Paul Stephen Benjamin: Black of Night

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Bemis Center for Contemporary Arts
724 S. 12th Street, Omaha, NE 68102
bemiscenter.org/exhibitions/paul-stephen-benjamin

Curated by Rachel Adams, Chief Curator and Director of Programs, Bemis Center for Contemporary Arts

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Paul Stephen Benjamin’s practice is an ongoing investigation of blackness through concept, thought, and perception. From wordplay with the actual letters that comprise “BLACK,” to utilizing the expanse of shades of black house paint—including as Nightfall, Soot, Ebony Field, and Black Beauty—to posing the question, “If the color black had a sound, what would it be?,” Benjamin calls attention to the color’s deep historical and social resonance. Across his practice, the artist’s work references integral moments in Black history as well as art history.

Black of Night—the artist’s first solo exhibition in the region—features video installations, paintings, text-based work, and sculpture as conceptual entry points for dialogue around identity, race, and patriotism. By continually “documenting” the color black through his multifaceted practice, he is also deconstructing its meaning—breaking it down to its simplest form and allowing for it to operate as a medium for interpretation and introspection. Focusing on the connotations of the color black in society, culture, and language, Benjamin incorporates history, text, imagery, and sound from popular culture, in turn discussing the absence and presence of color.

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IMAGE CREDITS