

## Three Decades of the Art Critic Kim Levin at Kiasma Museum of Contemporary Art

Staff. "Three Decades of the Art Critic Kim Levin at Kiasma Museum of Contemporary Art."

Artdaily.org, Undated.

<http://artdaily.com/news/26689/Three-Decades-of-the-Art-Critic-Kim-Levin-at-Kiasma-Museum-of-Contemporary-Art>



Kim Levin, Notes and Itineraries, 1975-2004, Courtesy Ronald Feldman Fine Arts, New York in cooperation with John Salvest.

**HELSINKI.-** Kiasma Museum of Contemporary Art presents Kim Levin: Notes and Itineraries 1975–2004, on view through February 1, 2009. Kim Levin: Notes and Itineraries 1975–2004 presents a unique look into the exhibition history of one of the world's major centres of contemporary art. In her notes that span a period of more than three decades, art critic Kim Levin has documented the development of the art scene in her native New York as well as the changing priorities of contemporary art. The exhibition will be on show in the Kontti Gallery in Kiasma. The installation also serves as a background for the Full

House exhibition, which is scheduled to open at the same time.

Kim Levin has been making notes about her visits to exhibitions for decades. She prepares exact route plans for her weekly rounds of galleries and museums, and has been saving invitations since 1975. Artist John Salvest found these "obsessive and systematic" documents fascinating, and compiled Levin's files into an installation.

The installation illustrates both the working methods of a scrupulous art critic and the logic of documentation and collecting. On the basis of just one note, Kim Levin's method may seem chaotic, but presented collectively as an archive they are revealed to be quite systematic. In her route plans, Levin marks interesting exhibitions and those that she has time to visit using colour codes, striking things out and circling items. She records her exhibition observations, ranking the artists and describing and drawing the works she has seen. These enable her later to recall thoughts that came to her mind when viewing the works, and to write them into critiques and reviews.

Levin's densely written notes are for the most part descriptive, but the observant reader can find in them gems of criticism, such as "Too clever"; "Not too subtle!"; "Mesmerizing". On Frank Stella, Levin comments: "Former minimalist who said 'what you see is what you see' – gone maximal. Less is more? More is more." James Turrell makes her wonder whether he is "Genius... or a con, an artist who's ridden his one-trick pony for all its worth? You'll either have a transcendent experience or wonder what the fuss is about". Levin's notes have the same concise quality and trenchant humour as her critiques based on them. Moreover, the exhibition provokes thoughts about how the choices of an influential critic also play a part in creating art history.

Kim Levin is a prominent New York art critic and curator. She is a regular contributor to *The Village Voice* and several international journals. She was President of the International Association of Art Critics 1996–2002, and has received numerous journalistic awards. John Salvest is an Arkansas artist whose object works and installations relate to accumulation. He is Professor of Sculpture at Arkansas State University.

The exhibition was produced in cooperation with John Salvest and by courtesy of Ronald Feldman Fine Arts, New York.

## Kim Levin

Staff. "Kim Levin." [artnews.org](http://artnews.org), Undated.  
<http://artnews.org/kiasma/?exi=13477>

17 October 2008 - 01 February 2009



© Kim Levin  
Notes and Itineraries.  
Courtesy Ronald Feldman Fine Arts, New York. In cooperation with John Salvest

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### KIM LEVIN "Notes and Itineraries 1975-2004"

17.10.2008 - 01.02.2009

For decades, the New York-based art critic legend, Kim Levin, has made notes about her visits to art exhibitions. She has also prepared route plans for her weekly gallery and museum visits. In this way, she has been able to navigate New York's myriad art offerings and arrange what she has seen into a practicable archive. Artist John Salvest was inspired by this "compulsive and systematic" documentation and compiled Levin's notes and route maps, written on press releases and invitations, into an exhibition called Kim Levin: Notes and Itineraries 1975-2004. The exhibition is on display in Kiasma's Kontti gallery from 17 October to 1 February 2009.

The exhibition takes a look at the working methods of a scrupulous art critic, systematic information collection and organisation, and the tools that assist the memory. For Levin, these tools summarise her reactions to, thoughts about and moods inspired by art, all recorded, for example, in the margin of an invitation using different colours and markings, as compact comments or drawings. Later, these markings are used to remember her ideas, tell about them to others and transform them into reviews and recommendations.

