

Toronto Exhibition

## Wanda Koop

IN ABSENTIA

Aug 27 – Oct 8, 2016

Opening:

Saturday, Aug 27, 2 – 5 p.m.



Installation view

Arsenal Toronto and Division Gallery are pleased to present *In Absentia*, an exhibition of new paintings by one of Canada's most distinguished artists, Wanda Koop.

For four months in 2015, Wanda Koop lived high atop the New York skyline. She spent her days exploring and working in her Brooklyn studio and her mornings and nights peering from her hotel window into the steely glass glare of Manhattan's sky, watching sundial light shift across the jagged city. Koop describes the experience as profoundly transitory, solitary, and inspiring. Around her was the sum of a civilization's desires, thrusting upward, sprawling outward, crystallizing the aspirations of America into stalagmites of steel against stalactites of sky. The experience prompted an outpouring of drawings and photographs that Koop distilled into an iconic body of work – glorious colour-field meditations of a city that is itself a distillation of global culture, industry, and growth.

The artist's dreamlike studies of sun-clashing office towers gave way to paintings of bruised crimsons, topaz blues, fiery dawns and dusky greys. Disorientingly close-cropped, the pictures reflect the abstraction of cosmopolitan life – its squalid bustle reduced to the clean lines of skyscrapers, their wide, blank facades factories for Koop's colour. Morning fog gathers in the high canyon, breathing sfumato up the thinning ricochet of sky and glass. Evening drapes the buildings in molten afterglow, its long, lively shadows willing Koop's fluorescents to sing. Perhaps more than in any of the artist's previous work, her colour play dislodges our sense of foreground and background, sky and earth, preserving the enigmatic, inscrutable grandeur of urban life within a deeply personal diary of colour and light. Real estate developers in major cities routinely sell what is referred to as 'air rights', or the space above existing buildings, confusing our sense of what belongs to whom and emphasizing the virtual nature of cities, property and prosperity. Titled *In Absentia*, Koop's new body of work extends this metaphor of abstraction and dislocation, reducing speculative markets and soaring monuments to

their most essential forms – capturing with an economy of colour the exhilarating disorientation of contemporary life.

A recipient of The Governor General's Award in Visual and Media Arts and the Queen's Golden Jubilee Medal, Koop is also a member of the Order of Canada and of the Royal Academy of the Arts. She has had solo exhibitions at the Winnipeg Art Gallery (WAG) and the National Gallery of Canada, and was recently included in Her Story Today: Six Painters from Quebec and Canada, a group exhibition at the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts. Her work can be found in the collections of TD Bank, Royal Bank of Canada, Air Canada, the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, The Art Gallery of Alberta, The Winnipeg Art Gallery, The National Gallery of Canada, The Museum of Contemporary Art Shanghai, and The Reykjavik Art Museum, among others. An active member of her community, she is the founder of Art City, an inner-city youth centre for visual arts based in Winnipeg. Wanda Koop lives and works in Winnipeg, Canada.

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