



EARLY SPRING 2013

A Mysterious Title

Walead Beshty | *Four Magnet, Three Color Curl*
(CMY: Irvine, California, January 1st 2010, Fuji Crystal)



VISIT THE BMA

to find *Four Magnet, Three Color Curl*
(CMY: Irvine, California, January 1st 2010, Fuji Crystal)
in the Contemporary Wing.

Walead Beshty (American, born England 1976). Detail, *Four Magnet, Three Color Curl* (CMY: Irvine, California, January 1st 2010, Fuji Crystal). 2011. Chromogenic photographic paper (photogram). Sheet: 1308 x 2794 mm. (51 1/2 x 110 in.). The Baltimore Museum of Art: Purchased in Honor of Elaine B. Snyder with funds contributed by her Family and Friends, and Photograph Acquisition Fund, BMA 2012.194. © Walead Beshty

Where are the magnets in this photogram? Where are the curls? Why does the title refer to only three colors when we can count at least a dozen? And what does CMY mean? Beshty's title is a mystery until we realize that it is a shorthand explanation of how the artist created this dazzling image in a darkroom in **Irvine, California on January 1, 2010**.

Beshty didn't need a camera to produce his large-scale photogram. Working in complete darkness, he cut a 9-foot length of **Fuji Crystal** photography paper from an industrial-sized roll and attached it to a magnetic wall so that the edges of the paper were left free to **curl**. He placed **four magnets** (perhaps long magnetic strips) on top of the paper and then exposed the paper to light from a color enlarger. No light could reach the parts of the paper where magnets had been placed. "Expose to cyan," he explained. "Take down paper, put it back up." Groping his way in the dark, Beshty removed and rotated the paper according to his plan, and replaced the magnets in new positions. Then he exposed the paper to a second color and finally a third. "Expose to magenta, take down paper, put it back up. Expose to yellow..."* With each exposure and each blind repositioning of paper and magnets, the **three colors** projected from the enlarger (cyan, magenta, and yellow or **CMY**) overlapped and mixed together in ways that Beshty could never have predicted. Turning the lights back on after color processing was completed, the artist saw before him a stunning array of reds, greens, yellows, blues, purples, pinks, and blacks.

* Meet the artist in *Walead Beshty (Artist Talk): Conversations with Contemporary Artists*. See segment 1:03.04-1:04.36. bit.ly/XROSqa

CHALLENGE FOR STUDENTS

Ask students to match reproductions of contemporary artworks with their actual titles. Discuss which titles are informative and which are puzzling. If possible, explain the sources or reasons for the titles.

Compare Beshty's darkroom procedure to the way a home computer printer produces full-color images using only cyan, magenta, and yellow inks. For an explanation of "subtractive" color mixing, see bit.ly/ZlouSe

Beshty's artwork is a contemporary twist on a traditional black-and-white photogram. Learn how to make a photogram at bit.ly/ISmEkb

PRINT THE IMAGE ON PAGE 2 FOR YOUR STUDENTS.

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2011. Chromogenic photographic paper (photogram). Sheet: 1308 x 2794 mm. (51 ½ x 110 in.). The Baltimore Museum of Art: Purchased in Honor of Elaine B. Snyder with funds contributed by her Family and Friends, and Photograph Acquisition Fund, BMA 2012.194. © Walead Beshty