

PHILADELPHIA

Chad States

Vox Populi // March 4–April 24

A MEMBER OF artist-run collective Vox Populi, States presents here a compact show of new work that makes the formal personal, and vice versa. States conflates sexual and somnial imagery: A motif of blues and yellows suggests ocean and sky (both Jungian symbols of the unconscious), nocturnal emissions, and bed-wetting, all bound up with desire and shame. As a preface, visitors are provided with an excerpt from James Baldwin's 1956 novel *Giovanni's Room*—describing a conflicted sexual encounter between two men—and are asked to remove their shoes before entering the gallery. Passing through a secluding veil, one finds a kind of domestic scene, with dense cerulean carpet over the whole floor and one wall ornamented with a multihued, patterned blue wallpaper. Near another wall is a teen-size mattress. Soothing ambient music plays over the whole tableau.

The space is lit exclusively by two artworks (all works 2016). On one side, *Untitled (Sunrise)*, an 18-minute time-lapse video, casts a pale-blue aura. It shows serial clips of a young man's crotch as he pisses his underwear, again and again, each new pair of white briefs accruing a painterly transparent yellow stain. Across the room, *Untitled (I am the sun!)* illuminates with a post-Minimalist sculpture of six neon lamps in concentric circles. Its outer edge is a permanent lemony halo; white bulbs at the center ripple on and off progressively from the center outward, reminiscent of spreading stains in the incontinent youth's undies.

The locus of the show, *Untitled (Sea/Sky)* draws these images together. From the mattress—which comprises two conjoined halves in different shades of blue, and floats, raftlike, on the carpet—spill wadded jockstraps and briefs, stained with semen, urine, and fecal matter, thereby conflating anal sex, wet dreams, enuresis, eroticism, and embarrassment in one sharp amalgam. Although one senses that this work comes from a specific, undescribed set of traumatic childhood experiences, States makes acutely appreciable the sensation of what it's like to be a kid trying to come to grips with life in an excitable and not always controllable body. It's an evocation of teenage alienation and libido that's a bit like being adrift at sea, like starting from a dream, and like meeting the dawn with pleasure. —Noah Dillon

Chad States

RIGHT:
Untitled (I am the sun!), 2016. Neon, power pack, sequencer, 84 x 84 x 2 in.

BELOW:
Untitled (Sea/Sky), 2016. Carpet, mattress, jockstraps, underwear, semen, urine, and fecal matter. 18 x 22 x ½ ft.



BOTH IMAGES: CHAD STATES