

gaze, only by concentrating intensely will viewers be capable of discerning the projected portraits clearly.

- Diane Calder

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Scott Wolniak, "Simulated Sunprint #2," 2008, bleach on paper, Chambers @ 916.

Opened January 7, 2010

Chambers @ 916

Portland, Oregon

Chicago-based artist **Scott Wolniak** plays with wry variations on the theme of "Patterning" in his show of that title - repurposing, deconstructing, and reconfiguring seemingly banal objects into signifiers of our cultural quest for transcendence. Many of his works, created during the dead of winter, comment drolly on the climatic and existential bleakness of the Second City at its coldest and darkest. In "Improvised Grass" he dreams of springtime, converting studio detritus - crumpled-up paper, discarded magazines, and junk mail - into slivers of wire-supported grass blades. Clumped together in the installation, they spread across the gallery floor like a grim faux lawn. "Weed (Rio)" turns the same materials into a ragtag tumbleweed, which, even in this tragicomic incarnation, retains the ability to conjure romantic visions of sun-drenched Western deserts. In "Untitled Tie-Dyes" he draws the intricate fractals of tie-dyed t-shirts but leaves out any color, as if draining all life from the sunny windowpane trips of yesteryear's psychedelia: the 1960s as seen from a clinical temporal remove. A more virtuosic critique of the Sixties is found in the video animation, "Notes in Harmony with the Attuned Healing Colors." With its hypnotic soundtrack by composer Jim Dorling, the piece is a computer-aided reinterpretation of home light-therapy kits for sufferers of Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD), which no doubt afflicts many along the windswept shores of Lake Michigan. Intensely saturated colors fade slowly in and out but then speed up, reaching a frenetic pace more apt to induce vertigo than serenity. Finally, Wolniak's eight "Simulated Sunprints," made with bleach rather than sunlight in his dark studio, suggest an element of ambiguity or perhaps even deception in art's promise of transformative or ecstatic experience.

- Richard Speer