



KIKA KARADI



White Challenger, 2004
oil paint and mixed drawing media on canvas
76in x 65in | 193cm x 166cm
Collection of Flash Art Museum,
courtesy of Giancarlo Politi and Helena Kontova



Futile Earth, Clay and Oil, 2006
oil paint and mixed drawing media on canvas
66in x 80in | 168cm x 204cm

NOTES FROM THE FUTILE EARTH

Kika Karadi's recent paintings generate, or require, both a visual and a visceral response. Looking at them as a group, and orienting oneself to their unique spatial qualities, makes for a moment of uncertainty. This series of canvases are open, penetrable, accented with shards of angular forms and luminous gesture. The combination makes for a simultaneous, parallel experience of space and surface. At one moment we are responding to forms that are stacked up or floating in gravitational defiance, then the next we are trying to apprehend the depth of the space we have just entered. Karadi clearly does not accept that there is a contradiction here, thereby calling into question the usual distinctions made between painterly and perceptual space.

Karadi is an experimental alchemist with her materials; various oils, ink, gels, gesso are mixed with the paint, and the effects add a kind of organic distillation to the image. The artist employs stains, thick impasto, scrapped surfaces and stencil-like precision to keep any perspicacious viewer busy, especially one who enjoys the variety of effects that this painter uses with authority. What makes Karadi's work worthy of extended viewing is her willingness to push her paintings beyond any kind of obvious conclusion, as though she hadn't any notion of a solution in mind when she started working. On the contrary, her work requires the viewer to suspend any expectation of closure in her work, because these paintings invariably resist the sense of being "finished" In fact, they appear to be continually in process, on their way to another image or identity through gradual permutations, like phases of the moon.

Futile Earth, Clay and Oil, is the title of one of Karadi's paintings. There is often a distinct sense of place, a location, in Karadi's paintings, but it's a place that is hard to describe. It could be a wooded or icy landscape, an abandoned or devastated building, but more likely a combination of these and other vistas. It often appears that she begins with a landscape image, only to subvert it with expressionist gesture or geometric fragments. The light seems to be both an internal illumination, and reflections from elusive and shifting planes. At least that's what the work suggests, from a certain distance. Just enough distance to get drawn in to their phantasmagorical vortex.

—ROBERT G. EDELMAN, 2007