

Museums

In the galleries: Wells & Barnes offer many seats, but no place to sit down

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Firepainting by Peter Kephart.

Judging from his “Dominican Sunset” series of accidental landscapes, Peter Kephart should paint just with fire. The West Virginia artist takes moistened cotton-rag paper and roasts it over hot embers, yielding subtle tan-and-brown patterns, except where he’s covered the surface with blobs of starch. Those areas, when the paste is removed, glow with intense whiteness. The process produced some of the most distinctive work in “Burning Brighter,” Kephart’s latest Zenith Gallery show.

Although the finished works sometimes evoke the swirling heat that sparked them, surrealistic landscapes are the most frequent result. Burnt paper represents earth, with watercolor hues added for sky and vegetation. This selection includes some dynamic paintings in which the scorches are augmented by blue only, whether to suggest a rush of water across a volcanic landscape or to underscore the charred swoops and star-bright highlights. These pictures heighten the effect without masking the violence of Kephart’s process.

Burning Brighter: The Fascinating Firepaintings of Peter Kephart On view through June 25 at Zenith Gallery, 1429 Iris St. NW. 202-783-2963. zenithgallery.com.