The contemporary observations by the influential critic also shed light on the establishment process of art history, which is based on choices: what museums, galleries and artists are included in the critic's journey, and what exhibition locations are considered significant over the course of time. As a compilation, Kim Levin's notes take a unique glance at the exhibition history of the world's most important centre of contemporary art, spanning a period of almost 30 years. They document the rise of new artists, galleries

and trends - and the fall of others - the different stages of the art scene in New York, and the changes in the emphasis of contemporary art. The exhibition provides a background for the Full House exhibition, a collection of American minimalism, opening at the same time.

Kim Levin is a renowned New York-based art critic and curator who has regularly contributed to The Village Voice magazine and several international publications. From 1996-2002, she acted as President of the International Association of Art Critics and, over the course of her career, has received many journalism awards.

John Salvest is an Arkansas-based artist whose artefact and installation works often deal with accumulation and heaping. Currently, he is professor of sculpture at Arkansas State University.

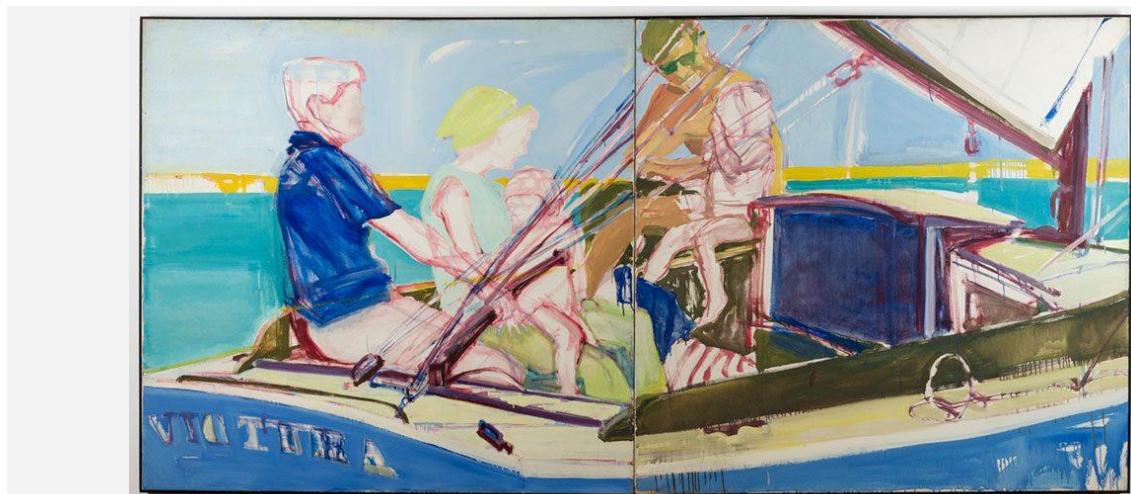
[www.kiasma.fi](http://www.kiasma.fi)



# Kim Levin

Landi, Ann. "Kim Levin." *Under the Radar*, July 13, 2016.  
<http://vasari21.com/kim-levin/>

by Ann Landi | Jul 13, 2016 | Under the Radar



*Victoria* (1964), oil on canvas, two panels, 48" by 100"

Kim Levin is well known to many as an art critic for the *Village Voice*, New York's most politically charged alternative tabloid, a post she held for more than 20 years, until 2006. She's contributed to many art magazines, lectured widely, and written countless catalogue essays. But what came as a surprise even to those who know her byline well was the revelation of Levin's ten-year career as a serious painter of vigorous Pop-inflected canvases, with imagery drawn mostly from photographs, still a novel approach in the years of her artistic career, 1963-73. Thirty-three of these works are now at Ronald Feldman Fine Arts through July 29th, and they retain a freshness unusual for paintings made more than four decades ago.



*Gloster Gladiator* (1973), oil on linen, 48" by 50"

Levin's path to prominence as an art critic contains a couple of other unusual wrinkles: she has a scholarly background in ancient art and archeology, worked on excavations in Egypt, and can count among her neighbors in years past Lucas Samaras and the conceptual artists Shasaku Arakawa and Lawrence Weiner.

