



Carla Klein/MATRIX 218

Scape

September 18 – November 6, 2005
**University of California
Berkeley Art Museum**

MATRIX

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Earlier this year, 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 indescribable “special quality.” She prints her own photographs in the darkroom and changes the colors while processing in order to produce the desired image. Klein is one of an impressive group of contemporary artists, including Peter Doig and Wilhelm Sasnal, who employ photographs as the source material and basis of their paintings. Sasnal, like Klein, edits out much of an image in the creation of his paintings. He concentrates on formal elements and removes all of the discordant surroundings. Doig 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 me a foot into a kind of reality that I want.”¹ Similarly, Klein states, “I use photographs and you should feel that in the painting. The photograph is not a reliable 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.”² Photographs are also, like painting, a means by which to secure memory.

Klein is intentionally nonchalant about her photographs and paints all of the errors that arise in them: fingerprints, hairs, and splashes of water. The horizontal band of white often found at 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 astonished by her juxtaposition of a harsh realism—which she achieves partially by using masking tape to create rigidly straight lines—and the painterly sloppiness that reveals the artist’s hand.

Klein’s compositions are often spare, contain deep perspective, and possess a single architectural element or series of abstracted forms. She paints natural and manmade landscapes: airports, swimming pools, and mundane environments that are “inhabited on a transitory, rather than on a permanent basis. . . . spaces that provide a prolonged experience.”³ For her MATRIX show, Klein began a new body of work that concentrates on the natural environment. These landscapes, like her earlier works, lack any human presence. Because of this absence, the interiors convey an implied loneliness and the exteriors embody the perceived freedom of open spaces.

Untitled, 2005; oil on canvas; 71 x 157 1/2 in.; purchase made possible through a gift from Therese Bonney.



Klein is intrigued with the notion of bending reality, and with her work questions how far something can be stretched and still appear as a representation of the real and recognizable. At times, upon close inspection, the image seems to disintegrate. Klein has said that she used to be concerned with shooting images small and then blowing them up to life size. She realized, however, that we do not fully understand the scale of nature, such as the size of the Great Salt Lake Desert. She is drawn to the abstraction that is located within a landscape, and is intrigued by the way the same site can be simultaneously flat and deep. For instance, Klein has painted several images of tunnels. The way in which they allude to an entry barrier, yet compel one to enter, creates an emotional resonance.

Klein paints in oil and enamel, 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 adroitly between varied painting styles and photography and is as masterful at one as at 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 untitled. One could infer that because 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.

I have recently relocated to an isolated environment of sublime and pristine beauty, and I can attest to the powerful allure of nature. The feelings of incomprehensibility and true awe are not fully accessible while living in an

Untitled, 2005 (studio shot); oil on canvas; 71 x 157 1/2 in.; courtesy the artist and Tanya Bonakdar Gallery



urban environment. When individuals travel, they often take countless photographs of natural icons: waterfalls, mountains, salt flats. Their intention is to forever embed these peaceful and inspiring images as counterparts to the mundane and often harsh ones that replace the idyllic upon returning home.

Few people want to sit through others’ vacation slideshows, home movies, PowerPoint presentations, and other photographic memories, because most of us know that “you just had to be there.” Klein’s great skill is in translating this type of everyday image into a painting. She paints the same or similar scenes over and over again. The details of places become more accessible and apparent as she continually examines their subtle differences. Much like the life of the character Phil Connors, the weatherman played by Bill Murray in the film *Groundhog Day*, some or all things must be done repeatedly until they are perfected. Klein paints and paints and we look and look. It is within this process of looking that we can learn to see.

