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GAGOSIAN GALLERY

whitewall
CONTEMPORARY ART AND LIFESTYLE MAGAZINE

Karin Kneffel

By Katy Donogue



KARIN KNEFFEL *Untitled*, 2011 Oil on canvas, 70 3/4 x 118 1/4 inches , (179.7 x 300.4 cm) KNEFF 2011.0008

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Karin Kneffel's first solo show with Gagosian is currently on view at the gallery's 980 Madison Avenue location in New York. Recently, the artist took the time to answer a few of our questions about the paintings that make up the exhibition and about what drives her forward. The show is open through October 20, 2012.

WHITEWALL: What was the starting point for this exhibition?

KARIN KNEFFEL: The starting point was the invitation of Gagosian Gallery two years ago to make a show at the Madison Avenue galleries, based on my recent work.

WW: The show was inspired by Haus Lange and Haus Esters designed by Ludwig Mies van der Rohe. What about these two spaces intrigued you?

KK: I have always been interested in architecture, but when I was invited to make an exhibition in Haus Esters in 2009, I decided to devise a series of paintings that in some way connected with the actual exhibition site. I conceived it as an intervention by painterly means to consider the history of the house, its architect, and its owner.

I searched for archival photos of the original interior in the 1930s and 40s before it became a museum, so that I could blend past and present, reality and fiction.

WW: By painting raindrops and rivulets over the scene, you create a feeling of looking inside the spaces from the outside. There's a bit of voyeurism. Is that intentional?

KK: Looking at my works, the viewer takes on the role of voyeur, which in turn influences the way that the whole scenario is viewed. Seemingly, he or she is looking into the house through a pane of glass. This becomes more dramatic when looking through the raindrops that repeatedly merge into rivulets on the glass. The viewer is placed outside in a sometimes dark, rain-lashed environment, which sharpens the noir-ish, voyeuristic edge.

WW: Raindrops and rivulets imply recent rain - is that for any other reason than to create a reflection of the exterior spaces?

KK: The reflections on the glass panes and the reflecting raindrops and rivulets, combined with the shadowy interiors, set up bewildering spatial relations. And even if we are inclined to see the furnishings and its accessories just as they appear, ignoring the raindrops, on a visual level all of the objects in the painting come together to give an overall impression. In some paintings the drops have a particular compactness and a rich golden, yellow hue; they seem to be floating in space, reflecting the houses of the setting.

On the other hand, it was very helpful for me to use these colorful intonations, because the archival photographs that I used were black-and-white shots. Thus I found a way to "dip" everything into color.



KARIN KNEFFEL *Untitled*, 2012 Oil on canvas, 31 1/2 x 35 1/2 inches , (80.0 x 90.2 cm) KNEFF 2012.0004

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WW: I read that the Seagram building in New York that you visited last year inspired another aspect of the exhibition. What interested you in this space?

KK: When I started to paint for this exhibition in New York, I was still engaged in Mies van der Rohe's Haus Lange and I so searched for a connecting factor to New York. Mies also designed the Seagram building - a paradigm of modern architecture. It is also the same age as me! When I

visited, I was only allowed access to The Four Seasons restaurant. So I spent several hours there to quietly absorb the atmosphere and learn something about the building.

WW: Was there a work in the exhibition that was particularly challenging for you to create?

KK: Every blank canvas and every finished painting is a challenge for me!

WW: Is there a work that you keep going back to?

KK: Never just one work. My paintings need a lot of time and, usually, each theme develops from the paintings that came before and which are around me. That is to say it is a long process: from painting, to thinking, to dialogue with the painting, to taking potluck with the painting, and to seeing what will happen. My interest in making art is to produce a sense of doubt, something I have not yet really grasped. That is what drives me forward.