

SV



Włodzimierz Książek

Marked Ground: New Work by Wlodzimierz Ksiazek

by Robert Knafo

The works by Wlodzimierz Ksiazek featured in this edition of SV are now on exhibit at Alpha Gallery in Boston until January 4, 2006. More information at www.alphagallery.com/artists/ksiazek.html.

I remember first seeing Wlodzimierz Ksiazek's paintings at a now-gone 57th Street gallery in the early 90's, and being impressed with work that seemed to be tethered to Abstract Expressionism and its European counterparts, but that at the same time defined its own distinct, contemporary orbit.

I'm usually not a fan of art that lashes itself blindly to the mast of a bygone era, but Ksiazek's works quietly refused to be discounted as nth-generation gestural abstraction. Some intriguing way that his work both evoked and departed from that tradition kept me interested.



Above: The artist's studio, with works in progress, December 2005.
Following page: the oil on canvas shown above at right in studio; 66x80", 2005.



To a man (and a few women), the Abstract Expressionists were all pictorialists: they were engaged in making pictures, and so operated essentially along two dimensions. Ksiazek's paintings by contrast generate a state of ambiguity between the idea of "picture" and that of ground. These paintings operate along a different axis, or a supplemental axis - not just X and Y but also Z.

Ksiazek's compositions typically present a sense of large-scale, architectonic structures inflected by more provisional and incidental traces. Many of the visual incidents and features in Ksiazek's compositions, the formal and chromatic discontinuities that catch our eye and compel our attention, are readable as absences and removals - they are very literally incisions and excisions, scratches, tears, and gouges, the diverse interruptions of some upper layer and the revelations of a lower. By the same token, just as many incidents and features read as accretions, overlays, incrustations, slips and drips and spatters.



Oil on canvas, 40x30". 2005. Following page: Oil on canvas, 66 x 80". 2005



Dominant architectonic rectangles and angular, irregular polygons elevate or sink in these compositional fields like so many continental shelves from a baseline stratum. Because they also serve to organize the space along the usual two pictorial dimensions within the bounding rectangle of the canvas, these large organizing elements impart a sense of pictorial structure, and of *picture*, all the while effectively acting as scaffold or anchorage for an accretion and modeling of a field or ground, an entity with three-dimensionality - a thing that is not exactly "sculpture", but nonetheless something like a bas-relief, with surface and depth and layers and thickness and texture.

Ksiazek's works above all register as deeply marked ground, and usher in a constellation of associations that one might imagine in connection with surface and ground - "earth," "depth," "strata," "excavation," "building," "plan," as well as "body," "skin," and "memory." These fields, equally fraught on the surface and under the skin, readily evoking an anthropomorphic surrogate, a stand-in body, are marked not by just any vocabulary, but one that speaks of self-revelation and hard passage.



Installation views, Alpha Gallery, Boston, December 2005. Following page: the artist in his studio, December 2005.



Because of this three-dimensionality, or corporality, the metaphorical or symbolic resonance of Ksiazek's works have ultimately less to do with their pictorial organization or composition - with our sense of them as pictures - and more with their registration as marked ground, as the skin of some recordable and mutable body shaped and impacted over time and experience. That quality serves to explain why over the course of the artist's exhibition history writers have written about Ksiazek's works as if they were alternately surrogates of bodies, or of minds. Their variegated, accretive, variously textured surfaces read as marked ground, and of course "body" and "mind" are perhaps the marked grounds most familiar to all of us.

Ksiazek's works remind us that we imagine that memory has depths, to be exposed or left buried; that it is composed of larger, embedded structures (culture, childhood) as well as provisional and incidental marks and traces (yesterday's breakfast, say). Equally to the point, Ksiazek's paintings play upon the ways in which we ascribe to memory corporal attributes, and to the body mnemonic attributes - we imagine that memory can be "strong," "weak," or "scarred," for example, just as we might imagine that a body "remembers."



Above: Oil on canvas, 23 x 24". 2005. Following page: Oil on canvas, 60 x 80". 2005



Ksiazek's marked grounds are simultaneously mindscapes and bodyscapes; or, to coin an awkward but more pointedly apropos word (and one that reconciles and renders moot this duality), they are Ksiazekscapes - another way of saying that they're symbolizations of the artist's own experience and memory. Ksiazek effects this symbolization through a language seemingly possessed of a kind of universality, insofar as it is capable of speaking not only of "him" (the artist) but also of "me" (the viewer) - insofar as we can see reflected in this work not only his but our own memory of experience, and our own experience of memory.

