

Murray Zimiles

STUART LEVY

It could be said that the Holocaust is too facile a subject for art, that it is inherently powerful, and that almost any artwork dealing with it will trigger the emotions. But people have a way of forgetting and sometimes need images to remind them of the past.

The fear that the Holocaust will fade into time like so many other human atrocities is the driving force behind Murray Zimiles' strong, memorable show, "The Fire Paintings/The Book of Fire," which painstakingly documents a small part of the Nazi destruction—the immolation of Poland's wooden synagogues. Spurred by the reunification of Germany, the show combined lithographs, woodcuts, and eyewitness testimonies in a large tome that stretched accordion-style across the gallery's back wall. A separate room housed the mixed-media-on-aluminum paintings, which echo in striking color the predominantly black-and-white lithographs of "The Book."

Zimiles' expressionistic style conveys the ferocity of his subject matter. The artist favors richly saturated color, using slashing, brutal brushstrokes in vibrant oranges, reds, yellows, and blues that, in their brilliance, signify helpless rage and defeat. His most

emotionally charged works, however, depict private moments of anguish: lone figures set against great, burning pyres. In *Olkienniki*, a synagogue, black against a midnight sky, belches flames from twin windows while a Baconesque figure flees the scene. And in *Grodnow*, one of the most representative, telling images in the show, a solitary, skeletal man, head thrown back, his arms opened wide, fiercely questions the destruction behind him.

—Norine Dworkin



Murray Zimiles, *Untitled* ("The Fire Paintings/The Book of Fire"), 1991, lithograph and woodcut, 50 by 30 inches. Stuart Levy.