After several years in Rochester, NY, where her father worked as an optical physicist for Bausch & Lomb, Levin's family moved to Connecticut when she was ten. Her mother, Jean Lien, had wanted to study art in Paris, but instead became a textile designer, working for Cannon Mills and supervising a studio of 17 other designers. "By the time I came along," Levin recalls, "she was teaching art to children in Rochester. In some ways I think she trained me to be an artist. She saved every scrap of paper I ever used for painting or drawing."



*Action Painting I* (1969), oil on linen, 12" by 16"

As an undergraduate at Vassar in the late 1950s, Levin heard a lecture by Meyer Schapiro, the renowned and revolutionary art historian who spent his entire career at Columbia, and decided to pursue graduate studies there. In her second year, she switched to classical art, later becoming interested in Egyptian archaeology. While still a student, she responded to an ad in the *New York Times* seeking writers to do entries for a book on American artists, and the piece she wrote about Hans Hofmann was sufficiently accomplished that Tom Hess, then editor of *ARTnews*, asked her to write mini-reviews for the magazine. (Since Levin was only 19 when she graduated from college, she and her editor had to suffer complaints from older artists that she was much too young to understand their work.) After earning her master's, Levin transferred to the Institute of Fine Arts, and was just about to take the oral exams toward a PhD when politics—both with her mentors at the Institute and in the world at large—intervened. When she told her archaeology professor that she was abandoning the field to write about contemporary art, he was shocked, asking, “How can you do that?” Levin wondered, “How can I do *what?*” He asked her, “How do you know what to write? There is no source material, there are no primary sources.” With the arrogance of youth, she replied: “I will be primary source material for future generations.”





*Sahara IX: Neptune* (1967), oil on canvas, 60.5" by 70.5"

By the early '60s Levin had a studio on Sullivan Street, where she painted all through her twenties. "I had a lot of energy in those days," she recalls. "I arranged my classes so they were all on two days. And I studied drawing with Mercedes Matter and Nick Carone.

"I started out by making sketches from a painting by Poussin to see what I could get from it," she continues. "Then I made Elaine de Kooning-like portraits of friends. And then I began working from photographs, political things, like many images of the Kennedys. I had a painting on my easel of JFK when he was killed." In 1964, Poindexter Gallery gave Levin her first show; fellow Poindexter artists Jules Olitski and Alice Neel offered

encouragement; publisher Si Newhouse, later to emerge as one of the biggest collectors of contemporary art, bought a small piece, as did feminist art historian Linda Nochlin. A job as a girl Friday for a documentary film crew took her to Greece and to Egypt, where she worked on an excavation shared by New York University and the Brooklyn Museum. By 1967, she had created a series of Sahara paintings and landed her second show at Poindexter.

In the more than four decades since she stopped painting, Levin has published hundreds of reviews and articles, some of them—such as “A Farewell to Modernism”—of seminal importance in defining the zeitgeist. The exhibitions she’s curated include shows in Copenhagen, Warsaw, and Seoul (she was the first to propose a biennial in Gwangju, Korea).

Asked if her experiences as an artist gave her greater understanding as a writer and critic, she says that those “ten years of being part of the creative community proved invaluable,” but adds that the study of archaeology gave her many insights as well. “Egyptian art extends over thousands of years, and it all looks pretty much the same to an outsider. You learn to date things by little details. In between the major kingdoms are periods of 200 to 300 years, but the culture continued. What was going on in those between times? I think that’s why I came to realize that all this talk about the end of painting, the end of art, was really only about the end of the Modernist period. We were and maybe still are living in an intermediate time.”

*Ann Landi*



Kim Levin

*Kim Levin has written for many art magazines, including ARTnews and Flash Art; she was a critic for the Village Voice between 1982 and 2006; and she has written numerous catalogue essays for exhibitions here and abroad. A forthcoming collection of her writings will cover the period 1991-2006. “Kim Levin: Paintings 1963-73” will be at Ronald Feldman Fine Arts, 31 Mercer Street, in New York, through July 29, 2016.*

Top: *Oxford* (1964), oil on canvas, 56 by 72 inches.

