

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Contact:

Nataliya Kotlova
+ 312 404 9188
nataliya@andrewrafacz.com
www.andrewrafacz.com

ANDREW RAFACZ is pleased to announce *Lake of Fire*, an exhibition of new paintings by John Knuth in Gallery One.

Chicago, IL, September 15, 2017 – ANDREW RAFACZ opens the Fall 2017 season with *Lake of Fire*, a solo exhibition of paintings by John Knuth. The exhibition continues through Saturday, October 28, 2017. Featuring thermal blankets that have been violently cut and burned, this new body of work continues Knuth's engagement with the changing landscape of the American West.

Well the west is the future, it's bright and metallic
Well the west is a fever, it's hot and hypnotic
And the west is a promise
And the west is a new land
And the west is an old lie
And the west is a bad man

- *Atomic Pilgrim*, Darren Jackson aka Kid Dakota

Over the past few years, John Knuth has pushed abstract painting and its possible modes of production forward by creating vibrant works with the use of unconventional materials. For a previous series, Knuth raised hundreds of thousands of insects, limiting their diet to acrylic paint and sugar water, and directed them to deposit the detritus of their digested, pigmented food onto prepared canvases. The compositions of these paintings, often inspired by the landscape in and around his home base of Los Angeles, suggest the light and atmosphere of Southern California.

With his newest series of paintings debuting in this exhibition, the artist has returned to his interest in emergency preparedness supplies and his own performative acts. The *Lake of Fire* paintings are made by grommeting many layers of thermal blankets together. Knuth then cuts the top layer into a jagged mountain or landscape shape, continuing until he reaches the last layer. He then takes a flare to the surface and melts thousands of little holes in the thermal blanket creating a delicate burn pattern that reveals the layers of its construction. A silver layer reveals a red layer, all the way down to the supporting canvas below.

Although these experimental works often fit into the context of contemporary landscape painting and challenge the limits of abstraction, Knuth is at his core a conceptual artist, concerned with the elemental forces and possibilities of nature, chance, destruction, and how the human creative process can interact with them. In the past he has used emergency flares and thermal blankets in performances that often take place in extremely remote locations. He is fascinated by the human desire to insinuate oneself in extreme places and situations, eschewing safety concerns or comfort for a more elemental survival-based existence.

Knuth's multi-layered practice recalls post war painters such as Gustav Metzger, who used acid on nylon to explore the liberating potentiality of the picture plane, and Yves Klein, whose Zen inspired Fire Paintings from

the early 1960s strived to achieve purification in art. It also finds a connection to the work of Alberto Burri and Lucio Fontana who damaged, burned, and lacerated the surface of their canvases to express their sentiments about a world ravaged by war. Knuth's work, while residing within a different time period and art historical context, is grounded in a similar desire to harness destruction as a creative tool and explore how materials have the potential to transcend their purpose.

JOHN KNUTH (American, b. 1978) received an MFA from the University of Southern California and a BFA from the University of Minnesota. He has had recent solo exhibitions at Marie Kirkegaard Gallery (Copenhagen, Denmark), Brand New Gallery (Milan, Italy), David B. Smith Gallery (Denver, CO), Human Resources (Los Angeles, CA), Andrew Rafacz Gallery (Chicago, IL), and The Armory Center for the Arts (Los Angeles, CA). Recent group exhibitions include ACME Gallery (Los Angeles, CA); Steve Turner Gallery (Los Angeles, CA); Hollis Tagart Gallery (New York, NY); The Under Ground Museum (Los Angeles, CA) and the University of Buffalo Museum (Buffalo, NY). Knuth has been featured in many publications including Artillery Magazine, ArtandCake.com, Art Review, The LA Weekly, MAKE Magazine, Hyperallergic and Flash Art. He is included in numerous private and public collections.