

# The New York Times

ART IN REVIEW

## Yishai Jusidman: 'Prussian Blue — Memory After Representation'



"Dachau," from 2010-12, by Yishai Jusidman. The work is part of the show "Prussian Blue — Memory After Representation."

By [ROBERTA SMITH](#)

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*Americas Society*

*680 Park Avenue, at 68th Street*

*Through March 23*

Yishai Jusidman's latest paintings are symptomatic of the time: well made, photo-based and explicitly if not sensationally political. (I say explicitly because it is often forgotten that all art is political.) They exemplify the kind of obvious, emotionally manipulative work that functions more as a kind of editorial than as art, seems generated by little in the way of personal necessity, borrows liberally from other artists and ubiquitous tropes and tends to clog far too many overly earnest international exhibitions.

[Mr. Jusidman](#), who was born in Mexico and lives in Los Angeles, makes paintings that are based on relatively unfamiliar photographs of a long-familiar subject: the gas chambers built at Nazi concentration camps. Painted in a relaxed, realist manner in tones of Prussian blue, they resemble the cyanotypes of 19th-century photography, which in turn relates them to the past. They usually portray the stark interiors of these structures, which are occasionally tiled, mostly

finished in dank concrete, with vents and drains. Some images make clear their subject. Others, like the close-ups of pipes, have the generic nastiness that images of old pipes can have.

The works' conceptual impulse extends to their physical makeup. As the lengthy wall text points out, Prussian blue is the compound ferrocyanide, which is also a byproduct of the Zyklon B gas that was used in the chambers (and sometimes tinted the walls blue). Mr. Jusidman has applied another chemical used in the chambers, silicon dioxide powder, to create suggestions of "a vaporous curtain." Finally he has lightened his blue with colors used for rendering skin tones, "to refer to millions murdered with the architecture depicted in his work." Please.

The Holocaust remains a looming, tragic subject, but that doesn't stop artist after artist from exploiting it while supposedly invoking themes of trauma and collective memory. The power of these paintings is not in the images as much as in the surrounding narrative and verbiage.

As if to head off any suggestions of déjà vu and derivativeness, the exhibition's reading area includes catalogs of the work of Gerhard Richter, Luc Tuymans and Marlene Dumas, artists these paintings inevitably bring to mind. This only drives home Mr. Jusidman's lack of genuine artistic effort.