

What to see in L.A. galleries: Andrew Masullo's off-kilter world, plus Gary Lang and Ruth Pastine

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By David Pagel, November 2, 2016

Each of Ruth Pastine's six paintings and two drawings in a second-floor space at Ace Gallery invites visitors to settle on a single moment — a tiny slice of time that doesn't seem to amount to much because it's so fleeting.

But in Pastine's hands, that incidental split-second expands — with uncanny frequency. The intensity also picks up. The supersaturated colors, in simple, minimalist compositions, make you breathe deeply — first to catch your breath and then to get enough oxygen so as not to miss anything.

That happens so often in “Ethereal Materials” that time seems to slow down. An intoxicating combination of sensuality and serenity suffuses the space. Whispering, rather than screaming, Pastine's paintings suggest that art is not timeless because its impact is unchanging, but because it is always changing. Mystery fills each moment with infinite possibility.



Ruth Pastine's "Blue Change 16/0000 (Over Blue Light)," oil on canvas on bonded panel, © Pastine, 60 inches by 12 inches (plus fabric)

Pastine's six midsize oils on canvas have been installed on three walls. On the north hang a pair of red vertical paintings. On the south hangs a dark blue horizontal canvas. And in between, on the long east wall, Pastine moves viewers from red to blue, or blue to red, depending on where you begin.

The trip takes you through a range of purples, pinks and burgundies, then grays and sky blues before introducing shades so dark they rival the night sky's velvety richness.

There's no end to the quiet beauty of Pastine's paintings, which play well with one another because each gives you so much time and space of your own. It's a dramatic and satisfying complement to the paintings downstairs by her husband, Gary Lang.

Opposites may attract. But more nuanced differences generate deeper conversations.

Ace Gallery, 9430 Wilshire Blvd., Beverly Hills. Through Nov. 12; closed Sundays and Mondays. (310) 858-9090, www.acegallery.net

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