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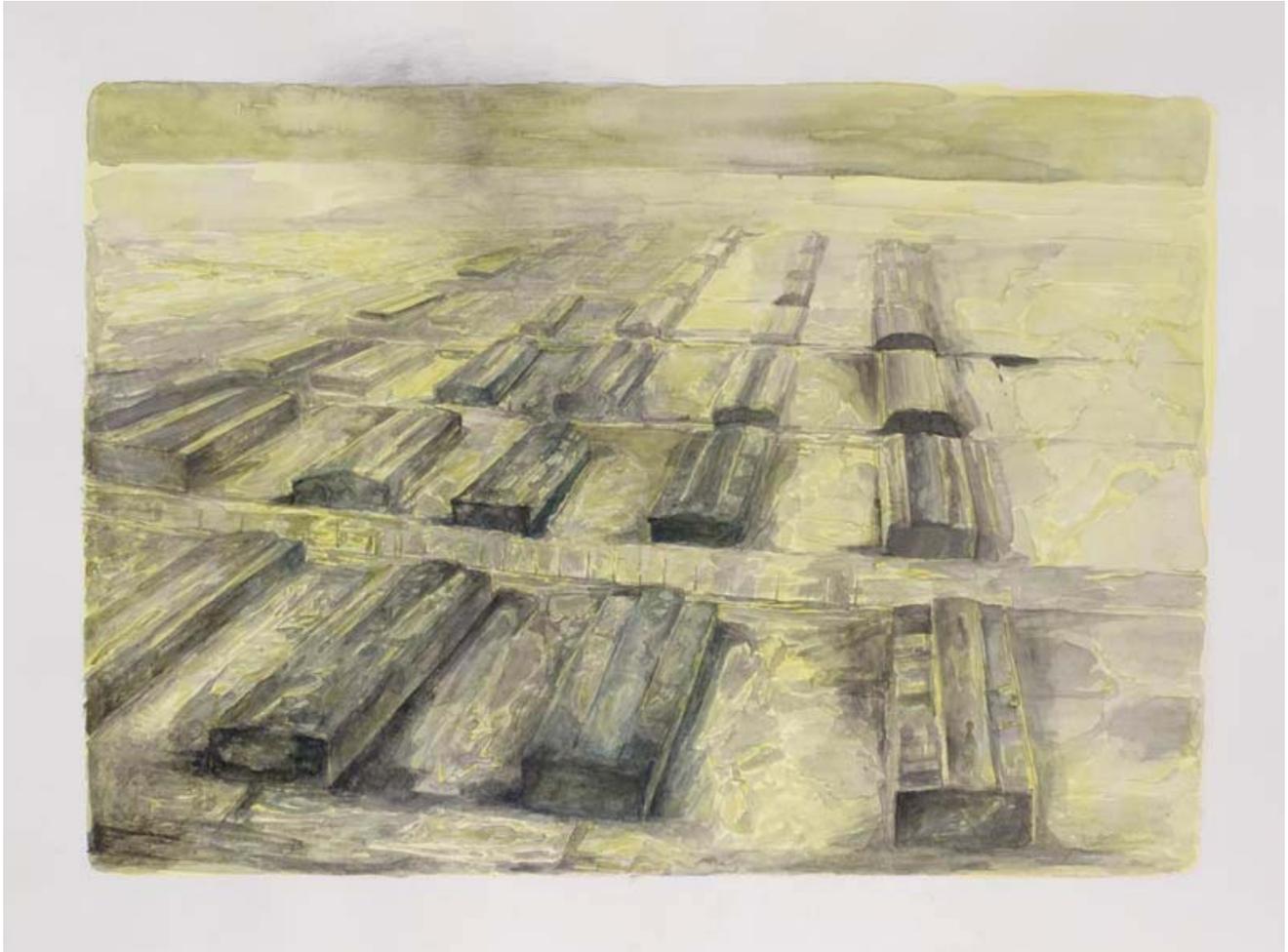
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Misha Kligman, *The Camp*, 2010, watercolor and lead on paper, 21"x25" (framed).

