



Paola Pivi, *What's up baby bear*, 2019. Urethane foam, plastic, feathers. 25.4 × 91.4 × 81.3 cm | 10 × 36 × 32 in. Photo: Guillaume Ziccarelli. Courtesy of the artist and Perrotin.

PAOLA PIVI, TAKASHI MURAKAMI, DANIEL ARSHAM, TOILET PAPER, LESLIE HEWITT, JOHAN CRETEN, MATTHEW RONAY, GREGOR HILDEBRANDT, BERNARD FRIZE, SHIM MOON-SEUP, GERARD SCHNEIDER, HANS HARTUNG

THE BLUES 2

June 29 — August 12, 2023

Perrotin is delighted to announce an upcoming group exhibition *The Blues 2*, which will showcase a curated selection of artworks revolving around color blue from modern and contemporary artists. This exhibition aims to explore the diverse artistic applications employed by individual artists within their distinct styles and seeks to create an ambiance capturing the essence of the summer season. Serving as a thematic continuation of our previous online exhibition, *The Blues*, the current show further expands the exploration of artworks that utilize the color blue within the contexts of modern and contemporary art.

"Color is a natural phenomenon but it is also a complex cultural construct" — Michel Pastoureau¹

Over the course of time, the cultural and symbolic perception of the color blue has undergone constant transformation. In ancient cultures, the scarcity of natural materials resulted in the relative rarity of the color blue. The earliest instances of its usage can be traced back to ancient

Egypt, where it became associated with divinity and transcendence. During the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, the deep blue pigment ultramarine, derived from lapis lazuli, gained prominence in religious art. The challenges encountered in its production contributed to the color's value and elevated status, linking it to religious figures such as the Virgin Mary in Christianity and Lord Krishna in Hinduism, but further on also to the representation of nobility and authority. Renaissance artists such as Giotto, Michelangelo and Titian skillfully explored the luminosity of blue pigments and its spiritual significance in their depictions of the heavens.

In the realm of contemporary culture, the color blue continues to be a subject of contemplation and inspiration for artists and philosophers. As Johann Wolfgang von Goethe once observed, "As yellow is always accompanied with light, so it may be said that blue still brings a principle of darkness with it."² Blue incites a potent sense of ambiguity; on one hand, it is associated with spirituality and divine subjects, while on the other, it is linked to night, darkness, and melancholy. Thus, for example, in English, the phrase "feeling blue" literally denotes "feeling sad." Yves Klein believed that blue conveyed a sense of tranquility and serenity,



Daniel Arsham, *Impasto Head of Dionysos*, 2022. Acrylic on canvas. Framed : 152.4 x 127 x 12.7 cm | 60 x 50 x 5 in. Photo: Guillaume Ziccarelli. Courtesy of the artist and Perrotin.

capturing the essence of the eternal and immaterial. He argued, “Blue has no dimensions, it is beyond dimensions.”³

Blue encompasses the vastness of the ocean and the infinite expanse of the sky. It is the color of nature, representing both the brightness of day and the mystique of a starry night. Blue symbolizes the blue dot of Earth against the dark backdrop of the universe, serving as a reminder of the existence of life. The color blue accumulates a multitude of interpretations and expressions connected to cultural and social aspects, language, aesthetics, and evoked emotions. Philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty wrote, “...I am the sky itself as it is drawn together and unified, and as it begins to exist for itself, my consciousness is saturated with this limitless blue,”⁴ emphasizing the embodied nature of perception. Our experience of the color is not solely based on visual sensation but is also informed by bodily interactions with our surroundings.

Blue 2 presents a curated collection of artworks that explore the symbolic, historical, and emotional dimensions associated with the color blue. In this exhibition for example, the likes of Gerard Schneider, Shim Moon-Seup, Gregor Hildebrandt and Bernard Frize all apply different shades of blue that speak to memories, emotions and thought processes that are not explicitly didactic, rather artworks that the artists have felt comfortable with revealing themselves. On the flip side the gallery presents sharp popping applications of blue that do not harbor self expression, from the likes of Toilet Paper (Maurizio Cattelan and Pierpaolo Ferrari), Paola Pivi, Takashi Murakami, Aya Takano and Daniel Arsham. Rather, these works reveal the commercialized applications of color and their inevitable need of being eye-catching.



