

Carla Klein

January 7 – February 15, 2018

Tanya Bonakdar Gallery is pleased to announce an exhibition of new paintings by Carla Klein, opening Saturday, January 6th and on view through Thursday, February 15th.

Klein's seventh solo show with the gallery presents a series of expansive works depicting greenhouse interiors throughout Europe. The diverse body of paintings includes cool-toned studies of lush flora, complemented by fiery views of banana leaf trees, and a sleek spaceship-like heater that conjures some otherworldly landscape out of a science fiction novel. Across these canvases, works take the shape of timeless spaces, familiar but foreign, with sweeping perspectives evoking a spectrum of imagined memories from the Jurassic period and post-apocalyptic visions of the future.

The large-scale and panoramic parameters of these works enable a psychophysical entrance into the surreal botanical perspectives. An essence of speed or motion is implied by the compositions' unusually low vantage points and strong diagonal features. The sense of vast depth pushes into indeterminable and unarticulated backgrounds filled with shadows of things or empty space that you want to gain access into, in seeking details beyond the horizon line. These features lead the viewer immediately into Klein's interiors, as if we were passing through the spaces ourselves. Tempering the illusion, the works' abstract surface details bring awareness to the picture plane, reinforcing a barrier with the viewer, simultaneously acknowledging the painting as painting and painting as object.

Klein's compositions are conceived through a negotiation between the artist's first-hand observation and photographic documentations capturing these precise moments. Shooting hundreds snapshots as she moves through spaces, Klein isolates the nuances of moments in a search for the most concrete expression of each observation or experience.

Klein's work explores the relationship between photography and painting and the layers of mediation involved in the creation and interpretation of images. With the fallibility of observation at the fore, Klein's meditation calls into question the very nature of observation. The camera's objective eye warrants a certain kind of truth while painterly renderings become objects far enough removed from their subjects that they take on new and different meanings as the artist exaggerates the inconsistencies between what is really seen and observed.

Irregularities are exacerbated and the misgivings of reproduction exploited as Klein articulates images in the darkroom. Artifacts of development are often kept and enhanced—part of the imaging process that Klein defines as the "abstract consequence" of the photograph. For example, several filters may be applied to part or all of an image to reveal different possibilities in reproduction or missing fragments of an image (consequences from the dark room processing) are later enhanced by drips of paint or swaths of white negative space. In emphasizing the inherent flaws in any representational process, Klein's work offers a compelling and authentic visual experience that pushes the original photographic image towards abstraction while maintaining a very direct relationship to its source.

Enlarged from negative to snapshot, and from snapshot to canvas, multiple paintings are often conceived from the same photograph to unique compositional ends. Klein observes, organizes and breaks apart the logical conclusion of observation in her emotive, interior landscapes to "create a form of painting where contradictions

and oppositions are accommodated and merge into one overall result". The expressiveness of Klein's paintings—and their bearing witness to each aspect of this process—is her mediation of observation, photography and painting as a vehicle to find the most real of expressions that embody a moment.

Objective studies, as captured by the camera, are tempered by painterly strokes that simultaneously evoke clinical perspectives and emotive landscapes. Enhancements may be made in warm or cool tones or light and shadow—all the subtle shifts that can completely change the mood of a composition. These expressive interpretations reinforce the surrender of an authentic reality in a moment of observation. At the precise moment of seeing, thoughts and feelings could differ greatly from one person to the next and distort further upon reflection of an experience. The artist renders multiple canvases from the same photograph to highlight the frustration of a memory or the inability to ever truly express a past moment.

This new body of work bears a strong conceptual affinity to Klein's earliest paintings—human-made vessels that imitate the natural world; vitrines, terrariums, aquariums and swimming pools—all of which represent artificially contained environments.

Fascinated by artificial, inhospitable and dangerous environments and our relationship to them, Klein evokes stirred emotion and a Romantic sense of the sublime in the ethos of these works. An essence of timelessness and the stark absence of the human form are hallmarks of Klein's precise compositions. Edited from their original context, the places depicted collapse time and could be read as contemporary, far-future or situated within a primordial-past. Reiterated by their human-scale and acute vantage points these works negotiate vast but contained interior spaces, as Klein treats the ambitious landscapes with the monumentality of history painting.

Klein continues to isolate the impulse for humans to structure nature and architect ecologies of contained preservation highlighting the irony that, in the wake of ever increasing proficiency and technological advancement, our need to safeguard and preserve natural ecologies becomes more desperate. These greenhouse interiors stir an uncanny sense of wonder, at once reiterating the fragility of life and the formidable power of nature. While the physical presence of the human form is missing, the artifact of human existence is ubiquitous. Perhaps these spaces of botanical preservation serve as pervasive memento mori for the future.

Born in Zwolle, the Netherlands in 1970, Klein currently lives in Rotterdam. She studied at the Royal Academy of Art, The Hague (1988-1993) and later completed a residency at the Rijksakademie, Amsterdam (1994-1995). Recipient of the Prins Bernhard Cultuurfonds Charlotte Köhler Award in 1999, the artist was also shortlisted for Rotterdam's prestigious 2012 Dolf Henkes Award.

Since the mid-1990s, Klein has exhibited her work consistently throughout Europe and the United States. Recent notable exhibitions include a two-person presentation of Carla Klein and Marlene Dumas, Museum voor Modern Realisme, Ruurlo, the Netherlands (2017) and solo presentation at Contemporary Art Museum, St. Louis, Missouri (2015). In 2005, the artist held an important solo exhibition the Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive, CA, followed by a presentation at Jarla Partilager, Stockholm (2007). Her paintings have also been shown in group exhibitions at the Bass Museum of Art in Miami, FL; Wexner Center for the Arts, Columbus, OH; Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen and Witte de With Center for Contemporary Art, Rotterdam; and Denver Art Museum, among others. Klein's work is included in the permanent collections of the Berkeley Art Museum, CA; Miami Art Museum, FL; Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam; Gemeentemuseum, The Hague; and Thermenmuseum, Heerlen, The Netherlands.