

Sultan Gallery Kuwait City invites DEAN PROJECT Miami Beach

BLUE NIGHTS

Opening May 16, 2017 at Sultan Gallery, Kuwait City

DEAN PROJECT is pleased to announce the opening of its next exhibition, *Blue Nights*, which features the work of eleven contemporary artists. Curated by Mark Dean, this group show of contemporary art is a continuation of the Miami-based gallery's biannual collaboration with the historical Sultan Gallery in Kuwait City, Kuwait. It will be on view from May 16, 2017 to June 15, 2017.

The exhibition's title takes its name from Joan Didion's memoir, *Blue Nights*, originally published in 2011. Much like Didion – a writer known for exploring the cultural values and experiences of American life—the works in this group show comment on contemporary pop culture and the current global geopolitical mood. Visually, all the works in *Blue Nights* contain or are the color blue. Similar to Didion's titular reference to the final lingering hours of daylight in summer, the blues used in the show warn of darkness, though simultaneously seem to suggest that it may never come. Figurative and abstract, the exhibited works are executed in diverse media, yet cohesively come together to speak about the contemporary human experience and to export these ideas from the United States to Kuwait.

Max Steven Grossman and Mel Bochner's works call attention to the ubiquity of words and text in society today. Grossman's c-print of a bookscape features numerous legible titles, but those with blue covers face outward. Bochner's brightly colored monoprints are divided into registers, each with the word BLAH—a common refrain in contemporary youth culture—in uniform text printed in different colors. The monoprint encapsulates the artist's ongoing commitment to exploring language and color.

Robert Polidori's image of Cuban Master Amelia Peláez's apartment with its cool aqua walls imbues an otherwise tranquil domestic scene with a somber mood, while the immaculate nature of the living space and overall absence of human presence endow it with an institutionalized and sterile atmosphere, despite the tropical locale.

Carlos Betancourt's *56-04 Re-collections XVI, Azul*, 2011, a metallic print with a circular composition, has a central form from which organic and floral elements radiate outward in an organized yet chaotic fashion. Set against an inky blue background, the frenetic blue-and-white design surrounds the nexus while simultaneously isolating the central element. Another metallic print, *44-02 Re-Collections VII Fuchsia and Blue*, 2009, highlights the wide range of shades of blue, which visually pop from the bright fuchsia background.

Hendrik Kerstens transforms the canonical seventeenth-century masterpiece *Girl with a Pearl Earring* by Johannes Vermeer by changing the sitters clothes from the warm gold and white robes in the historical painting into a dark black top, highlighting the silky, cool blue of her velvet turban. Gone also are the iconic pearl earring and cherubically rosy cheeks and lips, further shifting the viewer's focus to the jewel-toned headdress.

Lluis Barba's *Self Portrait Series, Warhol Marilyn*, 2014 also adapts a famous work of art with the visual vocabulary of mass contemporary culture. References to pop culture in myriad forms – McDonald's signature Golden Arches, Jeff Koons's Balloon Dog sculpture, an Oscar statue, celebrities, among countless others – cover Andy Warhol's original screen-print of the movie star and teal background. The modern-day additions interact with the historical Marilyn to become part of her, balancing on her eyebrow, peering into her eye, and casually sitting on her nose.

DEAN PROJECT's first exhibition in Kuwait was ten years ago, and for the gallery, this project marks the passage of time and an anniversary. *Blue Nights* brings together diverse artists working across disciplines to address contemporary issues of our existence and to share these experiences with a broader, more global audience.

Works by: Lluis Barba, Vincent Beaurin, Tim Berg & Rebekah Myers, Carlos Betancourt, Mel Bochner, Max Steven Grossman, Brad Howe, Hendrik Kerstens, Robert Polidori, Hunt Slonem, and Donald Sultan.

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