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Review: Scott Wolniak/Chicago Cultural Center

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RECOMMENDED

Scott Wolniak channels the energy of light and color with a somewhat distanced, if not overtly ambivalent, attitude towards its healing properties. His current exhibition, titled “Ungray: Color, Light and Other Balms,” focuses on the simulation of natural phenomena as found in many New Age healing methods. As a subtle but sensible development from his artificial grass and weeds (also exhibited here), his “Simulated Sunprints” look as if bathed in the natural light that is absent from Chicago this time of year. Wolniak has carefully folded these colored sheets of paper and soaked them in bleach, which ironically is anything but healing, for a result that still appears to reference specific textures and materials undergoing a long transition from one state to another.

Across the room, the video “Healing Colors, Musical Notes” uses footage shot through a “color cube,” a commercially manufactured light-therapy box. Paired with music from Jim Dorling, this video offers no hint of irony in its appeal to the energy chakras; however, the noted use of the “color cube” as a stand-in for actual light and color phenomena seems to carry on the idea of artificial healing in a world—or season—that is beyond bleak. If one chooses, the experience is no more than the color and light it emits, but even the tight video frame projected on the expansive wall of the gallery hints at an awareness, which Wolniak never completely divulges, of the flippant device that mocks the sun. (Tim Ridlen)

Through April 4 at the Chicago Cultural Center, 78 E. Washington

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