## A Paean to Family History and a Serious Exercise in Ancestor Worship



Misha Kligman, *Untitled*, 2010, oil, wax on linen, 12"x16".



Misha Kligman, *Branches and Traces*, 2010, oil, wax, charcoal, shellac on canvas.

Kansas City Artists Coalition, Charno Gallery  
 201 Wyandotte Street  
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 Kansas City  
**Misha Kligman**  
*The Scent of Time*  
 December 10, 2010-January 15, 2011

By BLAIR SCHULMAN

New work by Misha Kligman at Kansas City Artists Coalition shows us the weariness of a world where the past is always following you. Paintings and drawings of muted or obscured figures take us into a negative space (*Untitled*, 2010, oil, wax on linen; *Unknown*, 2010, diptych, oil, wax on panel), allowing viewers to avoid confrontation with the subject matter. It seems easier to absorb Kligman's take on displacement and genocide when you cannot meet the terror in their eyes.

His use of exhausting colors adds to the ennui. Watery reds, jaundiced yellows and lead graphite give off a sulphuric stench that never seems to dissipate. It is permanent, deep in the marrow of these works. They relay a feeling of nostalgia, but not for a happier time, as in the American vernacular, but rather the feeling of never being able to return to a certain place.

*Absence* 2010, oil, wax, charcoal, shellac on canvas, depicts a lush Bavarian countryside. There is history attached to this view of rolling greenery; a place where Kligman's ancestors once dwelled and never will again. An outlined formation of stones dead center serves as a reminder that such a group was ever there at all and are prevented from returning. A scripted message below the stones, however, is an unnecessary layer of journal-expressionism that detracts from the silence of the landscape.

Kligman's work deals primarily with home, cultural belonging and the Soviet Jewish diaspora without any mythologizing. He is earnest in wanting us to understand and examine these feelings. Born in Kazan, Soviet Union, Kligman and family immigrated to Cleveland, Ohio in 1995. He received his BA in Art from Cleveland State in 2001 and in 2009, an MFA in Painting and Drawing from the University of Kansas, Lawrence. The trajectory of this exodus leaves behind an essence of history tinged with personal remorse.

Using photographs pooled from the internet, the impetus of his subjects can be traced back to a definitive anti-Semitic POV. *The Camp* (2010, watercolor and lead on paper) is one example. Staring at an overhead view of a concentration camp barracks, you sense the photographer was utterly clinical in recording the original image. However, this disconnect does not absolve anyone. Long after any conflict it seems, people living close to the carnage but not a part of it eventually admits, "Everyone knew."

*Branches and Trees* (2010, oil, wax, charcoal, shellac on canvas) shows a monument of Stalin, covering things up, juxtaposing nostalgia with horror. Against a dark background, white branches appear ethereal. Skulls from Khmer Rouge, the Pol Pot Holocaust, are shown. Drinking glasses throughout the piece display another layer of historic referencing that is handed down through generations. This is what occurs in Kligman's own family and lends familiarity to *Reflection* (2010, glasses, mirror, graphite, wood). A table holding old wine and champagne glasses darkened by graphite that leave traces of dust on the fingers when handled. The graphite both hides and highlights the surface creating a richness that, says Kligman, opens a world of conceptual possibilities.

A series of memory-based drawings (*The Presence*, 2010, charcoal and graphite on paper) take bits and pieces of imagery from his source material. Kligman tests himself on what images can invoke without looking at a reference. Stone walls, glassware and figures are quick snippets that are prologue, or epitaph, to the paintings.

Charno Gallery's surgical brightness does not lend itself to the somber tones of Kligman's work. Dimmer wattage would have gone a long way in supporting his historic intentions as more pragmatic antecedents. Like visiting the attic of a long-dead relative with whom you have a definite, but tenuous, connection, the memories still hold a place in our lives, but one eye is also on the front door.



Misha Kligman, *Absence*, 2010, oil, wax, charcoal, shellac on canvas.



Misha Kligman, *Reflection*, 2010, glasses, mirror, graphite, wood.



Misha Kligman, *Unknown* (diptych), 2010, oil, wax on panel, 6"x12".