All photos of Levin’s paintings by Casey Dorobek, courtesy of Ronald Feldman Fine Arts, New York

## 2 Comments



1.

**Dona Mara Friedman** on July 14, 2016 at 11:00 am

Love the words "all this talk about the end of painting, the end of art, was really only about the end of the Modernist period.."

Thank you.



2.

**Jane R. Dell** on July 14, 2016 at 12:18 pm

VERY EXCITING and thoughtful work, and it's a breath of fresh air to see work from a seasoned, experienced artist!

# WIDEWALLS

Herzog, Nadia. "Rare exhibition of early paintings by Kim Levin at Ronald Feldman Fine Arts."

Widewalls. <http://www.widewalls.ch/kim-levin-exhibition-ronald-feldman-fine-arts-new-york/>

## RARE EXHIBITION OF EARLY PAINTINGS BY KIM LEVIN AT RONALD FELDMAN FINE ARTS

Art Exhibitions• Nadia Herzog









Many of you will recognize **Kim Levin** as the renowned art critic, some may know her as the author of *Beyond Modernism: Essays on Art from the '70s and '80s*, some remember her as teacher at the Philadelphia College of Art, or as the former president of the International Association of Art Critics, but not many will guess that Kim Levin was an artist herself for a period of 10 years. The upcoming exhibition

titled *Kim Levin: Paintings 1963-1973*, which will open soon at the Ronald Feldman Fine Arts gallery, will introduce you to her artwork from the years she spent actively painting. It is going to be a **rare opportunity** for the insight into the hidden talent of Kim Levin.



Kim Levin – Sahara V (Moon), 1967

## Autobiographical Subtext of Experience

*'Why didn't she carry her artistic career further on'*, you may ask. Well, as Kim Levin says herself, she ended up being an art critic 'by accident'. Actually, there were two reasons for her career change. One of them was Levin's increased interest for the art theory and the art history, which hit her at the beginning of the 1970s. The second reason was – her acute allergy to turpentine. While she was still an artist, though, her work was represented by the Poindexter Gallery, where she had **solo exhibitions** in 1964 and 1967. Since then, there were not many opportunities to discover her artistic side. The newest exhibition will showcase her entire artistic opus, and underline the autobiographical subtext of her experience at the time.





Kim Levin – WINGWALKER I, 1973

## Depicted Fragments of Reality

What kind of art did Kim Levin make? Mostly, her **large-scale paintings** are based on small black and white photographs, primarily from The New York Times. It was rather rare for an artist at that time to paint from photographs, and a little bit controversial, as a matter of fact. But, Levin didn't care much for conventions, she simply did what she wanted to do. Her paintings come out with deliberately unfinished surfaces which reveal the conceptual structure of the artworks, pointing out their abstract essence. She often reversed connection between figure and structure while depicting fragments of reality. Kim Levin painted in series, so there can be found a group of artworks about political leaders, such as **John F. Kennedy, Winston Churchill, Joseph Stalin**, and many others. Then, there are series of North African horsemen, wing-walking aerial stunts, football players, erotic studies, and the **Beetles**. Seemingly, they all have one thing in common – power. It is the central theme of Kim Levin's paintings.



Kim Levin – Yalta III, 1965

## Kim Levin Exhibition in New York

The exhibition *Kim Levin: Paintings 1963-1973* will present the rare view of the paintings made by the famous art critic Kim Levin in her short, but rich artistic period. The body of her artwork will be on a display at [Ronald Feldman Fine Arts](#) in New York from June 11 until July 29, 2016. The same gallery organized Kim Levin's exhibition in 2006, entitled *Notes and Itineraries*, but that was the installation of her archive of gallery cards and press releases, which she created during her long career as an art critic. This time, it is all about Kim Levin – the artist.

Featured image: Kim Levin – Nude II, 1970. Slider images: Kim Levin – ACTION PAINTING VII, 1970; Kim Levin – Camel Corps, 1969-1970; Kim Levin – Packers and Vikings, 1967. All images are courtesy of Ronald Feldman Fine Arts.