

Stasnick, Stephanie. "Frank Thiel," *ARTnews*, April 2014.

## reviews: new york

### Frank Thiel

**Sean Kelly**

In his commanding large-scale photographs of glacial formations in Argentine Patagonia, German artist Frank Thiel portrays a natural world that is at once alluring and ominous. Titled "Nowhere is a Place," after a book on Patagonia written by Bruce Chatwin and Paul Theroux, this show demonstrated the grandeur of these natural sites.

Thiel expressed an inclination toward one glacier in particular, Perito Moreno in Los Glaciares National Park. Part of the Southern Patagonian Ice Field—the world's third-largest ice cap—it was featured in eight works here.

Depicted from various vantage points, the glacier appeared to take on different characteristics and capabilities. *Perito Moreno #16* and *#18* (all works 2012/2013), for example, present the site as an architectural structure. Cracks in the top of the glacier form spire-like points, and the flat facade furthers its resemblance to a Gothic cathedral. But in *Perito Moreno #04*, an aerial shot, the height of the formation is diminished and the site is reminiscent of a sweeping cornfield. Level and expansive, the ice—in spite of its color—looks as if it has sprouted from the ground and is ready for harvest.

Only after encountering Thiel's nearly 30-foot-long opus to the glacier, *Perito Moreno #01*, did the true magnitude of this sprawling site become apparent. In the five-panel chromogenic print, the artist presents a towering image of the formation that consumes the viewer

with its grace and strength. But what was truly striking about this image wasn't what Thiel's lens was able to capture, but rather what it was not. Perito Moreno appears to continue far beyond the edges of the frames. The craggy, blue-and-gray wall is overwhelming, but it is merely the tip of the iceberg.

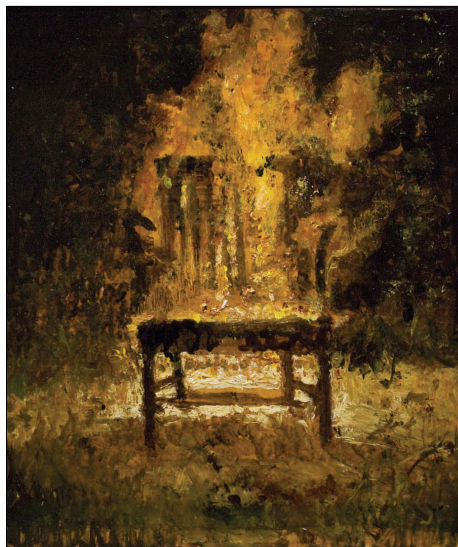
—Stephanie Strasnick

### Vincent Desiderio

**Marlborough**

Vincent Desiderio chooses subjects ranging from erotic Indian temple sculptures to film noir and paints them all in a lush and sensuous manner. With many of the 16 works in this show measuring as high as five feet and as long as 12 feet, viewers were introduced to visionary panoramas. Desiderio usually employs a palette of browns, golds, and grays, with the occasional introduction of brighter hues that come as a surprise and endow details of the paintings with subtle emphasis.

A brilliant draftsman, Desiderio imbues his figures and scenes with a sense of movement and fluidity. The alarming *Study for Exodus: Burning Chair* (2013) shows a fragile and disintegrating wooden chair surrounded by a golden halo of fire. In the absence of any context, this image conveys a profound feeling of loss and



Vincent Desiderio, *Study for Exodus: Burning Chair*, 2013, oil on paper, 16" x 13½". Marlborough.

fear. However, the study was actually in preparation for the artist's *Exodus* (2013), in which the chair is positioned in the middle of what could be a triptych, with on one side, an ominous spiral staircase, and on the other, the smooth face of man looking out from behind glasses. Each image raises questions: Is the exodus of the title referring to Nazi Germany? Has the man in the picture ascended the stairs? And why? They're all inconclusive and provocative, illustrating the artist's ability to imply narratives.

Far simpler but equally haunting was *Hitchcock's Hands* (2012), in which disembodied grayish hands hold a small jewel

box displaying a glass eye—the disconcertingly defined surreal object contrasts sharply with the mottled, almost ghostly hands. Is this Hitchcock's all-seeing eye?

In *Mourning and Fecundity II* (2011), four men wearing large overcoats and wide-brimmed hats stand in a bleak woodland. One has a shovel behind his back, and all are looking down at the ground. It seems like a burial event, but there is no sign of a body. Perhaps, as the title suggests, the consolation for those in mourning is nature's fecundity.

—Valerie Gladstone



Frank Thiel, *Perito Moreno #16*, 2012/2013, framed chromogenic print face mounted to Plexiglas, 64½" x 119½" x 2½". Sean Kelly.

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