

## GAGOSIAN GALLERY

September 7, 2012

### PRESS RELEASE

GAGOSIAN GALLERY  
980 MADISON AVENUE  
5TH FLOOR  
NEW YORK NY 10075  
HOURS:

T. 212.744.2313  
F. 212.772.7962  
Tue–Sat 10:00am–6:00pm



## KARIN KNEFFEL

Wednesday, September 12–Saturday, October 20, 2012

Opening reception for the artist: Wednesday, September 12th, from 6 to 8 pm

*Art is a lie in a certain sense. And that is why it can tell the truth to the reality of everyday life without competing with it. The reality of painting is one reality, the reality of everyday life is another.*

—Karin Kneffel

Gagosian Gallery is pleased to present an exhibition of recent paintings by Karin Kneffel. This is her first exhibition with the gallery.

Kneffel addresses the threshold between interior and exterior, and real and fictive space through a sophisticated play on reflectivity, opacity and transparency. Seaming together heterogeneous spaces and times in a flawlessly executed, seductively realist manner, she paints pictures that are perfectly constructed impossibilities. Although many of her sources actually exist, her image is first and foremost a surface, highlighting painting's simultaneous ability to uphold and destroy illusions.

In these mannered pictorial spaces, Kneffel's superb painting technique moves between materialization and dematerialization. On a quadruple-grounded canvas, she applies up to four layers of oil paint with the finest brush. Like veils, each covers the entire surface. Should she decide to change any element, it has consequences for the entire organization of the image. Her acute handling of rich color, texture, form, and space is resolutely apparent, equal to the visual games and enigmas that pervade Rococo and Mannerist painting, yet firmly rooted, formally and conceptually, within the vernacular information of her own time.

(Continue to page 2)

## GAGOSIAN GALLERY

In 2009, Kneffel presented an exhibition at the Kunstmuseen Krefeld in Germany, which is housed in a pair of significant modernist villas, Haus Lange and Haus Esters, designed by Ludwig Mies van de Rohe. Inspired by the architecture and its histories, Kneffel began an on-going series of paintings that conflate the various phases of the buildings into coherent yet 'slippery' scenes. In several paintings, the original owner's somewhat incongruous, interior furnishings form the background depiction, which is then overlaid with spectral images of lamps and chairs designed by Lilly Reich and Mies that are actually more consistent with the style and ethos of the building. Added to these disjunctive interiors, a third layer of raindrops and rivulets on the plate-glass windows mirrors the external landscape, setting up confounding spatial relations. Thus Kneffel maps the distinction between historical actuality and historical idealism as a glimmering palimpsest of memory. It would seem that not only has she found potent subject matter in the open and dynamic architectural structures of Mies, but also a conceptual equivalent that allows her to work through her own concerns with painting.

In another body of work, prompted by a trip to New York last year, Kneffel meditates on the historic Seagram Building in New York. Again, she renders uncanny the renowned interior, designed by Mies and Philip Johnson. What appears to be a factual reproduction of an actual location is, in fact, a smooth amalgamation of different temporalities and incidents. In some, random drops of water on the surface contain reflections and visual echoes of disparate details that ultimately develop lives of their own, recalling the use of bubbles and droplets as microcosms in seventeenth century *nature morte* painting. In others, words and phrases—some quote Mies himself, others would appear to be Kneffel's own fleeting thoughts—graffitied with a finger in the condensation on the outside of a window become the means through which the eye is permitted partial access to the scene within. A very recent work is a kind of intimate self-portrait, whereby the green vividness of a garden is visible through a cross traced in condensation on a window. We can just picture the moment at which the artist in her studio, perhaps bored, or frustrated, turns toward the window—frosted over on a winter's day from the heat within—and makes a spontaneous mark (of erasure or negation) that, paradoxically, opens the way to a fresh reality.

**Karin Kneffel** was born in Marl, Germany in 1959 and studied at the Staatliche Kunstakademie Düsseldorf between 1981 and 1987. She lives and works in Düsseldorf and is a professor of painting at the Munich Academy of Arts. Kneffel's recent exhibitions include Kunsthalle Tübingen (2010), and Kunstmuseum Krefeld Museum Haus Esters (2009–10).

Image Caption: *Untitled*. © Karin Kneffel. Courtesy Gagosian Gallery.

Press Contacts:

**FITZ & CO**

Meg Blackburn

[meg@fitzandco.com](mailto:meg@fitzandco.com)

212-627-1455 x225

and

Jenny Isakowitz

[jenny@fitzandco.com](mailto:jenny@fitzandco.com)

212-627-1455 x254