

NIGHT GALLERY

2276 E. 16th Street, Los Angeles, California 90021

nightgallery.ca

Jennifer Remenchik, "The Many Shades and Meanings of the Color Blue," *Hyperallergic*, April 9, 2018.

HYPERALLERGIC

ART

The Many Shades and Meanings of the Color Blue

An exhibition meditates on blue's various connotations and how it manifests in politics.

Jennifer Remenchik April 9, 2018



Installation view of *Blue State* at Night Gallery (all photos by the author for Hyperallergic)

LOS ANGELES — There is something visually seductive about an exhibition structured around color. The initial impression of a room immersed in a single hue is, at the very least, striking; even colors that might repel us in the everyday become compelling when repeated ad infinitum. It's trickier, however, to make that dazzling sight last beyond the walls of the gallery, to provoke something deeper than spectacle.



Elise Rasmussen, "Cyanometer" (2018), digital C print, framed, six parts: overall 21 x 145 1/2 in

Blue State, a group exhibition currently on view at Night Gallery, meditates on the color blue: its various connotations, how it manifests in politics, and its role in the visual language of expedition, evoking both sky and sea. But the strongest works point to the more unified theme of humans' obsessive need to categorize the world around them, in this case by color.

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In a series of six digital C-prints, Elise Rasmussen studies the cyanometer, an instrument invented by scientist Horace-Bénédict de Saussure to measure the blueness of the sky. The work, “Cyanometers” (2018), served as the initial inspiration for *Blue State* and depicts different versions of the device set in a series of blue-hued frames that deepen from left to right. In another room, the narrator of Rasmussen’s video essay “Did you know blue had no name?” (2018) recounts how the color blue appeared in ancient texts only after it was extracted from lapis lazuli and made into a pigment, insinuating that something only becomes culturally visible after it becomes useful.



Cynthia Daignault, “Blues” (2018)
(detail), oil on linen, 60 parts: each 9 x 9

In one particularly visually arresting installation titled “Blues” (2018), Cynthia Daignault has meticulously mounted 60 small squares painted with different shades of blue, each labeled with a name. Some blues feel particularly corporate or menacing, such as “Exxon,” “Ford,” and “Facebook,” while others like “Baby” and “Toothpaste” come across as banal or endearing. In the end, the piece showcases how arbitrary these labels are, with “Democrat” and “Delft” blue appearing almost identical from a distance, not to mention “Picasso” and “Police.”

Some works, however, like two lovely abstract paintings by Monique Mouton (“Untitled” and “Pacific”), seem to be included primarily because they are blue, and not because they push the exhibition’s narrative forward — a formalist exhibition’s death knell.

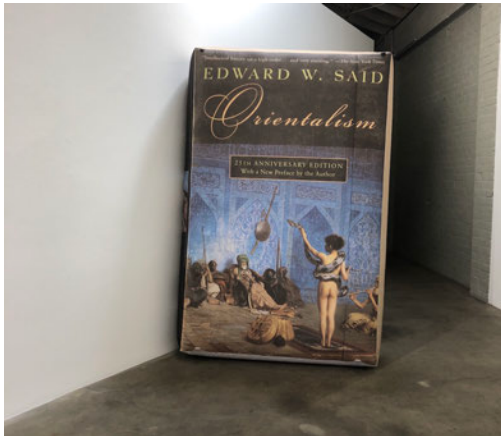
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Blue State continues to stretch a bit too far in [Divya Mehra's](#) inflatable book depicting the first-edition cover of critic Edward Said's post-colonialist classic, [Orientalism](#), a cover which happens to contain a large swathe of blue. While the piece itself hints at the darker underbelly of exploration's historical legacy through its subject matter, blueness as a topic feels more incidental than interrogated.

Blue State as a whole relies too heavily on the visual element of its theme to truly delve into any particular aspect of the color's political implications. While the individual artworks explore a variety of engaging topics, the exhibition ends up blanketing conceptually disparate ideas under the guise of blue.



Divya Mehra, "The World Isn't a Fair Place: Just Barely Adrift on your perceived Cultural Landscape (The Browning of America and the Color of Crime)" (2018), inflatable polyester book, 96 x 60 x 12 in

[Blue State continues at Night Gallery](#) (2276 E 16th St, Los Angeles) through April 14.