



KAREN WOODS

# Rainy days



**1**  
*Light Shower 1*,  
oil on panel,  
7 x 11"

**2**  
*Another Station*,  
oil on panel,  
7 x 11"

**3**  
*Park*, oil on panel,  
11 x 8"

**4**  
*Inclined*, oil on  
panel, 11 x 13"

Rain changed the way Karen Woods looks at potential subjects for her canvases. A painter who has painted scenes from the viewpoint of behind car windows for many years, it was when she noticed how water droplets give an abstract quality to realistic scenes that she found a new direction, about eight years ago.

"The two-dimensional view of the windshield versus the three-dimensional quality of the space beyond the windshield is intriguing to me and is something I have fallen in love with," says Woods, based in Boise, Idaho. "I want to communicate how beautiful rain makes things, even the most mundane scene of a crosswalk or intersection. It makes something we see every day more precious."

Her latest collection of at least 15 works at George Billis Gallery in New York City depicts scenes from the vibrant city the gallery is located in, from the yellow taxi

cab and street light in oil on panel *Inclined*, to the construction- and skyscraper-filled scene in *Park*. Woods' works implore viewers to closely examine the elements in her landscapes and make them ponder the goings-on beyond the glass screen.

Woods has visited New York about five times and says the excitement of the city is intriguing. After checking the weather to seek out rainy days, she'll often hail a cab, tell the driver how much money she has to spend, and take hundreds of photographs during each journey that might inspire her next piece. She develops all the photos and lays them out in front of her on the floor, sometimes picking out a square inch of the photo that re-triggers the emotional feeling that spurred her to initially shoot the photo.

"To paint these is very time-consuming and energy-consuming, and if it doesn't take hold of me emotionally, then I'm not going to last painting it, and it's not

worth the time," Woods says. "It has to be a very strong response to the photograph or something in it, and often, I don't know what that is. I can't identify whether it's a color or a mood or a play of light or a composition. I don't often know what it is, even when I'm finished, but I know there is something important."

Woods says she strives to communicate a very familiar experience in an unfamiliar way in her work and hopes to inspire viewers to experience the same joy she feels during rainy days. Driek Zirinsky, who has collected Woods' work for more than 20 years, says Woods is adept at catching fleeting narratives and the inherent drama seen through the window of a moving car.

"We have all noticed such moments, but Karen Woods has captured them for our contemplation," Zirinsky says. "In my collection of over 1,000 works by contemporary artists, some internationally



2



4

famous and others ‘unknown,’ Karen Woods’ art stands out.”

Woods paints both daytime and nighttime scenes, which allows her to experiment with color values and additional abstraction brought about by darkness. She says she has so much more to explore with the rainy-scene direction she’s working with, which provides her with continuous excitement.

“I chase the rain,” Woods says. “It makes colors explode and come out like jewels, like garnets and sapphires. Painting rainy scenes helps me see things in a new way. It’s a great means of exploring my technical ability and experimenting with abstraction and seeing how far I can push that.” ●

3