

HALES GALLERY

Darina Karpov: New Paintings

Private View; Thursday 19 January 6-9pm
20 January – 25 February



Opening, Oil on canvas, 27.9 x 35.6 cm / 11 x 14 in

Hales Gallery is pleased to present its first exhibition by Darina Karpov. Karpov was born in St Petersburg; she studied at the Moscow Institute of Technology in the early 90s and then moved to America to study at the Maryland Institute College of Art, Baltimore and an MFA at Yale in 2001.

Karpov's work calls upon a rich, European romantic tradition, using expressive palettes and spacial elements found, for example, in Karl Briullov's *The Last Days of Pompeii*. Karpov subconsciously allows elements from this romantic tradition to re-emerge in her own work as 21st Century broken abstractions. She builds each painting from, acrylic colour washes and stains, then overlays the surface with gestural brushwork in oils.

Karpov amplifies her link to the romantics of the late 18th and early 19th Centuries in her preparation for each painting. She constructs small, three dimensional arrangements which serve as a point of reference and departure for the paintings. This technique recalls the late landscape works of British romantic painter Thomas Gainsborough, who also made small models and lit them by candlelight to create his fantasy based idealisation of the English rural landscape. The models for set designs by Russian neo-romantic Leon Bakst have also been an important influence on Karpov. Russian folk art tradition and 18th Century Rococo featured heavily in Bakst's designs for stage and ballet and embody many subjects that Karpov has also borrowed. Karpov's miniature sets are made quickly from painted paper, tape, cardboard and re-cycled scraps of her own discarded work. The various structures are combined to create heterogeneous units. This quick ad-hoc way of working allows Karpov to re-visit the folk and home-made objects recalled from her childhood in Russia. Although this strong nostalgic feeling for Russia and Europe exists in Karpov's work, they are imbued with a sure footedness that is wholly American, expressionistic and rooted in the 20th Century. Like Arshile Gorky and Mark Rothko before her, Karpov has found a way of drawing upon her Eastern European heritage and distilling it with a New York contemporary sensibility.

Karpov intuitively pulls together memories and associations through these elaborate processes and techniques, allowing symbolic and narrative readings to develop. This might, at first, seem strange to describe works that are essentially abstract but Karpov talks about each element as a thought fragment in an ambiguous pictorial space, or a vague territory between still life, landscape and abstraction brought about by an arrangement of props. These ambiguous pictorial spaces resemble fairy tale landscapes, woodlands, table top still life, aeroplane holds and enchanted interiors. They are areas where the viewer is encouraged to attach their own associations. Everything appears fragmented and pulverised by Karpov, spun into a cyclone of objects that one has to re-imagine and piece together.

Karpov was recently awarded the MacDowell colony residency (2011) and the Virginia Center for creative Arts residency (2011). She received a Pollock-Krasner foundation grant (2009/10). Her work is included in the West Collection, Zabludowicz collection and the Vilardell collection. Karpov lives and works in Brooklyn, NY, USA.

For press information please contact press@halesgallery.com
For sales information please contact sales@halesgallery.com

Hales Gallery, Tea Building, 7 Bethnal Green Road, London E1 6LA, +44 (0)207 0331938, halesgallery.com