

ARTFORUM

Reto Pulfer

SWISS INSTITUTE
18 Wooster Street
May 8–June 23

While a dream about a cave with a constellation of stars inspired Reto Pulfer's US solo debut, he does not attempt to re-create this experience in a literal sense. Instead he has utilized language as a map, creating a tale—available as a handout for visitors to take—as a way to embed this dream within his mind. In subsequently transforming this verbal aide-mémoire into a three-dimensional installation, he has effectively untethered imagery from words. The result is *Zustandseffekte*, 2013, the only piece on view in this show—a vast canopy of sheer white cotton sheets that Pulfer has pulled tautly across the ceiling and down the walls of the Swiss Institute, transforming its space into planetarium-like dome. Lit only by natural light, which streams in the gallery's skylights and through the fabric, he transforms the space into a timeless realm, anachronistic save the lumbency of the day. A celestial belt of blue, green, and yellow acrylic paint rushes across the center of the canopy, which seen from below seems like splash of astral sky, a dream that has stained the surface of this weightless world.

The word *weightless* is key, as the premise of this exhibition concerns fleeing from that which grounds. Just as Pulfer uses his mnemonic tale to ultimately free his dream, he uses sheets to emancipate the gallery from architectural restrictions, and natural light to liberate the exhibition from the way artificial light imposes artificial time. Also part of *Zustandseffekte* is a trunk that resembles a treasure chest, which Pulfer has painted in the same palette as his acrylic cosmos, flushing the wood with midnight and aqua blues among bursts of yellows and oranges. Inside are tiny ceramics—totems, portents, talismans—the stuff that steals us from gravity.

— Allese Thomson



Reto Pulfer, *Zustandseffekte* (detail), 2013,
mixed media, dimensions variable.

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