Ksiazek's work insists on the power of gestural abstraction to mean something new, to resonate with a certain contemporaneity. Does it succeed? I think so - I think it feels current to me essentially because it ultimately manifests itself as so many various states of ambiguity, irresolution, and conflict. The orbit the work defines always keeps it in-between - in-between mediums and genres, in-between picture and ground, in-between suffering and pleasure, scar and balm, in-between deep structure and free form - in-between the bedrock of history and culture and the slip of being, living, and remembering.



Installation view, Alpha Gallery, Boston, December 2005.

Włodzimierz Ksiązek

Born November 7, 1951, Warsaw, Poland. Permanent resident of United States since 1988.

Education

1970-75

Warsaw Academy of Fine Arts. MFA (1) Painting and (2) Art in Architecture, 1975.

1969-70

Warsaw University, biology department

Selected One Person Exhibitions

2005 Alpha Gallery, Boston, MA

Consulate General of the Republic of Poland, New York, NY;

(with panel discussion moderated by Donald Kuspit, with Robert C. Morgan, Richard Brilliant, and Saul Ostrow.)

2005/2004

Kouros Gallery, New York,

NY Pool Art Fair, Art Addict, Four Points Hotel, Chelsea, New York, NY, curated by Robert Knafo

Selected Group Exhibitions

2005

International Art Fair - Art 2005, The Park Avenue Armory, New York, NY

Alpha Gallery, Boston, MA

Kouros Gallery, New York, NY

Art Chicago, Chicago, IL

San Francisco International Art Fair, San Francisco, CA

2004

Art of the 20th Century: The International Art Fair 2004, New York, NY

³Works on Paper from the Permanent Collection,² Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, MA

Wandering Library², Book Art Museum, Lodz, Poland

Alpha Gallery, Boston MA

Kouros Gallery, New York, NY

Art Chicago, Chicago, IL

2 x 2 x 2, Grimshaw Gudewicz Art Gallery, Jackson Art Center, Fall River, MA

The Art Show, sponsored by the Art Dealers Association of America, New York, NY

Monographic Publications

2003

Włodzimierz Książek, Alpha Gallery, Boston, MA, October 4-October 29, 2003.
Essays by Karen Wilkin and Joe Fyfe, published by Alpha Gallery, Boston, MA.

2002

Włodzimierz Książek. Kouros Gallery, New York, NY, September 12-October 12, 2002. Essay by David Pagel, Introduction by Amy Ingrid Schlegel, Preface by Jason Andrew. Published by Kouros Gallery, New York, NY

2001

Włodzimierz Książek: Paintings 1990-2001. The Gallery at the Barrington Center for the Arts, Gordon College, Wenham, MA, and Alpha Gallery, Boston, MA, September/October 2001. Texts by Richard Brilliant and Robert C. Morgan, introduction by Bruce Herman. Published by Gordon College, Wenham, MA (ISBN 0-9707487-2-8; Library of Congress # 2002449207)

2000

Włodzimierz Książek: Think of It. Loughborough University Art Gallery, Loughborough, England, November 16-December 16, 2000. Texts by Dominique Nahas, Saul Ostrow, and Mark Harris. Published by Loughborough University, England. (Library of Congress # 2002449210)

1999

Włodzimierz Książek: Hostage. Kouros Gallery, New York, NY, March/April 1999.
Texts by David Moos and James McCorkle. Published by Kouros Gallery, New York, NY
(Library of Congress # 2002449209)

1998

Włodzimierz Książek: Paintings. Jaffe-Friede & Strauss Galleries, Hopkinson Center, Dartmouth College, Hanover, NY, April 14- May 10, 1998.
Text by Donald Kuspit. Published by Dartmouth College, NH (Library of Congress # 2002449208)

1997

Włodzimierz Książek: A Vigil of Time. Marisa Del Re Gallery, New York, NY, June/July 1997. Published by Marisa Del Re Gallery, New York, NY
Essay by James McCorkle.

additional CV information at <http://ksiazek.org/cv.php>

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