

# Color Excursions

## The Art Of Gosha Karpowicz

Story by ABBY LUBY Photography by ANDREA B. SWENSON

Gazing at a painting by artist Gosha Karpowicz is like reading the first line of a poem — we are captivated, anticipating a foray into another place. Karpowicz's paintings are visual excursions through penetrating layers of color that offer an allusive calm before nuanced ribbons of color underlie a realm of turbulence and mystery. Wonderfully evocative, Karpowicz's work offers a moment of deep contemplation.





### Above and Below Diptych One

*Different textures dance among varying hues and two luminous striations are openings into a bright place somewhere beyond. You can almost feel Karpowicz's delicate tactile ease in applying different shades as they morph into one another like wind shifting its intensity and direction.*

At first glance, horizontal, saturated swaths of color roll in and out of one another, vibrating with a hum heard only in our inner ear. These organic striations are redolent of landscapes of varying terrains — a theme that figures prominently in many of Karpowicz's work and, for her, conjure memories of her youth in Milanówek, Poland, where as a young girl, she and her father hiked through a countryside of fields and hills.

As a youngster, Karpowicz had a natural curiosity and took to studying biology and chemistry. "I had an inquisitive mind and I wanted to know where things came from," says Karpowicz. "As a child, I was both curious and terrified of horizons because they didn't have an end, but I was also taken with their ephemeral quality."

Milanówek is just outside of Warsaw and at that time, Poland was still under the communist rule known as the Iron Curtain. Before the Cold War ended in 1991 (when the Iron Curtain 'came down') Karpowicz studied art at the Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw with known artist and teacher Janusz Petrykowski. The Academy was a state-sponsored institution with little to no access to the western art world. As part of the Communist bloc, abstract expressionism was

considered an aesthetic threat to communism and it was banned. State approved reproductions of standard art were faintly colored or in black and white. When Karpowicz eventually found her way to museums in London and Paris she hungrily drank in the rich hues of Turner and Van Gogh, a pivotal point in her sojourn exploring a universe of color.

When Karpowicz arrived in America in 1981, she was a political refugee with a large portfolio of work and little understanding of the English language. She had a full scholarship to Parsons where she studied with the renowned abstract Irish-American painter Sean Scully and ground breaking eco-artist Jackie Brookner. Karpowicz recalls first discovering the work of abstract expressionist Mark Rothko. "Seeing his work was so validating — it was a life altering experience."

As a young woman artist in New York City, enculturation would play out in her work as she began to experience limitless creative freedom. She began to conceptualize color relationships liking them to human relationships. "They are similar, having boundaries and walls, but with connections."

Layers of applied paint she calls "underpainting" are energies re-

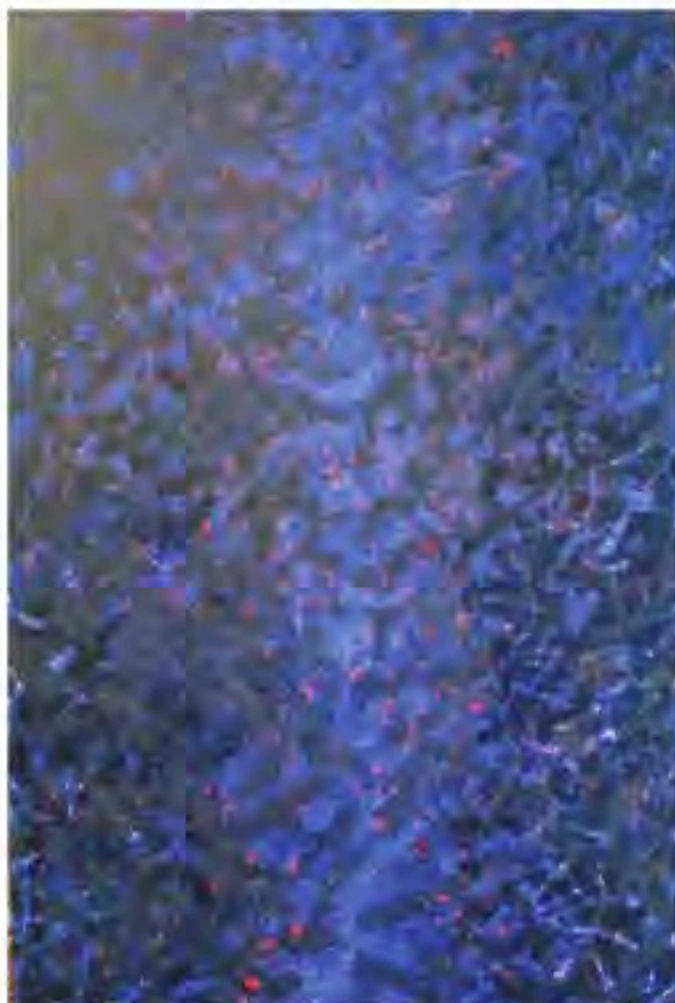


leased from memory, innocence and longing, executed as personal searches into her past and present. "Sometimes I paint into deep colors that I become attached to," Karpowicz explains. "I don't want to 'erase' them and let them go by returning to white, which is sort of like memories fading away. It becomes an interesting journey to let go, to let things fade into the past and see new veils of possibilities while still honoring the past."

Bringing dark colors in and out of the light Karpowicz says it "creates drama and movement - a push-pull between light and dark." That ebb and flow is evident in "Above and Below Diptych One" (2005). Different textures dance among varying hues interrupted by two luminous striations as openings into a bright place somewhere beyond. You can almost feel Karpowicz's delicate tactile ease in applying different shades as they morph into one another like wind shifting its intensity and direction.

Karpowicz could easily be considered a painter's painter. She makes her own paints by mixing specific pigments to get exactly the color she wants. It's a hands-on experience that puts artists more in touch with the very essence of color as opposed to squeezing a dollop from a tube (which she also uses). "I have color in my bones," she says.

In a departure from Karpowicz's horizontal color fields, "Nocturne VII" (2018) is a work that is a potent, tempestuous whirl. Just be-



#### Nocturne VII" (2018)

*Nocturne VII" (2018) is a work that is a potent, tempestuous whirl. Just beyond a dark, churning thicket is an illuminated vertical form twisting away, pulling us towards it.*

yond a dark, churning thicket is an illuminated vertical form twisting away with a magnetic pull. Karpowicz acknowledges why this work is different and her use of an upright form. "There is strength in vertical lines, as there is in columns and obelisks. We get an entirely different feeling."

Shown both nationally, internationally and in the greater New York City region, Karpowicz's work has also been the subject of solo shows. She has returned to her birth country as a recognized artist and was in a group show "Beauty in Geometry" at the Museum of Contemporary Art "Elektrownia", in Radom, Poland; the museum also has her work as part of their permanent collection. Last year she was selected as Artist of the month at the Edward Hopper House in Nyack.

"I am currently working on a series of 11 paintings based on fields I saw during a recent trip to Poland. I hope to reveal a sense peacefulness, serenity and calm through opaque layers," says Karpowicz.

In the span of her transformative, artistic trajectory, Karpowicz has clearly kept in touch with the curiosity of her youth. She has pur-

sued an exploration of color, shape and form to create a visual translation of her evolution. Her queries have become an ongoing journey, ones in which she has invited us along for the ride.

<http://goshakarpowiczart.com/>







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By Abby Luby

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Read article on *Hook Magazine* website.