

# UPSTATE DIARY



*Voice of Silence 305* (2024) photograph; Courtesy Private Public Gallery.

## **Susan Wides: Voice of Silence. Private Public Gallery, Hudson NY through November 10**

In this luminous exhibition, photo artist Susan Wides offers a meditation on nature, with colorful, ethereal, abstracted images of streams, waterfalls, and other waterways, around her home near Catskill, New York. The show's title *Voice of Silence* suggests a personal and hushed veneration of the natural environment; it also alludes to *Silent Spring*, the landmark 1962 environmental science book by Rachel Carson that spearheaded many subsequent conservation efforts. In her hyper-estheticized view of nature, Wides offers a gentle but urgent plea for close observation of natural surroundings and for the preservation efforts specific to the mid-Hudson Valley. On view are seventeen large and medium-sized photos, up to 45 by 30 inches, produced over the past four years. Wides is known for her photo works made with a 4 by 5 View camera, in which spatial relationships are enhanced or distorted by subtly manipulating the lens. The recent photos were created with a standard digital camera with which she achieves similarly dramatic effects using a single exposure and no further computer manipulation.

Some of the photos appear completely abstract, and all of them have a painterly feel. *Voice of Silence 9896* (2023), for instance, shows the close-up view of a splash of water, whose crystalline droplets shimmer against a blazing backdrop of red, orange, and chartreuse, presumably that of autumnal foliage. The work has the gestural aplomb of an Abstract Expressionist composition as well as the immersive feel of a Color Field painting. One of the rare horizontal works, *Voice of Silence 0305* (2024), has the panoramic look of a landscape by a Hudson River School painter such as Thomas Cole, who has been an inspiration for Wides. In this photo, a silvery splash of water traverses a vibrant green and white background evocative of a verdant meadow in spring. In this piece, and throughout the show, Wides offers the viewer an immersive experience of color and light. In a darkened rear gallery, the Wides debuts *Voice of Silence*, a mesmerizing video with gradually dissolving images that closely correspond to the photos. Shown on a single monitor, the works is a study for a planned multichannel video projection in which the viewer would indeed be completely immersed in the light and colors of nature.

— David Ebony, October 2, 2024