinyl. As a result, the artist had to get a bit more creative with her selected palette. Pure or intense colors were chosen based on their relative value, and were situated within the abstracted composition to increase the visual sensation of movement.

To understand how the artist made her color choices, try this simple exercise:

Take a picture of an object or set of objects with a large variety of saturated color with a mobile device. Edit the photo by changing the filter to Mono. Notice the value expressed by color in the photo with the Mono filter. This shows the color value of objects in your original photo.



Try it at home

Make your own studies of color value using the linear drawing of *Arrested Movement: Running Horse*. Or try it several times by using the drawing as a frame for distributing color value in various ways.

What you might need:

- One (or several) printouts of the linear drawing on the next page.
- Colored pencils, pens, markers, or paints to add color to the drawing.

Here are several suggestions to get you started:

1. Create a gradient of light to dark color values using pure colors, starting with light at the top, and ending with dark on the bottom.

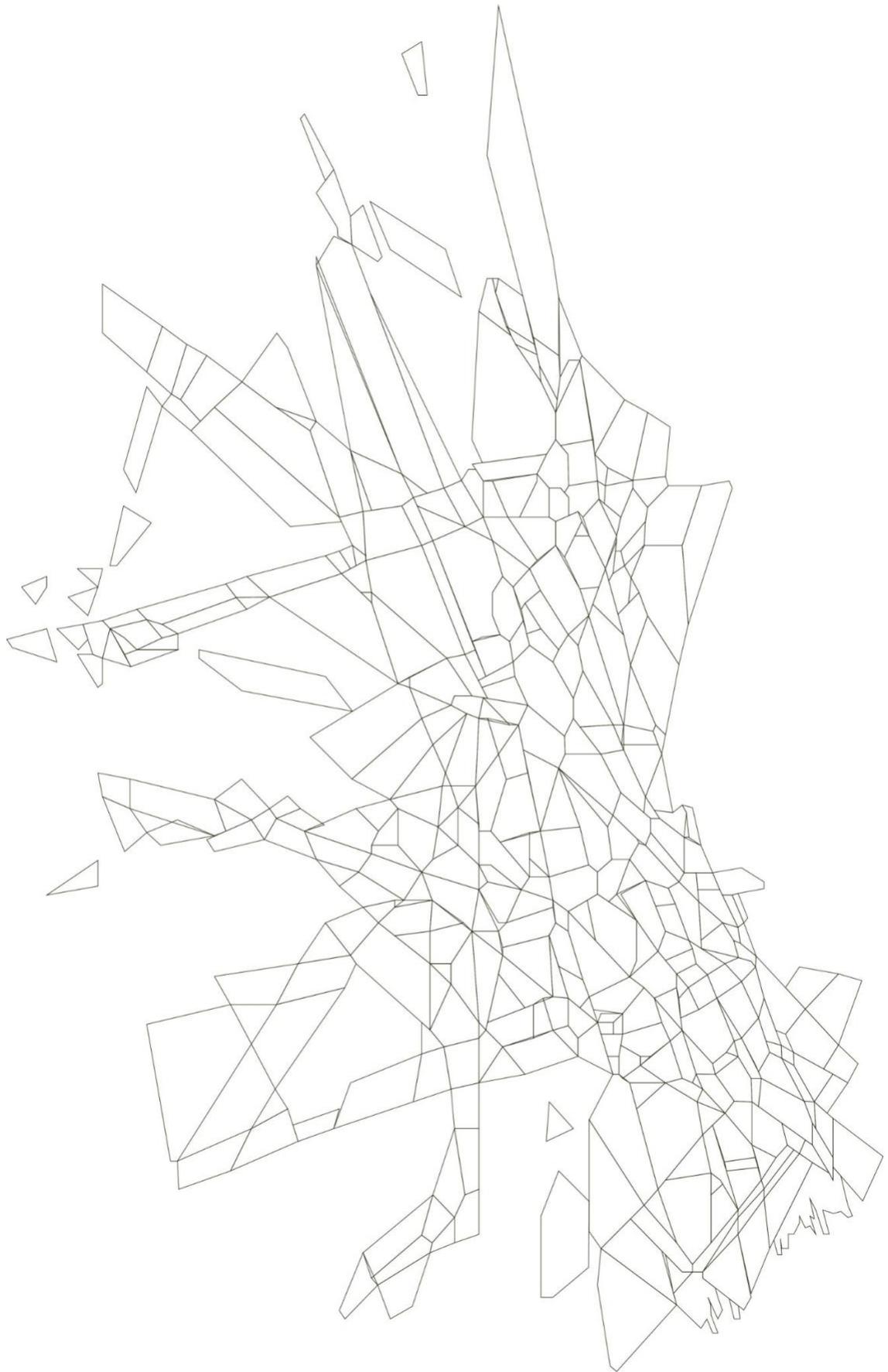
Hint: Start with intense yellow at the top, and use the color wheel below to develop a color composition that gradates to dark blues on the bottom. This should create a sense of a light source directly above the horse.



2. Create a gradient of light to dark color values using pure color, starting with the lightest colors on the right, and ending with the darkest colors on the left.

Hint: This should create a sense of the horse running into a light source, with its backside descending into shade.

3. Mix it up and scatter color around randomly. Notice if and how the placement of color shapes the abstract representation of a horse.
4. Follow your intuition, adding different tones to the pure color system of your choice. Take notice of where you place color. Ask yourself “What informed my choices and placement of color?”



A little more about Rebecca Norton

<https://rebeccajnorton.com/>

Artist Statement

There are two primary components of my visual work: geometry and color. Geometry diagrams bodies of possibility and specificity. I add color to my geometries because it appeals to our experiences with objects and space. With color, I can build on what is present in the diagrams, make it into something more, and transition it from one thing to another.

A central subject in my work is the intertwining of bodies and environments. I conceptualize interrelations of body-to-body encounters through my visual work and writings. The theoretical figural/ground relationships illustrated by my practice convey the active grounding of a lived body with its surrounding.

Biography

Rebecca Norton, born 1981, received her BFA from the University of Louisville in 2004 and her MFA from Art Center College of Design in 2010. Norton's studio practice encompasses 2D and 3D design, collaboration, digital modeling, and animation. Her work examines theories of synthesis and connectivity as they relate to the activity of reconstructing reality in vision and thought. She takes a special interest in color theory and problems of the mathematical intelligibility of natural phenomena. Norton has exhibited nationally and internationally.

Additional works by Rebecca Norton



Enclosed Operetta, 2014. Oil on linen.



Gulf Luminescence, 2015. Oil on linen, 58" x 25"



Double Reflection, 2020. Oil on linen, 60" x 38"