

November 18- February 9, 2008

Chicago-based artist Kariann Fuqua received a BFA in painting from Kansas State University (1999) and an MFA from University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign (2003). Her work has been exhibited at numerous venues, including a recent public commission for McCormick Place (Chicago), Johnsonese Gallery (Chicago), Byron Choen Gallery (Kansas City), Jenkins Johnson Gallery (San Francisco), Northeastern Illinois University Gallery (Chicago), the Evanston Art Center, and I space (Chicago), where she has been the Assisant to the Director/Preparator since 2004.

On Unstable Ground

Paintings by Kariann Fuqua



Kariann Fuqua
Slide on Agatite
2007
Oil on canvas over panel
24 x 24 inches

Hyde Park**ARTCENTER**

5020 South Cornell Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60615 773.324.5520 www.hydeparkart.org

The Hyde Park Art Center is a not-for-profit organization that presents innovative exhibitions, primarily work by Chicago-area artists, and educational programs in the visual arts for children and adults of diverse backgrounds. The Center is funded in part by the Alphawood Foundation; The Chicago Community Trust; a City Arts III grant from the City of Chicago's Department of Cultural Affairs and the Illinois Arts Council; The Lloyd A. Fry Foundation; The Leo S. Guthman Fund; The Irving Harris Foundation; The Illinois Arts Council, a state agency; The Joyce Foundation; JPMorgan Chase Foundation; The Mayer & Morris Kaplan Family Foundation; The MacArthur Foundation; The MacArthur Fund for Arts and Culture at Prince; The Orbit Fund; Polk Bros. Foundation; The Clinton Family Fund; The Sara Lee Foundation; South East Chicago Commission; The Wallace Foundation; and the generosity of its members and friends.

We understand our world in terms of spatial relationships: up and down, left and right, vertical and horizontal. Upon entering a space, we map it; it is through studying the orientation of a place that we are able to make sense of our place in it. The paintings by Kariann Fuqua require the viewer to experience multiple viewpoints simultaneously. Fuqua's psychedelic, acid-hued depictions of Chicago's built environment constitute an intimate re-negotiation of the idea of mapping space. Through her juxtaposition of architectural images and negative space, Fuqua explores the complexity of spatial relationships and destabilizes the viewers' notions of the immutable relationship between architecture and space.

On Unstable Ground showcases Fuqua's latest paintings inspired by photographs she has taken of the negative space between houses and buildings in Chicago's cityscape. Fuqua is interested in offering a re-conceptualization of the notion of surplus space. She juxtaposes rotated architectural images with images of tree branches, lampposts, and other elements of urban and residential neighborhoods. The effect is utterly disorienting.



Hamilton Teardown, 2007. Oil on canvas over panel. 24 x 24 inches.

The bewildering effect is magnified by the flat, heavily-saturated backgrounds of Fuqua's paintings. Defying spatial expectations, the combination of her confident application of non-local color, manipulation of scale, and inversion of architectural space renders it nearly impossible for the viewer to be cognizant of exactly what he is looking at. Though Fuqua's urban landscapes consist of ubiquitous images, they are unfamiliar. We are accustomed to skies that are blue, gray, or romantic collages of pinky tones; however, we are not used to skies that are lime green or tangerine orange. Fuqua's expanses of evenly-distributed color are devoid of images of clouds, planes, birds, or the sun, and there is no indication of a horizon line. Tree branches - or the negative spaces between tree branches - tower over some buildings and, at times, appear to be growing out of them. It's impossible to tell which object is bigger or most significant to Fuqua. Her images appear exploded: while we often see the whole facade of the house, sometimes we see

fragments: just a window, or a roof. By eliminating various representative features and distinctions between objects, Fuqua precludes the viewer from differentiating between the architectural image and negative space, or the foreground and the background.

Indeed, the world Fuqua creates is unstable. But then again, so is the city. Like Fuqua's paintings, Chicago is a space where old architecture confronts modern technology head-on. For example, the Classic Revival-style architecture of the Chicago Cultural Center built in 1897 is bordered on one side by Millennium Park and the contemporary, Frank Gehry-designed Jay Pritzker Pavillion, and sits diagonal to the modernist skyscraper, Aon Center.



Deconstruction 84, 2007. Oil on canvas over panel. 24 x 24 inches.

Though the colors and orientations of the images in Fuqua's paintings are clearly fantastical, they arouse connotations of the dynamism of urban life. At times, the city does appear as jumbled, as incongruous, and as indiscernible as the juxtapositions in Fuqua's paintings. Perhaps Fuqua's paintings depict the neighborhoods under constant construction, tumbling down and being built up. In these paintings, Fuqua utilizes a blazing color palette reminiscent of the colors that are currently en vogue in interior design. Fuqua is clearly concerned with investigating the relationship between shape, color, and space, and the product is a confused, confusing world that resembles our own. In and around this changing city, when we walk across scaffolding or wet cement, we too are on unstable ground.

Fuqua's depiction of various portals, such as windows and doors, offer one clue to approaching her paintings. The viewer cannot enter the space while maintaining his assumptions of spatial organization; instead, he must renounce his expectations and pass into Fuqua's neighborhood. Mounted on rigid panels, Fuqua's canvases have an architecture of their own. The line of paintings protruding from the exhibition wall invokes the image of a street lined with buildings. This is Fuqua's neighborhood, but it is also clearly and uniquely Chicago.

Jessica Hester
Exhibitions Assistant