

Artillery Gallery Rounds May 2, 2024
Pat Steir, *Painted Rain*
Hauser & Wirth West Hollywood
February 28 - May 4, 2024

by Jody Zellen



The point of departure for Pat Steir's exhibition "Painted Rain" at Hauser & Wirth is an exploration of blue, a color omnipresent in Los Angeles. When first visiting the city over fifty years ago to teach at CalArts, Steir was struck by the quality of light and the vivid colors of the sky and sea which were in sharp contrast to the muted tones of New York. This aura permeates her current paintings and, coincidentally, the pieces (which feature driplike) also evoke the recent weather—the violent storms and torrential rains that have pounded the region this season.

The background of *All the Colors* (all works 2022-23) is reminiscent of the azure essence of twilight just before night. The painting is divided into quarters by two white chalk lines that meet in the center of the canvas. Just above this intersection are six horizontal brush strokes that occupy the center and take command of the work. Orange, deep red, green, yellow red and light blue stand as elements of color in an otherwise barren ground. In *Thin Air*, she covers a cobalt background with textured layers that are a lighter tone of blue. Wide horizontal bands of red, white and yellow are painted just above the center and allowed to drip and meld together as they cascade down the length of the canvas toward the floor.

While most of the paintings explore the relationship between striations of color against a range of blue backgrounds, Steir's piece *Green on Top* covers a dark rust ground with overlapping stripes that trickle down to become veins of intermingling green, orange and dark red. In *Some Blues*, white lines divide a deep red background into a grid of rectangles. Toward the center of the work, are thirteen separate horizontal lines that transition from light to dark blue to create the illusion of a gradient. The works shows Steir's exploration into the tensions between texture and color, as well as the playful relationships between foreground and background.

As Steir's new works are a celebration of the color blue it is somewhat ironic that eight years ago she was diagnosed with color blindness and learned she couldn't see that hue. Nevertheless, Steir still mixes her paints to maximize the subtle differences of blue and, through an exploration of both gesture and chance, has created a powerful and emotionally complex body of work.

<https://artillerymag.com/gallery-round-pat-steir/>