

# NEWCITY Art

Reviews, profiles and news about art in Chicago

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Review: *Spectral Landscape (with Viewing Stations)*/Gallery 400

By Janina Ciezadlo

The proliferation, starting with the invention of aniline dyes in the nineteenth century, of new methods of producing, applying, mediating and transmitting color, has upended any certainty in what we know and how we perceive or use color in art and science. Cultural products like Pantone color charts and color wheels, and even the great treatises on color like Goethe's "Theory of Colours" and Albers' "The Interaction of Color," are not reflective of firm empirical truths, each questioning stable color categorization.

Pamela Fraser and John Neff, curators of the exhibition *Spectral Landscape*, have assembled a spectrum of their own examples of works that serve as visible proofs and provisional statements regarding what might be a crisis or at least a shake-up in our experiences and ideas about color perception. A John Baldessari video—*Six Colorful Tales: From the Emotional Spectrum (Women)*, from 1977—severs our received ideas about the relationship between emotion and color by having women recount emotional experiences in an affectless monotone against a hue usually associated with a specific emotion.



In counterpoint to the epistemological turn of the exhibition, various vivid pigment-laden surfaces and/or fluctuating colored emulsions give viewers the opportunity to conduct their own inquiries into the nature of the experience of color. A 2009 video by Jacob Dahlgren of a group of people carrying placards with what look like color design problems (actually paintings by German artist Olle Baertling) sums up the linguistic and experiential questions proposed by the exhibition. A cheerful group marching through the hills and woods of Marin county might be dramatizing the aporia between the existence of color in nature and the sign systems we invent to represent human relationships to the phenomenon of color.

At Gallery 400, 400 South Peoria, through June 9