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artillery

GALLERY ROUNDS: DAVE MULLER

BLUM & POE

BY JODY ZELLEN | JUL 27, 2022



*Dave Muller: Sunset, Sunrise (repeat) b/w The Record Pavilion. Installation view, 2022.
Image courtesy of the artist and Blum & Poe. Photo: Josh Schaedel.*

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Once upon a time there were “record stores” where one could look through bins of new and used albums, often organized alphabetically by musician/band and type of music, allowing listeners and viewers to troll through specific musical histories. Today, many people download songs to their mobile devices, completely bypassing the notion of an album with a fixed song order. Missing also is the album cover graphics that either pictured the band or related conceptually to the content of the album, as well as decorated and multi-colored vinyl.

In his exhibition “Sunset, Sunrise (repeat) b/w The Record Pavilion” that fills the top floor of Blum & Poe gallery, Dave Muller looks back at this period. Muller is a visual artist and a DJ, and themes relating to music, as well as to records, are constants in his work. For this presentation, Muller recreates records labels (in both 45 and 33 rpm formats) at an enlarged scale by a wide range of musicians, many drawn from his vast collection. He also fabricated a record pavilion filled with bins of “old” albums that can be perused and purchased on the spot.



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“Sunset, Sunrise (repeat) b/w The Record Pavilion” is, in many ways, a self-portrait as Muller paints albums that have influenced him, as well as their price tags, often combining them in poetic ways. Each work is a carefully painted replica of the printed original with all of its age marks, blemishes and stains. Muller never glosses over the nicks and tears on the surface of the labels, but rather celebrates their age, as well as their agelessness.

For this installation, he has painted one wall the color of a hazy blue sky and dotted it with an array of circular paintings—acrylic on gessoed plywood panels—ranging from a few inches to more than seven feet in diameter. Many of the larger pieces are concentric discs of different colors with a range of type that combine songs or albums that span musical styles and generations. *Where We Are Right Now* (2022) juxtaposes Elvis Costello’s “What’s So Funny ‘Bout Peace, Love and Understanding” with “What Do I Care” by Johnny Cash and “Moving to Florida” by Butthole Surfers. *A Total Eclipse of the Heart (on paper)* (2022) combines Traffic’s “Paper Sun” with Miles Davis’ *It’s Only A Paper Moon* and Duran Duran’s *Harvest*. While some will smile in recognition of these iconic albums, Muller is less interested in the individual objects than the meaning derived from his combinations. The coupling of The Doors “Touch Me” with X’s “We’re Desperate” is titled *We/Me* (2020), prompting thoughtful comparison. A similar feeling is evoked by *Life & Death* (2019) where Muller presents the front (*les chants de la vie*) and backsides (*le rituel funéraire*) of the same album. In a smaller work, Muller reproduces a 45 by Reggae singer Junior Delgado and not only delights in the image of two eyes behind spectacles that connect the word “Observer” but also riff on the song “I Am Still Thinking” by titling the work ...*Therefore I Still Am* (2021–22).

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In addition to the numerous works featuring individual records and combinations, Muller also presents large-scale paintings filled with price tags and labels peeled off the original objects. These colorful amalgamations, comprised of fragments of disparate shapes, sizes, colors and currencies, become kaleidoscopic compositions that reference a trip down memory lane. Muller titles these paintings “Youth Misspent (in Record Stores)”, followed by a dollar amount that is the sum of the labels within the works.

The centerpiece of the exhibition is the record pavilion filled with bins of albums culled from Muller’s personal collection, as well as from friends willing to sell their troves. This hands-on experience transports viewers back in time, sending them into the past where vintage record stores were the rage. Music plays, lights flicker, and transactions occur for those who covet a find. Muller has created a place to gather and reflect, providing a forum to delve into the language of song.