

Karin Apollonia Müller

JULIE SAUL

In “Terra Cognita,” photographer Karin Apollonia Müller left behind her earlier motif of urban Los Angeles to probe the less narrative and more lyrical possibilities of land, sky, and shoreline. Human figures, or the marks they make, studded many of the landscapes here and served as traffic signals for the imagination. For example: an X marks a landing pad on a remote mountain ledge; a slender sign of the number one appears in the midst of a row of stunted, severed tree trunks. Müller’s titles—*Landing Point*, *Navigated Boat*, and *No. 1*—suggest a site where a voyage begins. Or ends.

In this show of recent work, Müller led us from what we could see and recognize into shrouded, unknowable terrain. At first the grainy 40-by-50-inch chromogenic prints felt unsatisfying, as though covered with dust. Given the dramatic settings, we yearn for a crisper view. But gradually, like the fog she captures, an imposing and compelling ambiguity sets in, creating a charged landscape, disarming and ethereal. Like photographers Bill Jacobson and Michal Rovner, the German-born Müller works against the impulse to bring a literal subject into focus. Rather than manipulate her images to distort them, Müller lets the indistinct come naturally. In *Foggy and Disoriented*, only a few tufts of grass and the cleavage of a mountain pass penetrate a small corner of the print otherwise enveloped in fog. What Müller so ably conveys in these works is an unexpected sense of mute space. Her talent is in finding and arresting time and place.

—Elaine Sexton



Karin Apollonia
Müller,
Navigated Boat, 2001,
chromogenic print,
40" x 50".
Julie Saul.