



SAN FRANCISCO

Karla Wozniak: "This Weather Is Cosmic" at Gregory Lind Gallery

There's something distinctly American about the landscape as viewed from a car, the roadway whizzing by the motel signs and gas stations. Inviting the viewer on a virtual road trip is painter Karla Wozniak, a Berkeley native, who currently lives in Knoxville, Tennessee, where she has taught at the university since 2011. Her path across the country included the MFA program at Yale, and her colorful reflections on the landscape resonate with an underlying sense of logic. As with her earlier landscape-based work, even more focused on roadside signage and motels, the imagery of these paintings is derived from actual physical locations. From there, however, Wozniak steers us through the sharp and winding terrain of Cubism, barreling through Fauve territory with an audacious palette, then lingering to pay homage to American Modernists such as Marsden Hartley and Arthur Dove.

Pilot, East TN (2012) uses a palette of warm colors—pinks, reds, burgundy, violet and a rich assortment of orange and rust hues, to create a dynamic composition highlighted by arcing stripes in the right corner, foliage both spiky and looping, and some abstract star or flower forms near the center. Highest-keyed color—lemon and lime green, brilliant vermilion and alizarin—here also forms the densest paint surface. Walking a tightrope between order and chaos, there is a pleasurable tension in the way landscape reference comes in and out

of focus. Wozniak's works vibrate and swirl with formalist push and pull, as foreground and background flip back and forth. *Blue Mountain* (2013) uses a simpler composition positioning the silhouette of a mountain, broken into irregular chunks of blue and magenta striped with purple, against an orange sky. A foreground of muted hues of violet, dark gray and mauve breaks up into smaller shapes, including a prominent triangle. *Army Surplus, East TN* (2012) converges on a perspective point near center, creating a more traditional sense of space. A cooler and more muted palette is enlivened by areas of red-orange and violet. Here, as at other times, Wozniak's sense of pictorial organization suggests Richard Diebenkorn. When the cacophony of forms and colors threatens to spin out of control, Wozniak regains control of the pace, settling the viewer back down with a more-traditional piece of roadway, a simple highway sign, a flat, muted passage balancing strokes of screaming, juicy impasto. Her impressive work stands firmly among that of gifted painters who continue to find in the medium a fresh inspiration.

—BARBARA MORRIS

"BLUE MOUNTAIN," 2013, Karla Wozniak

OIL ON PANEL, 35" x 30"

PHOTO: COURTESY GREGORY LIND GALLERY