


[home](#)
[guides](#)
[current issue](#)
[calendar](#)
[parent resources](#)
[ad info](#)
[faqs](#)
[about us](#)
[contact us](#)

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Saturday Strolls Through the Kreeger Museum

by Gina Hagler

On Saturdays, the Kreeger Museum is open to families with children under 12. You can explore the exhibits and take a stroll through the Sculpture Terrace and the Garden, joining one of the three tours offered if you choose. With a permanent collection of nearly 200 works of 19th- and 20th-century European and American art alongside pieces of traditional African and Asian sacred art, it's fun to visit any time. Go now to see the *Gene Davis: Interval* exhibition, part of the citywide ColorField.remix visual arts project running through July 31.

Gene Davis, one of Washington, D.C.'s most influential and successful artists, is best known for his paintings of vertical stripes. He was interested in the interval — the space between colors. You'll find his large, colorful works installed in the galleries on the lower level.

Eileen T. Wold, the museum's media and communications manager, says, "A perfect activity for everyone in the family, but especially for the younger crowd, is a hunt for the tiny paintings (micro-paintings) mounted on the walls throughout the exhibit galleries. Some of them are a single color. Some of them, the satellite paintings, are a representation of the larger canvas that hangs beneath them."

To focus your preschool children on the use of colored stripes, "You can encourage them to imagine different colored ribbons or scarves," suggests Wold. "I'd talk to them about the way fabric moves in the breeze and is wavy but the stripes on the canvas stay straight. I'd also talk to them about the way some of the colors are very bright, while others are more subtle, and I'd ask them how they would describe the colors if they were sounds, with the bright being noisy and the subtle being quiet."

For an upper elementary or middle school child, you can, "Discuss the use of color and formal elements like the width of the stripes, the size of the paintings and the scale of the piece as a whole. You can compare that to the micro-paintings throughout the exhibit and ask what they think of the importance of scale and size," Wold says.

And high-schoolers can take part in "a conversation about the intervals of space between the colors. You can look at just one color and see how it repeats throughout the work and draws you in, entering 'through the door of a single color,' as Davis suggested. You can also discuss the ways that working with only stripes was seen as a radical act when Davis was working, because it was a direct reaction against the Abstract Expressionist movement of gesture painters like DeKooning and Pollock."

While you're there, look for "Icebox" and "Sherwood Forest." In "Icebox," Davis used paint to create the white stripes, while the beige stripes are actually the natural canvas. In "Sherwood Forest," your kids will experience a green so lush it looks like corduroy surrounding the inner work when you first see it.

A related series of workshops for children ages 8 to 12, "Playing in Fields of Color," is being offered one Saturday a month during the exhibition. These workshops are inspired by Davis's work and the Washington Color School movement of the 1960s. The workshops, taught by local contemporary artists, will explore different properties of color, paint and its application. Reservations are required.

The Kreeger Museum also has ongoing children's programs. Storytime at the Kreeger is an hour-long program held twice a month for children ages 3 to 5 and their caregivers. The Artful Adventures program, for ages 5 to 9, meets on select Saturdays. It includes a focused tour of the collection for children and their caregivers followed by a hands-on workshop. Saturday Studio Workshops for ages 8 to 12 feature Washington artists as instructors. These are held monthly. Music-loving children and families can sit in on the MasterClass Music Series, where talented young musicians from the metro area perform with world-renowned quartets. A discussion of technique and interpretation follows each performance. You'll find a schedule and notice of any fees at www.kreegermuseum.org.

Gina Hagler is a writer in Rockville.

Details, Details, Details

Fees: \$8 per adult; \$5 for seniors and high school or college students with current ID. Members and children under 12 are free.

Hours: (Children under 12 are not permitted in the museum on weekdays.)

Saturday: The Kreeger Museum is open 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. No reservations are needed. Optional guided tours open to all ages are given at 10:30 a.m., noon and 2 p.m.

Tuesday through Friday: Reservations are required to visit the museum on these days. Visits are part of a guided tour. The tours are offered at 10:30 a.m. and 1:30 p.m. Call 202-338-3552, or e-mail visitorservices@kreegermuseum.org.

Classes: Check www.kreegermuseum.org, or call 202-337-3050 for information.

Parking: Free parking on the museum grounds.

Website: www.kreegermuseum.org

Phone: 202-337-3050 for information. 202-338-3552 for reservations.

Location: The Kreeger Museum is located at 2401 Foxhall Road, N.W., in Washington, D.C.

Directions: Visit www.kreegermuseum.org.

Note: You can find ColorField.remix exhibitions at other venues by checking www.colorfieldremix.org.