

A.M. Richard Fine Art • 328 Berry Street, 3rd floor • Brooklyn, NY 11211
Tel: (917) 570 -1476 • Email: gallery@amrichardfineart.com
www.amrichardfineart.com

A conversation with Katie Klencheski– September 2008.



Katie Klencheski is a young artist living in Brooklyn. Her latest group of drawings will be exhibited from September 5th to October 5th at A.M. Richard Fine Art. The title of the show is...And Then The Sky Was Divided.

Katie, why a biblical verse to entitle your most recent work?

KK: "And then the sky was divided" describes the moment before the apocalypse in Revelations. This body of work is concerned mainly with ideas surrounding apocalyptic end times. Western art was for centuries tied (and often required) to depicting Biblical interpretations. I'm reflecting on that tradition but also looking at how contemporary culture interprets and looks at the possibility of a cataclysmic event. Most religions include a description of "end times". I'm interested in the moments that could surround that event and what they might look like. What we would leave behind, who might be spared, how it would come... I'm really interested in people who are fanatical in their beliefs to the point of believing that Rapture could happen at any moment in the near future. I love that the Bible actually spells out certain stages that the world will go through during the apocalypse and that many of the groups who follow that tradition look at contemporary events as signifiers that the end is nigh. Nuclear weapons, world wars, global warming, terrorism - all have been called out as proof. But every generation has this phenomenon, its not unique to this moment. This work just supposes that our contemporaries are the ones who will be correct.




You choose graphite on paper or wood as your primary medium – any particular reason why? What brought you to this decision?

KK: Graphite has amazing qualities of darkness, density and reflectivity that allows a flat surface to develop a tremendous amount of depth. I love that when I work with this material the areas that from one vantage point appear to be a dense black are also the most reflective and can appear to actually emit light from other angles.




Can you comment on your work process?

KK: It takes me forever to make my work and I get very, very dirty. There's a lot of powdered graphite floating around my studio. I assume this is a health hazard and I will eventually get the black lung.

 Your subject matter is very contemporary –and your finger is definitely on the pulse of a type of American group anxiety – I say this because you illustrate- among other things- architecture associated with a crowd pleasing Disney (EPCOT, a Gehry commission for a concert hall) in cataclysmic situations.

KK: The architecture in those situations is a both a nod to failed utopianism and to the work of Hieronymus Bosch. His work, which contained similar architectural elements (that stemming from his imagination, not that depicted in his contemporary landscapes) was really big on the concept of earthly indulgences and vanity eventually being punished. Puritans, and Al Qaeda are all really big on that concept too.

Other artificial elements in our landscape play an important role in my work as well. Cell phone towers (especially those that are camouflaged as trees), telephone lines, satellite dishes - all have become strong elements in our contemporary landscape and illustrate the control we have on our environment and the heavens. I'm interested in this tension between the known, controlled sky of the postmodern era, the one with tv satellites, cell phone transmissions, and international space stations; and the unknown sky that prior to the modern era represented the divine, heaven, and the potential for unknowable catastrophe.

 Athletes in motion are an interesting choice of subject matter as well. Especially taken out of context, as you stage the sports heroes ascending in a "divided" sky. They recall mannerist figures and religious compositions of rapture. Is this a parallel you would agree on?

KK: I've used the athletes for a number of reasons - I like that taken out of their competitive context the players appear vulnerable in large voids and that their poses are reminiscent of depictions of rapture, especially from Baroque paintings. I'm also interested in the larger ideas of who is chosen to be 'saved', literally translations of being 'raised into heaven' and what virtues we hold up as heroism in contemporary society (and how these ideas break down when taken out of context).

 What are you looking at for inspiration?

KK: The Fox News, conservative Christians, Al Gore, Perez Hilton...

 What are you working on now?

KK: Right now I'm working on a piece based on Hieronymus Bosch's Garden of Earthly Delights.

 Thank you Ms. Klencheski. Katie Klencheski ...And Then The Sky Was Divided... September 5th-October 5th at A.M. Richard 328 Berry Street (Williamsburg, Brooklyn). www.amrichardfineart.com Fri-Sun 1-6pm.

