



Press Release

Eric LoPresti: *An Ocean of Light*

12 April 2018 – 26 May 2018

Reception: 12 April 2018, 6 - 9 pm

It was like being at the bottom of an ocean of light. We were bathed in it from all directions. The light withdrew into the bomb as if the bomb sucked it up.

We were still talking in whispers when the cloud reached the level where it was struck by the rising sunlight...We saw a cloud that was dark and red at the bottom and daylight at the top.

We suddenly...felt exposed to the whole world.

-Nuclear physicist Joan Hinton describing the Trinity atomic bomb test, 1945

Burning in Water - New York is pleased to present ***An Ocean of Light*** by Brooklyn-based painter Eric LoPresti. The exhibition encompasses several types of work, including large paintings on linen, mixed media works on paper and altered digital photographs.

Employing a range of approaches to his theme, Eric LoPresti constructs a multifaceted depiction of the American West that scrutinizes our physical environment within the contexts of both the expansive narrative of the atomic age and the artist's own personal history. While the globally-transformative story of the development and testing of nuclear weapons suffuses these works, LoPresti's visual field shifts constantly and seamlessly from the micro- to the macroscopic. As with the infinitely elusive location of a particle in quantum mechanics, LoPresti presents a vision of the American West whose physical characteristics and historical associations defy any attempt to be perceived and comprehended from a fixed viewpoint.

LoPresti was raised in Richland, a seemingly anodyne suburban town in the desert steppe of eastern Washington state, but it wasn't until after he had relocated to New York City that he began to appreciate his home town's critical position in geopolitics. Richland is adjacent the Hanford site, where nuclear engineers created plutonium for the Manhattan Project. During the



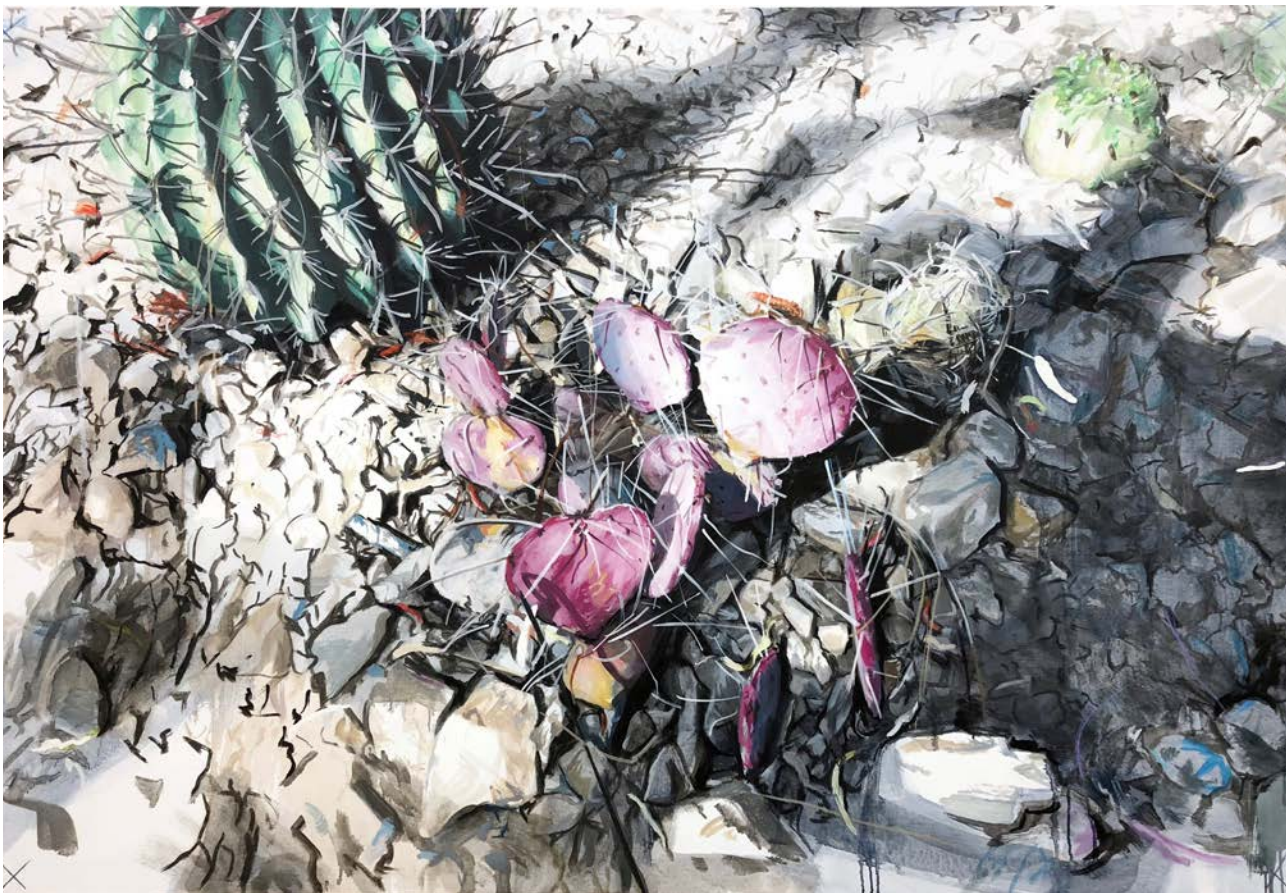
Cold War, Hanford plutonium-powered many of the over one thousand nuclear tests conducted at Nevada Test Site, and some of those underground tests are depicted in this exhibition.