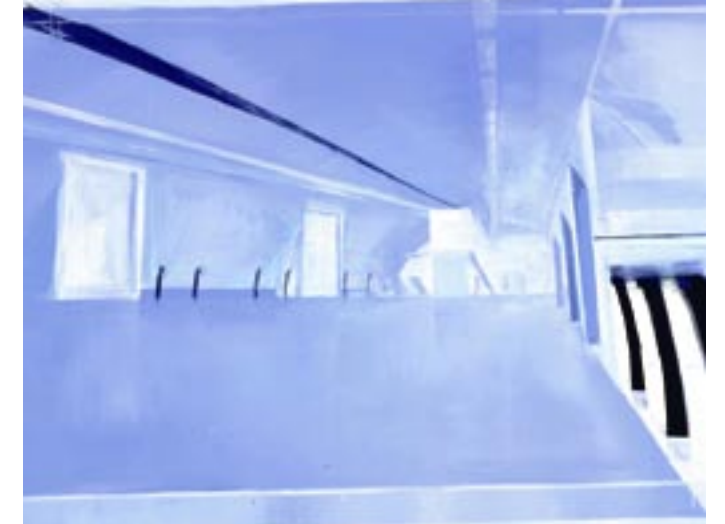
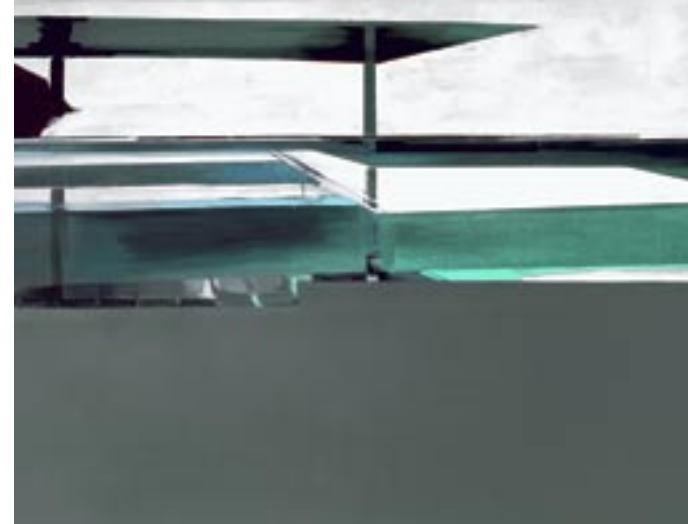
Heidi Zuckerman Jacobson
Former Phyllis Wattis MATRIX Curator
Director and Chief Curator, Aspen Art Museum

¹ Adrian Searle, “I’ve Never Been Canoeing on a Toxic Swamp [A Conversation with Peter Doig],” *Blotter* (Berlin and London: Contemporary Fine Arts and Victoria Miro, 1995), 10.

² Patricia Van der Lugt and Karin Baars, “Carla Klein and Charlotte Schleiffert,” *Attitude* 3, 1998, 7–11.

³ Micaela Giovannotti, “Carla Klein,” *Tema Celeste: Contemporary Art*, October–December 2000, 86.

Untitled (detail), 2005; oil on canvas; 71 x 157 1/2 in.; courtesy the artist and Tanya Bonakdar Gallery.



Carla Klein was born in Zwolle, The Netherlands, in 1970. She graduated from Koninklijke Academie Beeldende Kunsten, The Hague, and attended Rijksakademie voor Beeldende Kunsten, Amsterdam, from 1994 to 1995. She currently lives and works in Rotterdam, The Netherlands.

Selected Solo Exhibitions

2003
Tanya Bonakdar Gallery, New York

2002
Annet Gelink Gallery, Amsterdam

2001
Tanya Bonakdar Gallery, New York

2000
Bonakdar Jancou Gallery, New York

1998
Buro Empty, Amsterdam

1996
Expororium, Vrije Universiteit, Amsterdam

Selected Group Exhibitions

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

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

2004
"Delay," Museum Boijmans van Beuningen, Rotterdam

2002
"Artists from the Past Ten Years at the Rijksakademie van Beeldende Kunsten, Amsterdam," Victoria Miro Gallery, London

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

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

2001
Armory Fair, Bonakdar Jancou Gallery, New York

"Far from Us," Annet Gelink Gallery, Amsterdam

Untitled (detail), 2001; oil and enamel on canvas; diptych, 88 x 59 in. each, total 88 x 128 in. (framed); private collection.

