



Sarah McKenzie
Transitional

DAVID B SMITH GALLERY

Published by David B. Smith Gallery
on the occasion of the exhibition:

Sarah McKenzie
Transitional
March 14 - April 12, 2014

Photography by:
Sarah McKenzie, Nicole Schwager, Nico Toutenhoofd

Front cover:
Sarah McKenzie
Tunnel (detail), 2013
30 x 30 in. (76.2 x 76.2 cm)

Back cover:
Sarah McKenzie
Well (detail), 2013
30 x 30 in. (76.2 x 76.2 cm)

Catalogue by:
Nicole Schwager

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Printed and bound in the United States
ISBN: 978-0-9857418-6-0

Special thanks to:

Nora Burnett Abrams, Kim Dickey, Kyle MacMillan, Kimberly Shuman Smith, Nico Toutenhoofd

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Kim Dickey is an artist and professor at the University of Colorado Boulder. She has exhibited in Australia, Denmark, Germany, Japan, Korea, Sweden, Taiwan, the United Kingdom, and in the United States at MASS MoCA, Everson Museum of Art, the American Craft Museum (now MAD), and the MCA Denver, among other venues.

In Closing

Kim Dickey

There is a constructed-ness about the urban landscape that we grow so accustomed to that we neglect to observe its boxing effects. I often felt, when I was living in New York City for 13 years during my early career, that I was inside even when I was outdoors. Sarah McKenzie draws our attention to the interiority of the urban, and inhabits the abandoned, or yet to be completed, industrial sites that make up our contemporary cities. She is able to find beauty and order in its seeming chaos, and poetry in its reductive architectural language. Windows, whether dirty, broken or missing, function as entrances to the souls of these spaces, while suggesting a route for our escape. Corners, basements, tents, parking structures are no longer seen in their brutalist utility or obsolescence but revealed to us as metaphysical and archetypal.

McKenzie achieves this through her keenly observed compositions, her rich palette that rewards us with unsuspected gifts of bold color, and through her sensitivity to the changing light of the landscape as captured in moments of twilight, late afternoon, or the brilliant flat light of midday. Additionally, McKenzie constructs these sites with paint, building her surfaces through impasto or glazing techniques to match the tactile sensation of the landscapes she observes. The physical nature of these paintings comes to life before us, and celebrates what great painting can do—locate us in their space, and invite us into these transitional spaces to revel in their close material lushness, and their psychological power.

Painting here and now in Colorado, Sarah McKenzie brings an attention to the way this landscape, long understood in terms of the western panorama, could now be seen in its more recent urban development. In our rush to meet the economic demands of contemporary society—this later day “gold-rush”—we may leave behind the hurried architecture and unfinished project of another vanished boom time.

The philosopher Gaston Bachelard, in his famous text, *The Poetics of Space*, describes the power of images that are burned in our psyches, stating, “A house” (here one could insert any building) “constitutes a body of images that give mankind proofs or illusions of stability.”¹

1. Bachelard, Gaston, *The Poetics of Space* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1964), 17.