
'Seven Grays'

*Paula Cooper
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Through Feb. 9*

Gray, an elegant color that deserves more kudos (think Cape Cod shingles, silver fox) than it gets, is given some homage in this show organized by Dan Walsh, a Minimalist painter who pursues perceptual matters. His seven grays and not-grays, teasingly illusory, are perpetrated by all manner of materials, ranging from yarn to fluorescent fixtures to tiny overall dots of adhesive paper to plain acrylic paint. Each of the seven is viewed in a separate bay.

Bay No. 5 contains a sheet of pegboard enameled in shiny gray; Bay No. 6, a screen of radiator grille backed by twinkling green Christmas lights; Bay No. 7, vertical strands of yarn laid down on wood in repeated color runs, with purple, blue and green among them. Gray at its, well, grayest, is seen in Bay No. 3, a monochrome contemplative void by Olivier Moset that puts the viewer on the edge of infinity.

Outside this more formal investigation, Mr. Walsh has brought in the work of other artists for a free-ranging jam session on color theory. One impressive contribution is Michael Scott's "History of Memory" (1993), an ultra-Minimalist-Conceptual painting on aluminum in which irregular columns composed of short black and white horizontal lines are imposed on an overall bed of finely spaced horizontals in nuanced gray. Another winner is Michael Rhodes's tricky "Untitled," two triangular plexiglass boxes mounted on a gray board and connected by a multicolored zig of paint. Shiny gray film inside the boxes bounces light to break up the zig in distorted color reflections.

And the versatile Mr. Walsh contributes a number of works himself. In "Itten Study" (named for the Swiss painter and color theorist Johannes Itten, 1888-1967), rows of shiny tiles effect a transition from black to white by way of a color series. "Binoculars," a perceptual apparatus that the viewer peers into, blends five different colors with the aid of mirrors and fluorescent light fixtures. Other works about the process of perception range from Matthew McCaslin's "To the Rainbow," in which a humidifier blows steam through light to generate a highly tenuous rainbow on the wall, to Kathy Drasher's untitled octagonal wall piece that leads the eye on a subtle journey from palest orange to rose.

The show tends to be scattershot, with more than a few exhibitors too many. But its quirky, light-hearted approach brightens a tired old subject.

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