



Peter Kephart, *Somewhere Else*, 2011, executed over bonfire with water and mixed media on archival cotton rag paper, 22" x 30". A. Jain Marunouchi.

Peter Kephart

A. Jain Marunouchi

Like the Action Painters of the 1940s, Peter Kephart relies on elements of chance to create the vibrant works he dubs "firepaintings." He first drenches a sheet of paper with water, then scorches it over a flame and spills paint, glue, and gunpowder across the surface. Finally, he singes it with a torch. Kephart enhances the results with charcoal, pastel, or paint to produce textured, kinetic images that suggest landscapes of the unconscious: blue-green vegetal pools, horizons bisected with tree-like slashes, or gold cloud shapes floating over red orbs.

Some works, such as *Land of the Rising Sun* (2011), where spindly trees rise before a hulking, purple mountain, are reminiscent of the mystical scenes of Russian painter Nicholas Roerich; others, like *Carbon Clouds at Heatrise* (2011)—an interplay of charred sepia tones and jagged patches of bright orange—are meditations akin to the Color Field paintings of Clyfford Still. At his best, Kephart straddles the figurative and nonfigurative, fashioning bold, colorful images like *Somewhere Else* (2011), which can be seen as a landscape, a slide under a microscope, or simply an arresting abstraction.

Kephart has documented his artistic

process in a video that played at the gallery and is posted on YouTube. Emerging from the nighttime shadows, he wrangles a sheet of paper, mounted on board, over a crackling bonfire and demonstrates his splashing and searing techniques with the panache of a cowboy. Like Jackson Pollock, who famously dripped paint for the camera of Hans Namuth, Kephart understands the power of the artist in motion. If you didn't catch the gallery show, you can still see the movie online.

—Mona Molarsky

Scott Patrick Wiener

Milton J. Weill
Art Gallery,
92nd Street Y

Walking into this spacious gallery and taking a first look at Scott Patrick Wiener's eleven large photographs of elegiac landscapes, you immediately wanted to give yourself over to their moods—to

the loveliness of the mossy hills, tall and stately pines, and sunlight pouring over golden leaves. But quickly, you felt somehow restrained.

Inspired by Theodor Adorno's observation that "to write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric," Wiener nevertheless ventured forth with his camera, creating his own poetic images as he traveled through Germany. He visited Bergen-Belsen, Buchenwald, and Mittelbau-Dora, among other sites of atrocities, and proved that often horror leaves no obvious marks on the landscape, only in the mind. So isn't it sinful to find these images appealing?

But it turns out that our imaginations fill in the spaces, where memories still linger in the atmosphere. There is a palpable sense of desolation in the grayness of the day in *Southeast from Isolation Barrack (for Prominent Inmates) at Buchenwald* (2010). And snow covers the ground in the pine forest in *Southeast from Neutrals Camp at Bergen-Belsen* (2010). Did prisoners sometimes escape and run through these woods? Were the trees as tall back then?

Wiener gave us a choice of at least three ways to look at his photographs, an approach reminiscent of Wallace Stevens's poem "Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird." We could see them as simple reflections of interesting places in our world; we could see them as locales that retain hidden but painful resonances; or we could populate them with what we know of their past. In the end, we probably do all these things at once, and come away profoundly enriched by



Scott Patrick Wiener, *Southeast from Neutrals Camp at Bergen-Belsen*, 2010, archival ink-jet print, 30" x 40". Milton J. Weill Art Gallery, 92nd Street Y.