His subsequent remove from his home afforded LoPresti a radically different perspective on both his personal origin story and the epochal narrative of America's atomic age. Belying the impact of his dual training as a scientist and as an artist on his modes of perception, LoPresti's selections of visual subjects seems influenced by an almost Heisenbergian uncertainty. Rather than depicting the precise moment of a nuclear explosion - the visually ubiquitous mushroom cloud - LoPresti's images render the affected environment, both natural and constructed, at a point of temporal attenuation. While never completely severing connections to his overarching narrative, LoPresti's approach remains defiantly prismatic. In addition to temporal modulation, LoPresti constantly shifts his pictorial focus between the complex ecosystem of the desert, the landscape and its broader environmental and physical qualities.

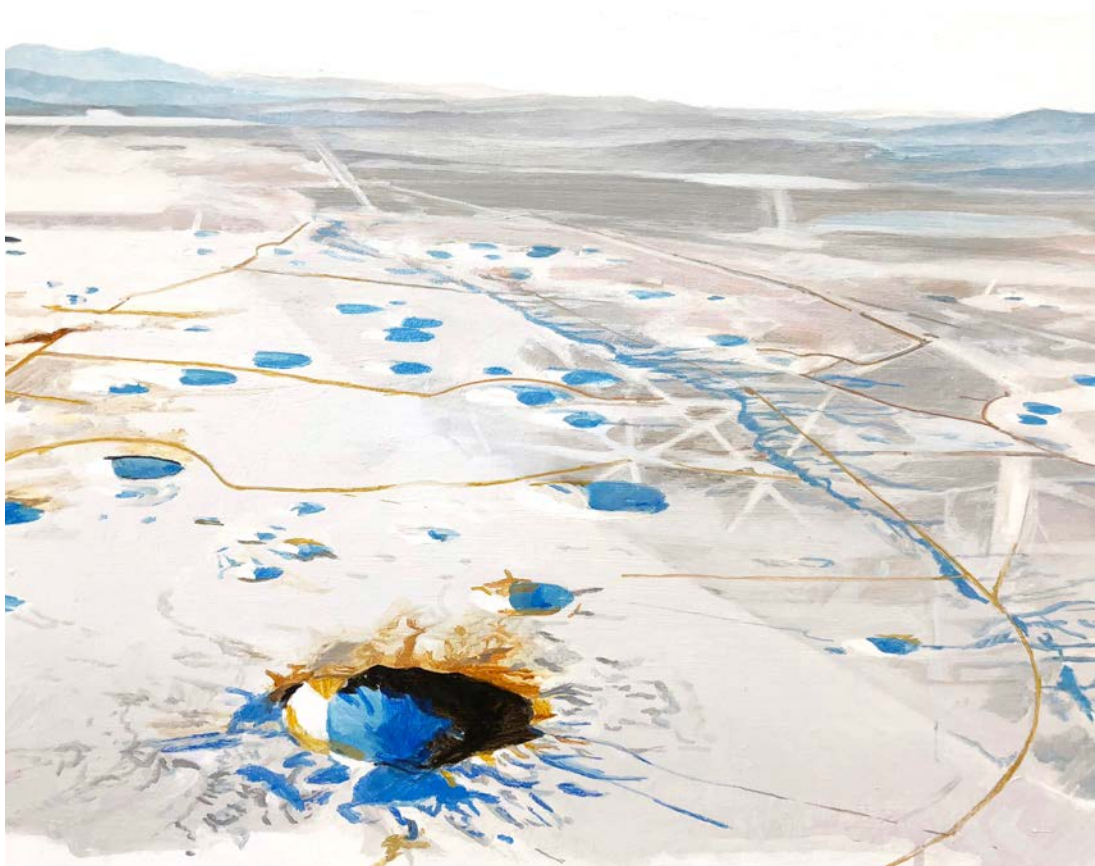
Many of the resulting images include detailed, nearly microscopic, examinations of the plant and animal life that survives in the brutal environs of the desert. LoPresti's depictions of the desert function as a bracing rejection of the oft-held notion that the desert environment is fundamentally void of life. As part of the comprehensive, vigorous examination of the atomic desert environs that recurs throughout his work, LoPresti intermittently shifts his focus to the extremely macroscopic by drawing upon high-altitude atmospheric and aerial surveillance imagery drawn from government archives.

