

FreedmanArt opens an exhibition of new paintings by Kit White



Kit White (b. 1951), *Before the Storm*, 2019. Photo transfer and oil on wood panel, 38 x 48 inches.

NEW YORK, NY.- [FreedmanArt](#) is presenting *Walls and Occupied Spaces*, new paintings by Kit White, opening April 16, 2019.

The spaces in these paintings exist as metaphorical landscapes occupied by linear structures derived from both the organic and inorganic.

Kit White's new work incorporates photographic images into his paintings as poignant backdrops to abstract lines. The photograph provides a material, worldly context for the drawing, which, though abstract, represents the real as an analog mark.

This new series of works seek out images of land that have been scarred by conflict. Initially, the images were of contested spaces of what we have traditionally referred to as the Middle East, places where competing claims to land have led to war-like confrontations. Conflicts of all kinds, violent and non-violent, surround us and announce themselves through walls, barriers, and borders. These collisions, not always physical, are manifestations of the fraught politics of occupation, both actual and symbolic. The artist also found himself drawn to the photographs of Matthew Brady (1822 - 1896) and others of the Civil War, and meditating on the figurative wall born of that conflict, a psychological division that continues to separate us.

Kit White studied at Harvard University, A.B. Fine Arts, Cum Laude, and had his first solo exhibition with Betty Parsons at Parsons/Dreyfuss Gallery in 1977. His work has been the subject of more than twenty-five solo exhibitions in galleries and Museums. He received a Louis Comfort Tiffany Award for painting and was a professor of painting for twenty-one years at Pratt Institute. His work is the subject of a monograph by Carter Ratcliff, *Line Into Form*, and Kit is the author of the international best-selling book *101 Things To Learn In Art School*, published by MIT Press. A large selection of the original drawings from this book are in the collection of the Luther W. Brady Art Gallery at the Corcoran School of Art and Design, George Washington University.

Artist's Statement:

Over the years, I have approached the space of my paintings as metaphorical landscapes. They have horizons and are occupied by linear elements that act as surrogates for structures both organic and inorganic. But because paintings are wholly created spaces, the parameters by which they are judged are formal in nature. All content reaches the viewer through a formal lens. Yet, it is the other lens, the photographic lens, through which we now receive most of our knowledge of the world and contextualizes most of what we know of it.

This realization led me several years ago to start incorporating photographic images into my drawings as backdrops to abstract lines. The resulting image conflated the recognizable world, the photograph, with the metaphoric world of drawing. I found that the two could occupy the same space and inform each other in such a way that they each became a commentary on the other; the photograph providing a material, worldly context for the drawing and the drawing eliciting an acknowledgement of the abstract nature of all images, even those that purport to represent the "real".

Because land, the basis of landscape, is territory and usually occupied, often contested, it is politically symbolic. And so, to underscore this issue, I sought out images of land that was the source of conflict. Initially, the images I employed were of the contested spaces of what we have traditionally referred to as the Middle East, places where claims to land are the source of conflict. These conflicts surround us and announce themselves through walls, barriers, and borders, all of which symbolize the fraught politics of occupation. But these barriers are not always physical. I found myself drawn to Matthew Brady's photographs of the Civil War and started thinking about the psychological wall born of that conflict which remains with us today.

This is a different view of landscape from the picturesque, the scenic. It is land as an active player in our sense of self and the politics that erupt from those identifications with physical as well as cultural and mental spaces. It is also, like these images, part real and part imagined. Landscape is a complex conflation of ambitions, affinities, motivations and identities. At this moment, not to acknowledge the political nature of landscape is to miss one of the greatest issues of the moment.

Process of the paintings

These paintings all start with a photographic image that is transferred with solvent to paper as a small scale drawing. This process eliminates much of the detail of the photograph and makes it a ghost of the original. This indistinctness serves two purposes; it renders the image general, not specific, and it pushes the photo in the direction of becoming more atmosphere and metaphor than documentary information. It sets the stage for the drawing that I add over the photograph in an attempt to respond to the valence of the image. The drawing, at this point, becomes a dance between the two. The photograph makes a physical location which the lines of the drawing inhabit. Often, the lines will create their own alternate, competitive space to the backdrop photo setting up an equivalency between the two. This balance seems necessary for each component to claim its respective power and meaning.

In the larger paintings, the photographic transfers are digitized, then printed onto a mylar film that is treated to accept inkjet ink. A solvent which lifts the ink from the film is applied to the painting surface and when the film is applied to this solvent and then removed, the photographic image is transferred to the painting surface. Once dry, this image is then painted onto. The process allows more nuance than a silk screen, and allows the manipulated photograph to retain its character and texture.