Shim Moon-Seup, *The Presentation*, 2014. Acrylic and on canvas. 194 x 130.5 cm | 76^{3/8} x 51^{3/8} in. Courtesy of the artist and Perrotin.

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- 1 Pastoreau, Michel. *Blue: The History of a Color*. Princeton University Press, 2001. P. 7
 - 2 Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Theory of Colours*. The Project Gutenberg EBook, 2015. P. 310
 - 3 Philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty. *Phenomenology of Perception*. First published in Routledge Classics 2002 by Routledge. P. 249
 - 4 *What was it with Yves Klein and Blue?!* <https://www.phaidon.com/agenda/articles/2017/april/28/what-was-it-with-yves-klein-and-blue/>

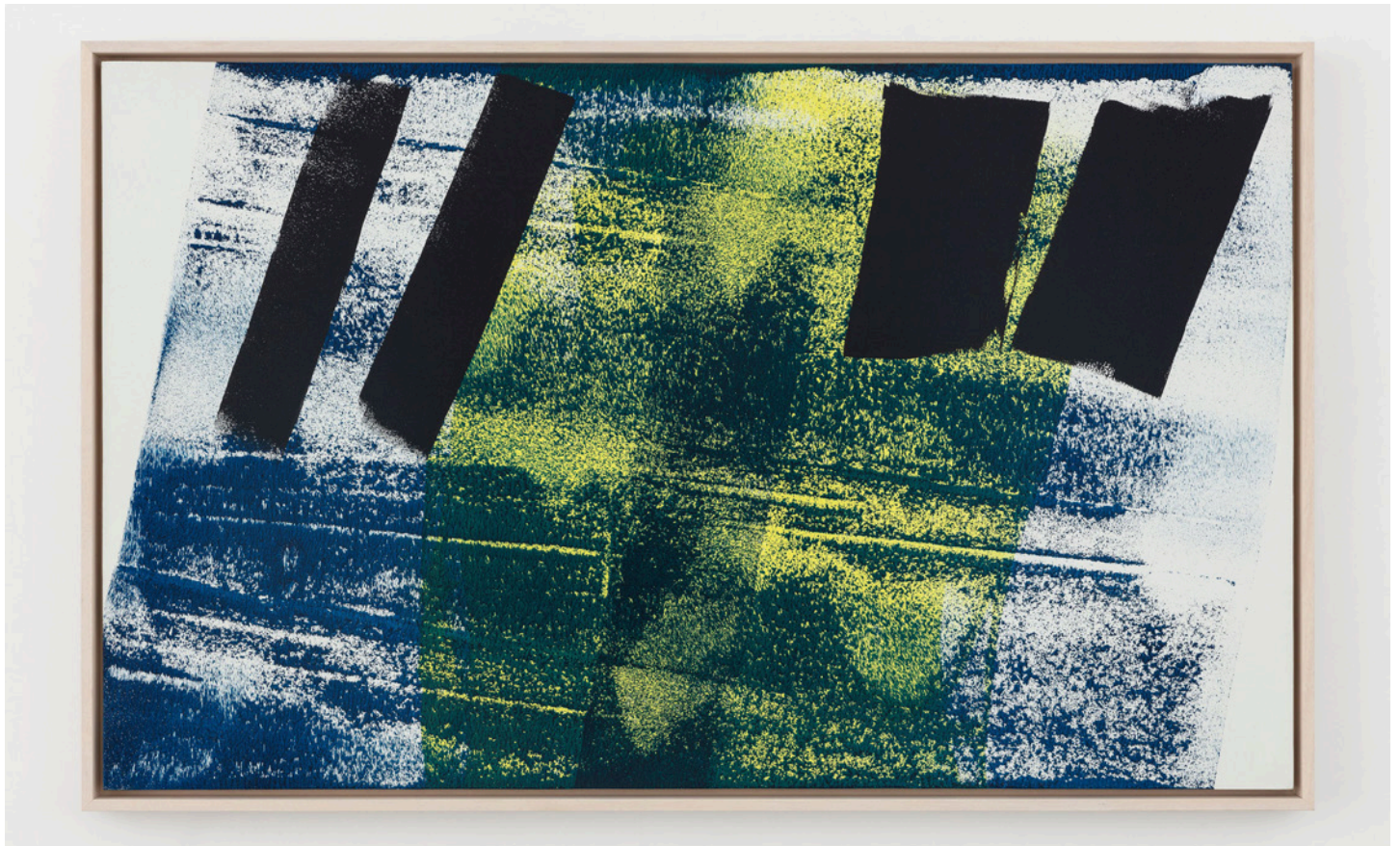
Additional notes:

Shim Moon-Seup

Born in 1943 and growing up by the sea, Shim Moon-Seup's artistic practice adheres to two main principles, temporality and nature. The Presentation series expresses this by using a varying spectrum of blues to capture the perpetually undulating quality of the dark and light ripples in the sea. In the context of the Hong Kong space, the paintings are displayed as an installation in conversation with the view of the harbor. The blues of these works therefore evokes the fundamental qualities of the sea as well as Shim's personal nostalgic fondness to it.

