

Art & Design

Spectral Landscape with Viewing Stations at Gallery 400 | Art review

John Baldessari, Richard Mosse and other artists explore color

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Richard Mosse, *Taking Tiger Mountain*, 2011.
Photo: Courtesy of the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery.

Curators Pamela Fraser and John Neff open this exhibition with the bubble-gum-hued hills of Eastern Congo. Richard Mosse photographed them in *Taking Tiger Mountain* (2011) with Kodak's now-discontinued Aerochrome infrared film—originally used for military surveillance—which reveals normally imperceptible parts of the color spectrum. His arresting, unlikely image of a war-torn region is the perfect introduction to a show that moves away from modernist and postmodernist color studies toward contemporary considerations of color.

Fraser and Neff organize the works on display into a loose spectrum, which includes invisible colors (as in Mosse's infrared work) and metallic ones, as in Polly Apfelbaum's *Miss America*. This runway-like floor installation of sequined fabric generates its own pageantry, capturing rainbows of light on its iridescent surface and throwing ghostly patterns onto the gallery wall.

John Baldessari's *Six Colorful Tales from the Emotional Spectrum (Women)* (1977) cleverly demonstrates how colors can convey strong moods. As each woman in the video shares a personal story—of teenage humiliation or an irrational fear, for example—Baldessari tints the background a different hue, giving the stories titles such as “Catatonic Yellow” or “Apoplectic Violet.” Though this work is considerably older than others on view, it fits. In a recent *Bad at Sports* interview, Fraser describes Baldessari as the “granddaddy” of the show, and his playful, endlessly experimental approach to color is a visible influence on its younger artists. Fraser's dense exhibition essay analyzes color from various scholarly perspectives, but *Spectral Landscape* is a dreamy, often psychedelic trip.