

**Juliana Paciulli**

***Out of the Blue***

**September 14 - October 19, 2024**

Perhaps no one loves the sun more than Juliana Paciulli, whose new body of work sheds light on the possible futures of past iconography. Thirty year-old magazine ads, once quotidian and forgettable, emerge from the recesses of Paciulli's psyche and archive to create remixes of mass-marketed ephemera, asking us to revisit the questions and implications of these cultural artifacts with fresh eyes. What were these images telling us then, and what are their lasting legacies now? What inherent missteps regarding femininity have been made in this material and our fleeting encounters with it? Through cyanotype, collage and sculpture, Paciulli takes on these long-unresolved questions, and asks what has been baked into the collective consciousness via untold tons of printed matter that has been almost entirely discarded, and forgotten. Unearthing and revisiting it reveals the volatility of meaning that may only become apparent over time, like shadowy figures emerging from a long exposure.

In her wall works, Paciulli uses cyanotype and collage, both processes that combine the photographic elements with a handmade approach. In one cyanotype, Paciulli digitally removed a male figure who seemed poised to attack his female counterpart in a 1991 Playboy cartoon. Instead, the now solitary female figure gazes in ecstasy at the iridescent, labial gravitational waves dominating the night sky, created by two black holes in a death spiral preceding an annihilation so violent it slaps the actual fabric of reality.

In another cyanotype, floating above a canary yellow sun, a mixtape given to Paciulli by a childhood friend spills curled locks of magnetic tape that frame the iconic eyes of Jane Seymour—a Bond girl turned TV actor, and subject of countless checkout line magazine covers—imbricating the personal and intimate with the ubiquitous and popular. A young girl, disillusioned by ineffective authority figures, is adorned with seashells sliced to reveal their inner architecture. She tugs at her hair through splayed fingers, a distanced ferocity in her eyes that is both calm and intimidating. In every work, once-ubiquitous ephemera that composed the backdrop of cultural spectacle is placed in the context of natural and cosmic forces that unflinchingly dislodge and outright humble time as experienced on a human scale.

Visually, the work is characterized by illumination that mirrors the cyanotype process. *This is not a joke*, takes as its source material a front page article of the May 21, 1992 New York Times covering single motherhood. In a glowing, ethereal *pietà* pose, TV's

Murphy Brown (played by Candice Bergen), cradles her character's baby between images of Dan Quayle and Marlin Fitzwater, the VP and spokesperson (respectively) of the first Bush White House. The title itself not only calls attention to overblown controversies that all-too-regrettably come to define our culture in its broadest terms, it also emphasizes that which slips underneath these moments while riding the same zeitgeist. Though the regressive alarmism of conservative politics is an inarguable, persistent historical threat to actual liberation, campy, mass-consumed pop culture, like a television sitcom, may not only reaffirm pernicious patriarchal narratives but actually offer the potential for salvation.

*Out of the Blue* emerges from the gap between truth and misapprehension, and the effect of time on both. The merging black holes that were imaged by astrophysicists collided half a billion years before their light and gravitational wobble even reached us. Tiny sea creatures and so much "lesser" life has ceaselessly and incrementally accumulated minerals and manipulated global chemistry so as to alter the face of the planet. Cyanotype itself is birthed from the most quotidian phenomenon of all, sunlight. Lasting, impactful, meaningful phenomena occur without notice, or emerge at scales of time and space beyond comprehension. Through her process and material, Paciulli acknowledges how the everyday and overlooked events that define and inform human experience suffer the temptation to mark them as insignificant, but affirm that they are anything but.

–Reuben Merringer