Takashi Murakami

The pioneer of the superflat movement and in contrast to emotionally charged uses of color, Murakami's application of blue is utilitarian and flat. Although figurative and bright colored, the thesis of his practice remains unwavering and strips it of all personal conventions. The manner in which his paintings are assembled, usually by his studio and not



Hans Hartung, *T1975-K25*, 1975. Acrylic on masonite. 92 × 150 cm | 36^{1/4} × 59^{1/16} in. Photo: Tanguy Beurdeley. Courtesy of Perrotin & Hartung-Bergman Foundation.

created personally, further adds to the detachment and void of emotions. Placing emphasis on the bright hued subject matter entirely.

Gregor Hildebrandt

Born 1974 and based in Berlin, Hildebrandt's works are evocative of memories, emotions and sounds that are tied to specific recordings expressed through cassette tapes. The works are created by meticulously sticking each strip to a surface and ripping them off one by one such that residue is stuck to the surface. *Friend's Time* is composed of the recording of *Secret Adversary* (1983), a movie based on Agatha Christie's adventure novel and invites interpretations towards the story, sounds and emotions experienced in the movie.

Johan Creten

A lifelong practice dedicated to the revival of ceramics within contemporary art, he is also affectionately called "The Clay Gypsy". Created at the same time as his famous *Odore di Femmina* series which draws inspiration from the metonymy of the french word 'shellfish' for being allusive of sexual undertones, *Threesome* uses an explicit title that contrasts with a muted subject matter colored in a calm blue. In this sense, the color blue is used skillfully to subvert expectations and manipulates the interpretation of the work's title.

Gerard Schneider

Considered as a pioneer of lyrical abstraction alongside the likes of Pierre Soulages, Hans Hartung and Georges Mathieu, Gerard Schneider's works, are often characterized by its dynamic nature. Schneider's practice centres around his view of how, "painting should be looked in the same way as music is listened to". *Sans Titre* represents this ideal with its application of color; the varying spectrum of blue is applied with thick and firm brushstrokes that evoke a deep bass tone,

while the brighter applications of the more dynamic reds, yellows and whites each have their own highlights in the entire composition.

Bernard Frize

Born in 1949, Bernard Frize's works are most unique for its translucent and aqueous composition of colors created by mixing resin and acrylic. His practice revolves around the removal of the 'hand of the artist'. *Pator* is composed entirely of blues that are applied sequentially through tidy diagonal strokes. The blue in his works are helpful in understanding his ethos and ego because Frize doesn't try to dictate what the works should mean or should look like, but rather let the viewer interpret themselves.

Paola Pivi

Born in Italy in 1971, Paola Pivi's artistic practice is diverse and enigmatic. Comingling the common and the alien, Pivi works with commonly identifiable objects which are modified to introduce a new dimension e.g. material or color, challenging the audience to change shift their own perspectives and subversing the expectations. Animals are often cast as protagonists in Pivi's world. She draws upon their perceived characteristics and instills them with human mannerisms. The dark colored blue bear is characterized by its pose, laying down rather than being dictated by the color.

Hans Hartung

Born in Leipzig, Germany in 1904, Hans Hartung is most widely known for being one of the leading figures in Lyrical Abstraction, the movement that ran parallel to American Abstract Expressionism in Europe and as a response to minimalism. A decorated War Veteran of the Free French Army in occupied France, he was gravely wounded and had to have a leg amputated. Hartung expressed his feelings on canvas, with thatched



Toilet Paper. *Untitled* (detail), 2015. Wood screen, UV color print, varnish, solid brass, anodised metal. 175.4 × 167.9 × 2.5 cm | 69^{1/16} × 66^{1/8} × 1 in. Edition 5/5 + 1 AP. Photo: Claire Dorn. Courtesy of the artist and Perrotin.

brush strokes defining characteristic of his early post war works. In his later body of work, especially since the 70s, he adopted a spray gun similar to ones used in the automotive industry instead of brushes due to his limited mobility.

