



## UNTITLED (1972 )

Calling a work *Untitled* is actually somewhat unusual for Gene Davis, an artist who prided himself on the fanciful names he came up with for his work, a good portion of which were a series of vertical stripe paintings that he created over the course of 25 years beginning in the late 50's.

He admitted that he did not really know how to draw very well. These works were neatly painted with masking tape usually in acrylic paint on unprimed canvases in all sizes as a reaction to the 'messiness of abstract expressionism'. The Smithsonian quotes Davis as saying "instead of simply glancing at the work, select a specific color and take the time to see how it operates across the painting. Enter the painting through the door of a single color, and then you can understand what my painting is all about." In discussing his stripe work, Davis spoke not simply about the importance of color, but about 'color interval:' the rhythmic, almost musical, effects caused by the irregular appearance of colors or shades within a composition.

**Artist:**

Gene Davis

**Collection:**

City of Inglewood

**Medium:**

Screenprint on Paper

**Size:**

80" high x 42" wide

Inglewood City Hall  
1 West Manchester Boulevard  
Inglewood, CA.

Davis operated at all scales. On one end were the micropaintings that measure a few inches. At the other he covered streets with painted stripes. In 1972 the same year as the Untitled print was created, he painted what was then reputed to be the world's largest painting: *Franklin's Footpath* stretching 414 feet along the Benjamin Franklin Parkway from the steps of the Philadelphia Art Museum towards City Hall.

### **Gene Davis**

Gene Davis (1920 - 1985) was never trained in fine art beyond a class in high school. For thirty years he was actually a journalist, initially as a sportswriter, even serving as the White House Correspondent during the Truman administration for Transradio News till he secured a faculty position at the Corcoran and was finally able to support himself as an artist.

In 1949 he began painting seriously. At the Washington Workshop Center for the Arts he met Jacob Kainen who was very influential in the Washington art scene and introduced him to many artists including Kenneth Noland and Morris Louis. They were all very interested in exploring color and experimented with staining unprimed canvases with it. They eventually became known as the Washington Color School Artists. In 1952 he began producing the first of what would grow into his signature series of vertical stripe paintings. Seven years later he had developed the compositions of edge-to-edge vertical stripes that would occupy him for the rest of his life.

Besides the Smithsonian which houses the bulk of his archive, his artwork can be found in major collections including The Walker Art Center, The Phillips Collection, The Denver Art Museum, The Tate Museum and The Guggenheim.