



Artist Keltie Ferris in conversation with Asuka Hisa,
Director of Education and Public Programs

Asuka Hisa: We walk into your exhibition and what do we see?

Keltie Ferris: I have three works here, two large paintings and one work composed out of five skinny panels. My biggest work here is *Doomsday Scenario*. It's dark and swirly and full of dark greens and blues. Opposite of it is a painting called *Boogie Sapiens*, from my Broadway Boogie Woogie series based on the Mondrian painting, of course, but also taking the spear-like format.

AH: What should we consider when looking at your work?

KF: I'm inspired somewhat by graffiti but I don't use spray paint. I make my own spray paint out of oil paint, so it's actually a mixture of a traditional painting medium and a more modern application. I get to mix my own colors and control them. It has the luminosity of older paintings but it's a newer painting technique. And I use a spray gun.

AH: What different techniques do you use to apply paint to your canvases?

KF: With these paintings I used a lot of palette knife to trowel a thicker paint down first, using acrylic and oil paint. I think of this as painting a fence, almost like Tom Sawyer. The marks are almost always vertical and it's very workman-ly and preparatory. From there forms begin to happen that I react to. When I get to the later parts where I use spray paint and a brush, it gets more complicated.

AH: Speak about references and the energy in the work.

KF: The most central subject matter to my painting is energy. I know that sounds woo-woo, but I'm thinking of energy in terms of potential energy—a rock sitting at the top of a hill. That something that could happen, is about to happen, or might happen. It's potential and possibility. I think of possibility as being a big subject in my painting, and also artificiality and light and therefore artificial light and artificial energy. That's why when a lot of people see my paintings they see cities and digital mediums and these things are composed of light and composed of energy, complication, and potentials.

Conducted on the occasion of Keltie Ferris: Doomsday Boogie at the Santa Monica Museum of Art, January 17–April 5, 2014.