2000
Armory Fair, Bonakdar Jancou Gallery, New York

Mirrors, The foundry, London

Mirrors, Het Archief, The Hague

1999
"TroubleSpot.Painting," MUHKA, Antwerp

"Groupexhibition," Zeno X, Antwerp

"Selected Paintings, Sculpture, and Works on Paper," Bonakdar Jancou Gallery, New York

1998
"Vous etes ici," project with Jurriaan Molenaar and others, KunstRAI, Amsterdam

"Attitudes 3," Stadsgalerij Heerlen, Heerlen, The Netherlands

1997
"Green Easter," Museum Dhont-Dhaenens, Deurle, Belgium

"Reviting," Wolfram Bach Gallery, Dusseldorf

"Paswoord: worden," W139, Amsterdam

"Fetishimage," Witte de With Center for Contemporary Art, Rotterdam

Buro Empty, Amsterdam

"Kunstenars van het laatste uur," Artoteek, The Hague

1996
Collectie Océ-van der Grinten, Bonnefanten Museum, Maastricht, The Netherlands

Van Ouborg tot Akkerman, Stadscollectie, Gemeentemuseum, The Hague

"Groene pasen," Museum Dhont-Dhaenens, Deurle, Belgium

1995
"Painters Opinion," Bloom Gallery, Amsterdam

"Kunst ist Luxus," Luxus, The Hague

Koninklijke Subsidie, Paleis op de Dam, Amsterdam

Open Ateliers, Rijksakademie, Amsterdam

1994
Open Ateliers, Rijksakademie, Amsterdam

Untitled (detail), 2003; oil on canvas; 67 x 118 1/4 in.; collection of Chris Vroom and Illya Szilak.

Selected Bibliography

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Giovannotti, Micaela. "Carla Klein." *Tema Celeste: Contemporary Art*, October–December 2000, 86.

Henry, Max. "Carla Klein at Tanya Bonakdar." *Art In America*, June 2002, 124–25.

Johnson, Ken. "Carla Klein." *The New York Times*, July 7, 2000.

Kerr, Merrily. "Painting as Paradox." *Flash Art*, January–February 2003, 107.

Peters, Philip. *Groene Pasen—An Exhibition by Bart Cassiman*. Deurle, Belgium: Museum Dhont-Dhaenens, 1997, 37–47.

Saltz, Jerry. "Painting a la Mode." *The Village Voice*, December 4, 2002, 63.

Schwabsky, Barry. *Vitamin P: New Perspectives in Painting*. London: Phaidon, 2002, Introduction, 176–79.

Schwendener, Martha. "Carla Klein." *Time Out New York*, November 6–13, 2003, 60.

Uslip, Jeffrey. "Carla Klein." *Flash Art*, March–April 2002, 101–102.

Van der Lugt, Patricia, and Karin Baars. "Carla Klein and Charlotte Schleiffert." *Attitude 3*, 1998, 7–11.

"Voice Choices." *Village Voice*, July 11, 2000.

Untitled (detail), 2003; oil on canvas; 71 x 114 1/4 in.; private collection, New York.

Work in MATRIX

Untitled, 2003
Oil on canvas
67 x 118 1/4 inches
Collection of Chris Vroom and Illya Szilak

Untitled, 2004
Oil on canvas
74 3/4 x 118 1/4 inches
Collection of Lenore and Rich Niles

Untitled, 2003
Oil on canvas
71 x 114 1/4 inches
Private Collection, New York

Untitled, 2001
Oil and enamel on canvas, diptych
88 x 59 inches each, 88 x 128 inches (framed)
Private Collection

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Purchase made possible through a gift from
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Untitled, 2004
Oil on canvas
55 1/4 x 118 1/4 inches
Collection of Paul Rickert

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