

MAGNANMETZ GALLERY

ARTFORUM

2009

“Signs of the Apocalypse/Rapture”
HYDE PARK ART CENTER
5020 S. Cornell Ave.
July 19–September 20

This expansive survey curated by Doug Fogelson of the Chicago-based independent publisher Front Forty Press convincingly argues that the apocalyptic impulse still looms large in the contemporary imagination. Complementing a handsomely designed hardbound volume published late last year, the exhibition of thirty-four local and international artists is eclectic in its approach, encompassing both the mythic and the kitsch aspects of doomsday thought along with its more subtle and idiosyncratic variations. Inevitably, perhaps, the show’s imagery tends to coalesce around crumbling urban wastelands, ecologically devastated landscapes, and combusting or exploding phenomena—a literalism deftly offset by the inclusion of hypnotic, Op-inflected abstract works that convey transcendent states of euphoria. There’s also a healthy sprinkling of eroticism, for what good is an apocalypse without a little end-time bliss?

Yet for every painting that employs mushroom clouds or an orgasmically cocked head, there’s something else that veers off in a less predictable direction. In David Opdyke’s drawing *Undisclosed Location*, 2007, eerily detached power nodes—air ducts inexplicably protruding from the ground like submarine periscopes—chart a winding path toward an empty horizon. Even works that inspire bemusement elsewhere fit right in: The sentimentalized aerial embrace of a nude couple in John Pranica’s *Autumn*, 2007, has probably never looked as convincing as it does here. Located at the back of the exhibition, a listening station that features experimental music pipes sound-based expressions of the show’s themes directly into the viewer’s head, where the most potent visions of apocalypse and rapture ultimately reside.

— Claudine Ise



View of “Signs of the Apocalypse/Rapture,” 2009.