Scape

Carla Klein MATRIX 218

Carla Klein traveled to a very particular location in the United States in order to make a series of paintings. She was drawn to the Great Salt Lake Desert in Utah, as she had seen photographs of it and thought they resembled paintings she had created in Finland of the landscape there. While driving around the Great Salt Lake Desert Klein used her camera to experience Utah. The physical mode of vision inherent in photography allows and promotes distance. And it is from a distance that things often come into focus. Klein paints directly from her photographs. She says the photographs from which she paints possess an indelible “special quality.” She prints her own photographs in the darkroom and changes the colors while processing.

Sasnal, like Klein, edits out much of an image in the creation of his paintings. He concentrates on formal elements and eliminates all of the discordant surroundings. Dog paints from postcards, newspapers, and popular films as well as from his personal photographs. He explains, “I use the photo like a map, but it is not a tracing, just a way of giving a fuse into a kind of reality that I want.” Similarly, Klein states, “I use photographs and you should be aware that in the painting the photograph is not an abstraction or a representation of reality but a picture with a reality of its own that I can put to my own use, can manipulate… Reality, very much depends on your point of view.”

Photographs are also, like painting, memory devices that serve as a base for memory. Klein is intentionally nonchalant about her photographs and paints all of the errors that arise in them. Fingernails, hairs, and spatters of water. The horizontal band of white often found on the base of her paintings emulates the photographic paper. This band serves as a base for the image and also provides an abstract element. Within these conscious choices the artist highlights the essence of her practice: when looking at a Klein painting, one perceives the duality Klein successfully achieves. The viewer is seduced, and ultimately consumed by her juxtaposition of a handmade machine—which she activates partially by using masking tape to create rigidly straight lines—and the painterly repetitions that reveal the artist's hand.

Klein's compositions are often sparse, contain deep perspective, and possess a single architectural element or series of abstracted forms. She possesses a single architectural element or series of abstracted forms. She is drawn to the abstraction that is in locating within a landscape, and is intrigued by the way the same scene can be simultaneously flat and deep. For instance, Klein has painted several images of tunnels. The way in which they allude to an entrance, yet keep one in, creates an emotional resonance. Klein paints oil on canvas and limits her palette primarily to black, white, and blue. She occasionally uses green and yellow for smaller pictorial elements. Her colors and process relate to the gray paintings of Gerhard Richter, who moves abstractly between varied painting styles and photography, and is masterful at one as well as the next. Klein cites Richter, along with Jan Vermeer, the Dutch master of light and intimacy, site-specific environmental artist Walter de Maria, and color field painter Barnett Newman as influences. All of Klein's paintings are unidentifiable. They are nameless, they are unidentifiable and consequently unknowable, or at the other extreme, that they are universal or ubiquitous, not requiring a name. Their generally large scale, which fills the viewer's peripheral vision; artificial color scheme; and lack of titles imply the former, suggesting they have no names because none are available.

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Carla Klein was born in Zwolle, The Netherlands, in 1970. She graduated from the Academie pendende Kunsten, De Pijp, and attended the Academie voor Beeldende Kunsten, Amsterdam, from 1990 to 1995. She currently lives and works in Rotterdam, The Netherlands.

Selected Solo Exhibitions

2002 Victoria Miro Gallery, London

"Art/Huis," The Kunstpaviljon at Nieuw Roden, Denmark

2001 Armory Fair, Bonakdar Jancou Gallery, New York

"Painting as Paradox," Artist's Space, New York

2000 Buro Empty, Amsterdam

"Artists from the Past Ten Years at the Rijksakademie van Beeldende Kunsten, Amsterdam," 2002

2004 "Delay," Museum Boijmans van Beuningen, Rotterdam

2005 "Vanishing Point," Wexner Center for the Arts, Columbus, Ohio

2006 "Radar: Selections from the Logan Collection," Denver Art Museum, Denver, Colorado

Selected Group Exhibitions

1996 Exposorium, Vrije Universiteit, Amsterdam

1998 Buro Empty, Amsterdam

2000 Bonakdar Jancou Gallery, New York

2001 Tanya Bonakdar Gallery, New York

2002 Annet Gelink Gallery, Amsterdam

2003 Tanya Bonakdar Gallery, New York

From 1994 to 1995. She currently lives and works in Rotterdam, The Netherlands.

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