

ARTnews

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Elaine Spatz-Rabinowitz

Howard Yezerski
Boston

"Surface to Air" presented only ten oil-on-cast-Hydrocal pieces, but collectively they filled the gallery with chilling recollections and premonitions. On plastery surfaces chipped and cracked to expose their wire mesh supports, Elaine Spatz-Rabinowitz paints worlds shattered by violence. Beauty and horror intertwine in these works, as do disparate places and times. Vietnam and Lebanon; Madrid and Moscow; Iraq and Shanksville, Pennsylvania, collide and merge in pictures memorable for their atmospheric effects as well as for their violence. The stories behind the billowing smoke, torn metal, and scattered household items matter less than the overall impact of these gorgeously rendered landscapes.

reviews: national

Burning Heap, Blue Sky (2007) smolders with destruction, its flaming pile of exploded metal parts poised before a nearly abstract background of smoke-laced azure. As with most of the pieces here, Spatz-Rabinowitz drew ideas from her collection of documentary photographs, ultimately producing a composite setting that refuses to be pinned down.

The objects strewn about *Iraqi Ditch* (2005) suggest an archeological survey of



Elaine Spatz-Rabinowitz, *Burning Heap, Blue Sky*, 2007, oil on cast, pigmented Hydrocal, 29" x 25" x 2".

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war's artifacts: dolls from Auschwitz; blue slippers from Afghanistan; cinder blocks, rope, and wood that could have come from anywhere. The artist also mixes techniques: charcoal markings lend a charred immediacy to the picture; elements rendered in fresco evoke an ancient history. In *Wasteland* (2007) an eroded patch near a central inferno has the texture of cement and contours like continents on a map.

Paintings as strong as these do not need titles as obvious as *Vietnam Redux* (2006). These visual messages, rife with the remnants of carnage and of natural majesty, echo Goya's "Disasters of War" and other chronicles that transcend the moment of their making.

—Joanne Silver