While the title *Ocean of Light* is drawn from Joan Hinton's first-hand account of the Trinity atomic bomb test, it may also be considered as referring to the ambient atmospheric qualities of the Western desert landscape. One of the most beguiling aspects of LoPresti's art is that, while addressing the extremely fraught topic of atomic weaponry and the threat of nuclear annihilation, his work simultaneously remains resolutely defined by the optic phenomena of color and light — a paradoxical mode that he considers to be firmly ensconced within the painterly tradition of the *apocalyptic sublime*. For LoPresti, the visual aspects of the atomic landscape are not necessarily bifurcated into "natural" and "atomic" but rather reside at different points along an enigmatic continuum. Fundamental to these visions is LoPresti's adherence to the "aesthetic of the western deserts - vast, harsh and beautiful places of subtle color relationships." Within his vision of a world bathed in an ocean of light, colors remain LoPresti's first-order elements:

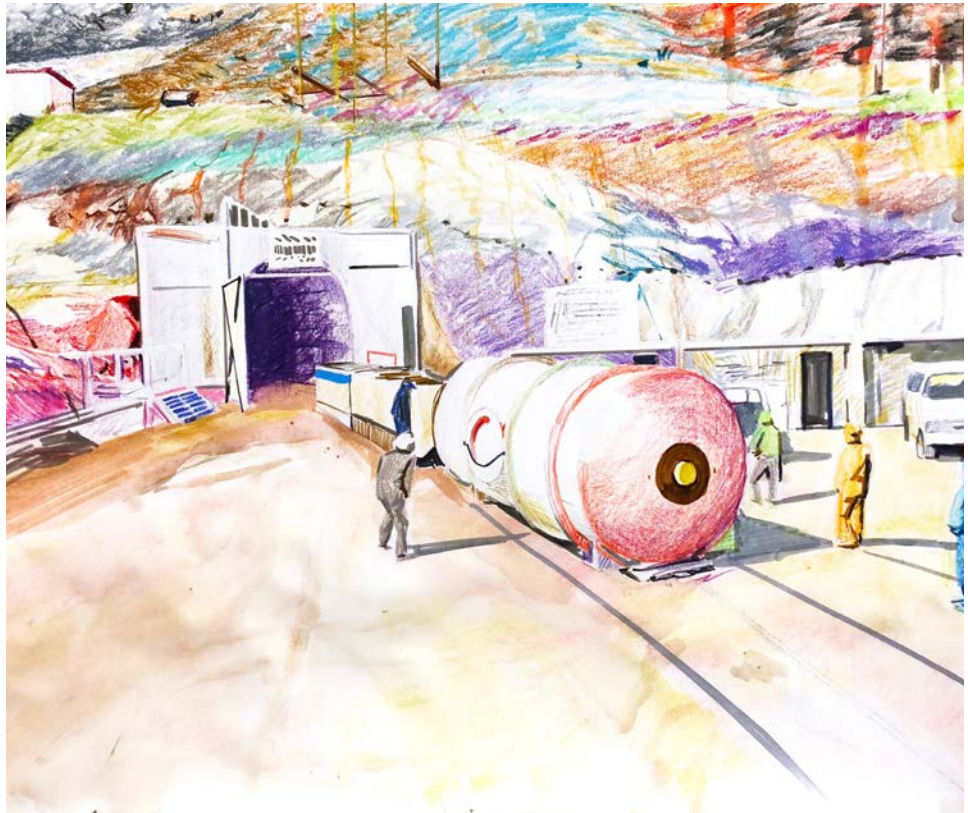
The 'secret subject' of this work is color – the specific color of the desert, as I see it. I'm using color to speak to my individual and cultural identity as an American artist, raised in the west, painting in the east, and thinking about the contemporary landscape.



Eric LoPresti (b. 1971, Denver) earned a BA in Cognitive Science from the University of Rochester and an MFA from the Maryland Institute College of Art. Past awards include the Faber Birren Foundation Award, the Walentas/Two Trees Studio Grant and the Miami Young Painters Award. Recent solo exhibitions include *Blooms* at Elizabeth Houston Gallery (New York); *Blueprint Paintings* at the University of Rochester; and *No Blue Skies* at Kunsthalle Galapagos (New York). His solo exhibition *Test Site* was exhibited at the Smithsonian Institution's National Atomic Test Museum (Las Vegas). Current group shows include *Plural* at the University of Nevada Las Vegas and *Site* at Youngstown State University. In the fall of 2018, LoPresti will open *Superbloom*, a large solo exhibition at New Mexico State University. LoPresti's artwork has been cited in numerous publications, including *Artforum*, *The New York Times*, and *Art in America*.



Eric LoPresti, *Small Yucca Flat Painting*, 2018, oil on linen.



Eric LoPresti, *Anvil-Husky-Pup (Yucca Test)*, 2018, watercolor, ink and graphite on paper.

Burning in Water is a New York gallery and project space featuring an innovative curatorial program that highlights the work of living artists with reference to broader issues confronting society. Founded in 2015 by Dr. Barry Thomas Malin, the gallery frequently collaborates with nonprofit and community-based organizations in presenting its projects.

Burning in Water:

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Gallery Hours:

11 - 7 pm (Tues – Sat)

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