Leslie Hewitt:

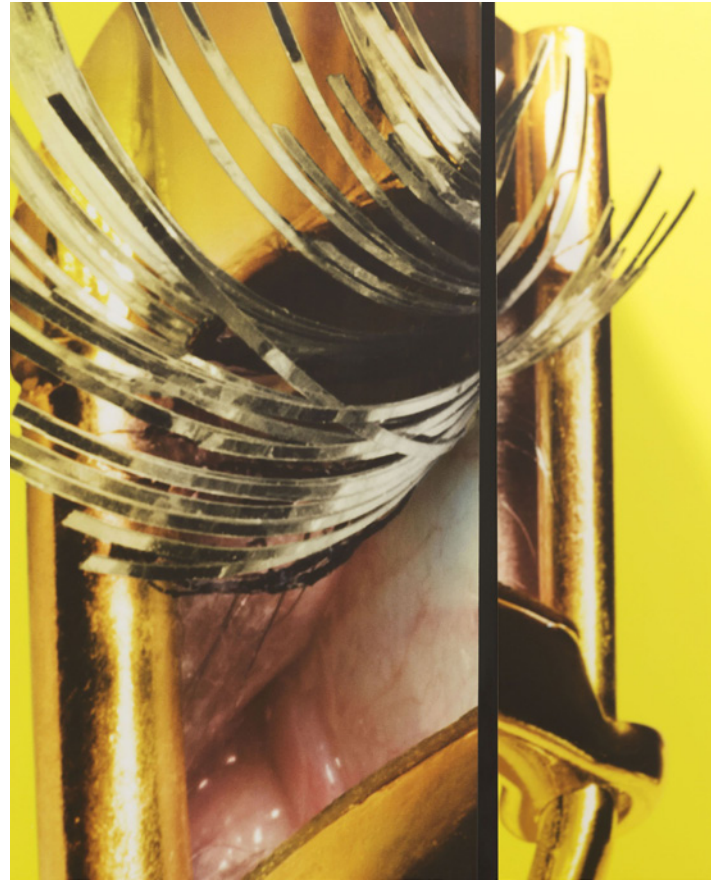
Born in 1977 in Saint Albans, New York, Hewitt's works often present arrangements of personally and politically charged materials. In *Daylight/Daylong* however, Hewitt has created a body of work that, taken together, creates a visual exploration of how images can be connected by borrowing the western Texas sky during sunrise. All works in this series are viewed as diptychs, with the sunrise on the left and a block of shifting colors on the right to illustrate the impression from the perception of that specific view. *Daylight/Daylong 008* imitates the ephemeral tranquility of watching the sunlight on the sky and its surrounding clouds during sunrise.

Toilet Paper - Collaboration Maurizio Cattelan/ Pierpaolo Ferrari:

Toilet Paper Magazine is a collaboration between the satiric artist Maurizio Cattelan, and the photographer Pierpaolo Ferrari. It is a biannual book that publishes collages of visual imagery and concepts that they both find meld with their unique style. A product of such aesthetics, the photograph on each wooden screen of *Untitled* is divided into three parts and folds like conventional room dividers. The bright blue and yellow colors of the screens pop, disrupting the flow of the exhibition with large, distracting and eye-catching imagery.

Daniel Arsham

Known for his sculptures with its signature eroded crystalline aesthetics, Daniel Arsham's works usually create an alternate landscape with the theme being fundamentally based on time. Arsham's paintings are no



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different, instead of being in a three dimensional space, Arsham's painting allows the audience to peer into the world where he envisions his sculptures. Seated on a pedestal, with an entirely blue background reminiscent of the Ancient Greeks or Medieval's depiction of the divine, the painting projects a scenario where the head of Dionysus is one day unearthed and regaled as an artifact of the classical era.

Matthew Ronay

Ronay's practice revolves around themes of the spiritual and the subconscious through sculptural works. The process of sculpting his works starts from automatic drawing, a process where Ronay unconsciously draws on a piece of paper that serves as the base shape of the sculpture. Eventually each work is hand carved, with every texture slowly carved by hand. Although oddly shaped, Ronay's works definitely speak to the spiritual, since the colours are arbitrarily chosen.