



Chromatic propulsion at Frosch & Co.

August 8, 2024



Fran Shalom, Maverick, 2024, oil on wood, 24 x 24 inches

Contributed by [Jonathan Stevenson](#) / [“Out of the Blue” at Frosch & Co](#) boasts a tight concept and adds real snap to the conversation presumed suspended until after Labor Day. The idea is to explore how the color blue ramifies through the lenses of different painters. That might seem like a merely modular survey, since other colors too have distinct connotations. But blue’s, as the gallery’s press statement notes, seem to swing more dramatically – between cool and warm, masculine and feminine, obscene and pure, barbaric and royal, stormy and serene. This quality makes for an unusually rich array.

Some of the paintings seize on hovering anxiety. In *Maverick*, [Fran Shalom](#) presents abstract shapes that are eerily discomfiting, a feature somehow affirmed by a blotchy blue interior. In the four-panel *Blue Boxes*, [Sharon Butler](#) tracks the contingent interplay of nature and the human hand, resonating fear as well as hope. [Judith](#)

[Simonian](#), in her majestic yet busy forest-and-river landscape *Walking on Water*, may have kindred concerns in suggesting both the enterprise and the arrogance of the species. So might [Vicki Sher](#) by way of *Night Shade*, which registers the casual encroachment of dark blue vertical shapes on bright colors. [Barbara Friedman's](#) arresting kinetic *Castasterized into the Blue* poses an epic reckoning, beautiful and violent.



Sharon Butler, *Blue Boxes*, 2024, oil on canvas, 24 x 80 inches



Judith Simonian, *Walking on Water*, 2024, acrylic on canvas, 26 x 36 inches



Vicki Sher, *Night Shade*, 2024, oil on canvas, 46 x 42 inches



Barbara Friedman, *Catasterized into the Blue*, 2024, oil on linen, 44 x 38 inches

Other works focus on the individual standpoint. [Edie Nadelhaft's](#) mesmerizing hyper-realist circular painting *Biometric Portrait (Cloud Iris)*, based on photographs of her own eye, suggests the ultimate inscrutability of one's senses. A soft blue background in [Jerry Kearns's](#) *What?* subtly leavens the quizzical expression of the subject, a young white woman. But the bright blue hat and shirt worn by [Fedale Spadafora's](#) Libyan man in Tunis in the eponymous painting deftly contrasts with the somber expression of the refugee, balancing optimism and uncertainty. [Becky Yazdan's](#) ominous *Father Figure* casts a looming blue omnipresence against a mottled, lighter blue backdrop. The coursing spigot of [Hans Witschi's](#) trenchant blue-on-blue *Untitled (Water)* gets at the passage of time from a more quotidian perspective.



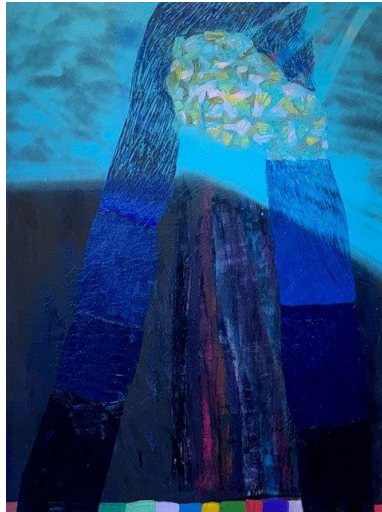
Edie Nadelhaft, *Biometric Self-Portrait (Cloud Iris)*, 2020-24, oil on canvas, 29 inches in diameter, 32 inches (framed)



Jerry Kearns, What?, acrylic and graphite on paper, 16 x 16 inches



Fedele Spadafora, Libyan Man in Tunis, 2024, oil on canvas, 30 x 24 inches



Becky Yazdan, 2024, mixed media on linen, 48 x 36 inches



Hans Witschi, Untitled (Water), 2000, oil on primed cotton, 40 x 30 inches

Two artists contemplate stealthy distillation of culture and iconography. Blue light reveals the indentations of [Bruno Jakob's](#) otherwise “invisible paintings” as a deconstructionist might expose the latent biases of a body of thought. In [Yanik Wagner's](#) noirish *Road in Rain*, a dense blue sky at dusk bathes the highway, engulfing a speeding car detectable only by its taillights and fixing it in myth. Out of the past and into the future, traveling so many different thematic vectors to linked endpoints, it seems as though the show could expand indefinitely without running off the rails. Blue connects.



Bruno Jakob, Untitled: The Sound of Bread, Again, Pump the Cyber Presence, Daily Movements, 2024, Invisible Painting, Various Water & Brain Waves, Music: Hans Witschi, 9 x 12 inches



Yanik Wagner, Road in Rain, 2022, oil on linen, 24 x 30 inches

[“Out of the Blue.” Frosch & Co.](#), 34 East Broadway, New York, NY. Through August 24, 2024. Artists: Sharon Butler, Barbara Friedman, Bruno Jakob, Jerry

Kearns, Edie Nadelhaft, Fran Shalom, Vicki Sher, Judith Simonian, Fedele Spadafora, Yanik Wagner, Hans Witschi, Becky Yazdan.

About the author: [Jonathan Stevenson](#) is a New York-based policy analyst, editor, and writer, contributing to the *New York Times*, the *New York Review of Books*, and *Politico*, among other publications, and a regular contributor to *Two Coats of Paint*. He is married to *Two Coats of Paint* founder and publisher Sharon Butler, who has a painting in the show.