



ART REVIEW: “ColorPop” Tension in Works by Dayton, Jennings and Pagano

January 17, 2018
by Kelcey Edwards

For a second winter, the [Malia Mills](#) retail space on Main Street in East Hampton has been converted into a brick and mortar exhibition venue for [folioeast](#), the online gallery, studio visits coordinator and sales organization founded by Coco Myers in 2016. “ColorPop,” the folioeast show that opened January 13, 2018 at Malia Mills—featuring works by [Peter Dayton](#), [Janet Jennings](#) and [William Pagano](#)—is one of the most welcome surprises of the East Hampton art scene this January.

In the display window to the left of the entrance of the cleared-out retail space is one of two clusters of sculptures by Peter Dayton: spear-shaped tripods painted with colorful stripes, a sharp-edged, sculptural manifestation of the surfboard imagery Dayton has worked with for years.

On the wall to the left is William (Bill) Pagano’s dye sublimation on aluminum series, works Pagano describes as influenced by “postwar prosperity and its promise of Utopia.” The streaks of color capture the fiery skies of a sun both rising and setting, giving the pieces an event horizon feel—a reminder of the unattainable nature of utopias.

Next on the wall are Pagano’s canvases. Unlike the works on aluminum, these paintings bear the psychological weight of empty rooms, and the thrumming heart of the show is the white void in the center of a painting from his “Modern House” series, a ghost image of an architectural space dissipating into pure absence.



“ORANGECYCLE, 20176” by Peter Dayton. Acrylic on MDF,
35 1/2 inches.



“MODERN HOUSE 11” by William Pagano. Oil on canvas, 36 x 48 inches.

The opening on January 13, 2018 was well attended, abuzz with the artists and their friends and patrons. I passed through a throng of black-clad gallerygoers to reach the watercolors on the back

wall by [Janet Jennings](#), my favorites in her series. Reminiscent of textile art, the thin painted lines quiver with life—parallel and straight, if not taut. Standing before them, the viewer’s eyes are drawn to the texture of the surface—much like Dayton’s small paintings on wood, which read like studies for the larger sculptures, with the surfaces of the paintings marred by pencil marks and drops of varnish.

In the case of Jennings, the “imperfections” in the painted lines give an energy to the work that crescendos to the very edge of the painting, where the lines halt, abruptly, against the raw paper with the finality of a severed thread.



“PINK LINES” by Janet Jennings, 2017. Watercolor on paper, 22 x 30 inches.

To the right of the Jennings watercolors stands the second cluster of Dayton’s sculptures. This time, standing closer to them than I would have liked in the crowded space, I am struck by their razor sharpness, by their latent threat.

In his artist’s statement, Dayton describes them as rockets pointing toward the future. I can’t help but feel there is something of the tongue-in-cheek punk rock sensibility of their creator behind this claim, for while earlier works of Dayton’s have neutralized the dangers of surfboards by flattening their designs into a decorative, two-dimensional space, these “rockets” seem to be part missile, part spear. And if the colorful beacons are indeed pointing toward the future of our time in this world, it leaves the viewer wondering what kind of future that may be.



Folio East’s group show “Color Pop” at Malia Mills.

That said, perhaps it is simply, as Pagano suggests in his artist statement, that such abstractions result in “zones of indeterminacy.” Whatever the reason, the tension that arises from all of the works in the exhibition seems to be the thread that draws them together. From the uninhabited spaces of the Pagano paintings and prints to the blunt edges and disorienting palettes of the Jennings color fields to Dayton’s “rocket” missiles, the selected works seem to be a collective reminder of the frailty of our senses, perhaps the vulnerability of our species itself.



"PARADISE 7" by William Pagano. Oil on canvas, 16 x 28 inches.

Shows like this do not emerge from nowhere, and folioeast founder Coco Meyers and her associate Kay Gibson should be commended for their curatorial artistry in both the artist selections and installation. Even the show's title, "ColorPop," seems to have taken on new meaning. More than just a reference to the pop of color in the white-walled popup gallery and a nod to the contemporary art movement, "ColorPop" is the synesthetic sound these works make in this small space; it's the sound a missile makes when it is fired from a distance.



"BLUE 2 GREEN 2 YELLOW 3" by William Pagano. Dye sublimation print on aluminum, Edition 1/6, 16 x 28 inches..



"SURE SHOT" by Peter Dayton, 2017. Acrylic, spray enamel, pencil and resin on wood, 16 x 12 inches.

Leaving the opening to return to the drab, grey January night, with Main Street awash with melted snow, it seemed fitting to glance back over my shoulder for one last look at Peter Dayton's sculptures, this time through the protective barrier of the glassed-in storefront. It was only then that I discovered the show's final surprise (a complementary easter egg, if you will, unique to the popup nature of the series): the vinyl lettering of the retail tag superimposed over the well-lit display of Dayton's rockets, which reads like a postmodern word-poem:

"hell yes!

bra

sized

swimwear

lovingly

made

in

America"



Folio East's group show "Color Pop" at Malia Mills. © Kelcey Edwards, January 13, 2018.

BASIC FACTS: "ColorPop," featuring works by Peter Dayton, Janet Jennings and William Pagano, is on view January 13 to February 4, 2018 at folioeast at Malia Mills, 55 Main Street, East Hampton, NY 11937. The exhibition is open Friday to Sunday, 12 to 5 p.m., and by appointment. www.folioeast.com.

Kelcey Edwards is an award-winning documentary filmmaker, writer and art curator. Her films have screened at top-ranking festivals around the world, including SXSW, Berlinale and Doc NYC, and have received support from MacArthur Foundation, Tribeca and Sundance Film Institute. The most recent feature film she produced, "Wonder Women! The Untold Story of American Superheroines," was broadcast on the PBS series Independent Lens. Edwards is a co-founder of the contemporary art space Iron Gate Studios, a charter member of the East Austin Studio Tour, and founder of [Iron Gate East](#), a forum and popup art exhibition series launching in Southampton in 2018. She holds an MFA from Stanford University.

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