

Sherrie Levine

PAULA COOPER GALLERY | 534 WEST 21ST STREET

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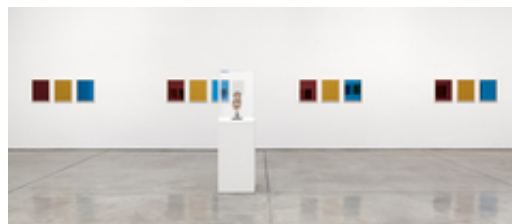
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Repetition can act to affirm, to shore up meaning and provide closure: The lecturer reiterates her point to underscore its significance. Yet repetition can also effect the opposite, seriality emptying into beige-bland banality. To repeat in this second sense is to succumb to pathology, a compulsion whereby meaning cedes to a nightmarish sameness.

Sherrie Levine has staked her nearly four-decade-long career on a deconstruction of the avant-garde myths of origin and originality, to which repetition is the debased double. Her latest show takes aim at Aleksandr Rodchenko's triptych of monochromes, *Pure Red Color, Pure Yellow Color, Pure Blue Color*, presented in Moscow in 1921 on the heels of the Bolshevik Revolution. "It's all over," the *echt* Constructionist would later affirm: Reduced to its zero degree, painting (the ultimate bourgeois art form) seemed gleefully obsolete. Levine's *Red, Yellow, Blue Mirrors: 1–3, 2014*, rehearses Rodchenko's gesture, reproducing his triptych as rectangles of colored glass set in plywood frames. Four sets of three hang on three adjoining walls, transforming his augured ending into a multiple. The red and blue glass is transparent, imaging the viewer, her surroundings, and the frame's edge within; the yellow is matte and registers only shadow. Modernism's most overdetermined strategy (the monochrome) finds its theoretical double in the mirror, whose colors are permuted—the red more or less ruddy, the yellow variously sepia, the blue tending toward lurid cyan—depending on the angle of one's approach.

There are easy ways to read Levine's revision: the author's death and the subject's birth or via somewhat tired rhetorics of appropriation. There's a cynical way, too: as Levine™, of which three cast-bronze sculptures seem illustrative. More productive, perhaps, is to consider the tension between reflexivity—the doubling back that grounds the modernist medium—and the mirror's essential condition of reflectivity. Both concern an experience of repetition. Yet while the first emphasizes the material support, the second cancels it, submitting the art object to a psychological condition: the vanity of the viewer seduced by her own image. Modernism's critical gambit is perversely rehearsed as narcissism, and contemporary art finds itself trapped in paralyzing self-reflection, doomed to elaborate its presumed impossibility endlessly.

— Courtney Fiske



View of "Red Yellow Blue," 2014.