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Dimensions of optimism Pard Morrison creates ways of "Love"

The title of Pard Morrison's show - "50 Ways to Fall in Love" - may put a song in your head, the pessimistic but funny Paul Simon tune about how to get out of a relationship, not into one.

But Morrison is the optimist here, an artist who uses patinated aluminum forms as a canvas and who aims to use a technique known for its perfection - powder coating - into works that speak all too well of imperfection and the presence of the human hand.

"50 Ways to Fall in Love," at Rule Gallery, is a much more upbeat approach to the subject of romance, as interpreted by Morrison through a large selection of cubes and dimensional paintings and bars.

Here multicolored cubes stand in for flowers, an optically complex triad of alternating soft gray and blue bars becomes a blanket, and a long, shallow row of color blocks takes on the allusion of a superhero's cape.

The word "love" appears in numerous titles - from the jazzed-up *Love Cloud* to the more clearly delineated blocks in *Walking With Love* to the large-scale sculptural installation that forms a screen at the gallery entry, *Love Prayer*.

That series of eight creamy white and deep red pillars, standing some 8 feet tall, separates a visitor from the outside world and Morrison's own environment of bright and eye-popping geometric fantasy. It's not a toy store, but it is a step out of reality.

The Colorado Springs-based artist, who earned a bachelor of fine arts in sculpture at Colorado State University, terms his style *human minimalism*.

This assemblage of two dozen works indeed speaks to a minimalist view, uncluttered shapes and blocks of color that offer a regularity and simplicity that is quite affecting.

But look closely at those blocks of color, and the salient point is the feathering and built-in, actually preserved, evidence of brush work and layering. Morrison paints and repaints, accentuating the irregularities in each field of color.

His palette varies in unusual ways. In some works, black is a major player, in others a point of reference, as seen in *Walking With Love*, with its one strategically placed black horizontal line. He also uses gray as both a full field, a counterpoint to the bright hues that run throughout the show, and as a regular color inserted along with all the others.

The most intriguing set of colors, though, is one that delves into a softer sensibility, one filled with red, pink, cream and gray, as evidenced by *Flower 3*, which looks as much like a confection as it does a sculpture.

In exhibitions over the years at Rule - and in a group show earlier this year at the Colorado Springs Fine Arts Center - Morrison has made a point of using material and medium to explore the contrast between big concepts such as hard and soft, chilly and warm.

That quest continues in "50 Ways to Fall in Love," where Morrison has stepped beyond the phrase "emerging artist." He now shows the ability to create a suite of works that hang together, while offering complex situations for a viewer to unravel on a number of levels. Not least of these is the issue of just what love has to do with it, after all.

