

## John Bauer BSOD

Moto Okawa, November 18, 2015



Flood of pristinely cool, bright lights brings out gorgeous deep blue on the simultaneously flat and yet tactile surface of John Bauer's dynamic abstract paintings in Duke Gallery at Azusa Pacific University. I sat down with the Los Angeles-based artist and gallery director Stephen W. Childs for a conversation — glean insight into the artist's production process, which involves mixing analog and digital techniques. Here's the first of our two-part conversation.

**Stephen W. Childs:** What does the title *BSOD* mean?

**John Bauer:** *BSOD* stands for *Blue Screen of Death*, the error screen that appears when a computer running Windows crashes. I like the double meaning in relation to my work. It plays off the obvious color of the paintings and the screen printing. It also alludes to the mediated aspect of my work in relation to the hand made. I like that it also refers to the failure of technology, which is another aspect of my practice.

**SC:** How do the concepts of technology, film, the color blue, and death factor into your practice and this series of paintings?

**JB:** One of the great things that painting shares with film is light. I love the dramatic light of El Greco or the colored light of [Mark] Rothko. Traditional photography is based on light creating an image. There's something intriguing about using matter like paint to create something ephemeral like the movement of light. Some of my paintings have tons of layers in them, but it's hard to tell. There are transparent layers and more opaque ones. I use

Photoshop to work on the paintings and the key to that technology is layers, many of which you aren't aware of. I use clear mylar printed with every gesture or image in my studio to plot out the paintings and this is another type of film and layering relationship. Death is always in my work because painting is a lost cause. I'm a doubter like [Gerhard] Richter. As our culture moves forward with technological advances in science, and entertainment, painting falls farther and farther behind. It's so antiquated and dependent on the investment of human time and energy that the spirit it embodies seems to get stronger by the day in relation to something new on the market.

**Moto Okawa:** The blues are oh so beautiful against the flood of white lights. How did you come to selecting this particular hue?

**JB:** My practice is based on black and silver paintings, and I use blue painters tape to pin these transparencies on the paintings to see where to place the next screen. I think seeing the blue with the black got me thinking. Also, when I started making the blue paintings about 5 years ago, I was interested in the NYC police barricades for crowd control and [that] happen[ed] to be this blue color also. That and thinking about going surfing.

**MO:** There is one small black on blue on blue on black painting included in the exhibition. How does this piece differ from other larger paintings?

**JB:** A lot of the small paintings reverse the process of the larger ones. In a large painting like *Surf Combat*, I used Photoshop to cut and paste the composition that ultimately was screen printed. For this small painting I tried to physically recreate the cut and paste layering that I normally do in Photoshop. This is achieved by covering the canvas in tape and cutting out a random shape, printing on the shape, then repeating the process over and over and over. This painting has blue printed over some blacks which is something I don't do in the large pieces. The small size allows for trial and failure.

The second part of our conversation will be posted on Friday! Stay tuned.

John Bauer's *BSOD* was on view at Duke Gallery in Azusa Pacific University.

REF: [http://www.betterlucktomorrow.gallery/conversation-with-john-bauer-and-stephen-w-childs-part-one/img\\_1040/](http://www.betterlucktomorrow.gallery/conversation-with-john-bauer-and-stephen-w-childs-part-one/img_1040/)