



Eric LoPresti: **Different Country**
April 8 – May 8, 2011

The atom bomb represents the ultimate success of theoretical science, one that catapulted it from being about unknown chemists laboring in obscure laboratories to constituting the measure of global domination. But it also marks the ultimate moral failure of science, as many of the bomb's inventors themselves acknowledged. And the fact that my own family history is tied up with that story—that I grew up in its shadow and that my dad, and my friends' dads, did work they weren't allowed to talk about—speaks to a dark center that I still find fascinating. - Eric LoPresti

The American landscape that Eric LoPresti depicts in his new paintings and drawings is, despite the soft hues with which he often inflects it, one that consistently reflects this “dark center.” Maintaining his established focus on the physical and psychological aftermath of the Cold War, LoPresti renders landscapes bearing the scars of nuclear testing and subsequent environmental clean-up campaigns, especially those near where he grew up, in the desert steppe of eastern Washington state, near the Hanford plutonium production site. With nods to both Ed Ruscha's take on the pop-inflected vista of the West Coast and Gerhard Richter's mastery of historically burdened European equivalents, “Different Country,” LoPresti's third solo show at Like the Spice Gallery, achieves a kind of “desert noir.”

LoPresti juxtaposes his landscapes with spectral color gradients and dark linear elements, pitting his ongoing investigation into a specific technological, cultural, and geopolitical narrative with an enquiry into the nature of perception itself. He often starts with a softly gradated color field – a signifier of subjectivity, a “wild card” seen differently by every viewer. After overlaying landscape imagery based upon photographs he makes from chartered planes, LoPresti imposes onto each view precise black lines, suggesting a systematic, perhaps even violent division of territory. The lines hint at annotated military satellite imagery and formally echo the vector graphics of early 1980s-era video games. The result is a sophisticated commentary on the human manipulation of nature, that also reflects our ability to understand an image as at once highly codified and open to divergent interpretations.

The title of this show is based upon a quote by Robert Oppenheimer: “*The atomic bomb made the prospect of future war unendurable. It has led us up those last few steps to the mountain pass; and beyond there is a different country.*” (1946)

Eric LoPresti (b. 1971, Denver) moved to New York in 2002 and currently lives and works in Brooklyn. His recent exhibitions include “Afterglow” (Washington State University, 2010), “Fade” (Like the Spice Gallery, 2009), “Test Sites” (New York Public Library, 2008), and “New Thought New Work” (Miami University, 2006). A winner of the Faber Birren Foundation Award and the Miami Young Painters Award, his work has received mentions in, among other publications, *Art in America*, *Artforum.com*, *NY Arts*, and the *Village Voice*. LoPresti holds a BA in Cognitive Science from the University of Rochester and an MFA from the Maryland Institute College of Art