



WANDA KOOP

In Absentia

October 14 – November 18, 2017

“The illusion of a city center is that it’s the center.”

– Andrew Berardini, *The Skyline Beckons: Wanda Koop’s In Absentia* (2016)

Night Gallery is pleased to present the first American solo show of one of Canada’s most distinguished and inventive artists, Wanda Koop. The body of work presented here, *In Absentia*, explores the connection between urbanism and the natural landscape. The paintings reference her memories of the New York skyline following a four-month residency in the city. In a 2016 interview with Robert Enright, Koop recalls her first impressions looking out of her high-rise loft: “There was no solid wall; it was floor-to-ceiling glass from one end to the other. I just started taking pictures and making drawings and I ended up filling all these sketchbooks... The morning after the day I arrived a hawk flew by. From where I was positioned, the sky was bigger than the city. There was nothing blocking my view. The whole thing was stupendous.”

Koop’s expansive view became the inspiration for a series of paintings that depict the skyline in stark, spare shapes filled in with rich gradients. Through minimal but highly evocative forms, the viewer is able to discern skyscraper from sky, foreground from background, solidity from void. What appears at first glance as pure abstraction is in fact a careful composition of colors in an indexical relationship. We are left with an impression of the natural and the manmade in harmony, co-constituted, suggesting the sublime.

Wanda Koop (b. 1951, Vancouver) lives and works Winnipeg, Manitoba, where she has been based since early childhood. Her painting career spans four decades and includes a major survey of her work mounted by the National Gallery of Canada in 2011. Koop has exhibited across Canada and the USA, as well as in Europe, Asia, and South America. Koop has been the recipient of numerous awards, including honorary doctorates and Canadian medals of honor, including the nation’s highest civilian honor, the Order of Canada, in 2006. Her life and work have been the subject of several documentary films.