



SPACE + LAND

curated by Chelsea Dean

CHELSEA
DEAN

SUSAN
FELDMAN

SUSAN
LOGORECI

AILI
SCHMELTZ

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ON COVER INTERIOR:
Chelsea Dean
Place And Paradox
(series)
2015
9" x 12"
Inkjet print

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THE AMERICAN WEST has long been thought of as a place open and free, rich in space and land: the new frontier, manifest destiny. Perhaps the basis for this understanding of the West is the Public Land Survey System, established by the Land Ordinance of 1785, and still the primary legal definition of property in much of the United States, between Ohio and California. This “grid” was the vision of Thomas Jefferson, who, after the Revolutionary War, found a need to subdivide and describe the recently claimed Western territories. This turned the land—be it desert, forest, mountain, or river—into a national network of neat, uniform one-mile squares, running north-south, east-west. These one-square-mile, or 640-acre, plots of land, called sections, could then be quartered up indefinitely, making nearly any point in the West locatable through a series of numbers, known as township and range.

The US now had so much land, they would offer some of it up to private hands. With the passing of the Homestead Act in 1862, any citizen could essentially claim up to 160 acres, or a quarter of a section, if they could sustain themselves on it by ranching

or farming. However, working on the land in such a way proved particularly difficult in certain parts of the country, including arid regions, and subsequently in 1938 the Small Tract Act was introduced. This specific version of the Homestead Act granted applicants five-year leases on much more manageable five-acre plots (1/128 of one section) in parts of Southern California. If they improved the plot by building a structure on it, they were handed a patent, or deed, to the land after the lease was up. These simple structures, which were often no larger than 400 square feet, came to be known as jackrabbit homesteads, because they quickly popped up across the landscape. However, many of these homesteaders were confronted with the difficulties of living and maintaining a home in the harsh desert environs, oftentimes in remote places that were not serviced by utilities or roads. Before long, many of these cabins had been abandoned, and by 1976 the Small Tract Act was repealed.

As a result, the area east of Joshua Tree and Twentynine Palms, known as Wonder Valley, is peppered with the skeletons and shells of these jackrabbit homesteads. Beginning in the early 2000s, a next generation started to find interest in these cabins, including photographer Kim Stringfellow, who has documented and written extensively about Wonder Valley’s homestead cabins in her 2008 book and multimedia project Jackrabbit Homestead, and artist Andrea Zittel, whose A-Z West compound originated from a single homestead cabin on a five-acre parcel in Joshua Tree. In the last few years, a new crop of artists have taken to these high desert homesteads for inspiration, and perhaps, amidst soaring city real estate prices, in the hopes of land and home ownership.

The Small Tract Act homesteaders, and the cabins they left behind, drew Chelsea Dean to the high desert. Poking around the ruins of Wonder Valley, she finds inspiration and source material for her mixed media works. While many of the cabins have

collapsed and are no longer functional for shelter, occasionally original mid-century artifacts have been preserved, miraculously: a swatch of metallic wallpaper, a case study chair. Dean carefully collects or documents these found objects, and combines them with watercolor, drawing, and hand-cut photographs to create new scenarios for these homesteads. In Dean's constructions, she is in control of their environment, history, and decay.

In the city of Los Angeles, 160 miles or so west of Wonder Valley, the grid is here, too, but it's a bit off-kilter. In the center of the city, the streets run at an angle. When the Public Land Survey System came to Los Angeles in the 1850s, when California became part of the Union, civil land grants like ranchos and pueblo lands were excluded, but all unclaimed lands were gridded and passed into private hands. The result is a network of clashing street grids, moments of unsettling amidst order.

Susan Logoreci captures this tension, the grid askew, in her vibrant drawings of aerial views of cityscapes. Her drawings serve as a record of Los Angeles at the moment, capturing both the physical appearance of its buildings and streets, as well as the invisible currents that flow through them—heat waves, tremors, traffic, development, power, change. The physical world is meticulously depicted, but with a surrealist bent, reminiscent of the morphed renderings of Google Maps satellite imagery in 3D mode, with exaggerated rooflines and blobby trees. Logoreci's works suggest shifts beneath the asphalt. We are anxious yet hopeful, in anticipation of what's to come.

While Logoreci takes a macro view, overlooking the city, Susan Feldman zooms in, peering into the windows of each building on the block. Made from found materials

and photographs she takes, mostly from construction and demolition sites and forgotten houses, her layered sculptural works become peepholes into the buildings and their inhabitants—speculative or imagined narratives, informed by the traces left behind at the site. Feldman, whose practice often involves disassembling and reconfiguring older works to create new ones, is constantly building, constructing ladders to climb up and bridges to reach across, finding connections between the individual stories embedded in the history of each structure.

Aili Schmeltz addresses the grid most directly, through her graphite drawings and sculptural works that explore the linear perspective, and consider the ways in which we depict forms in space, from the Cartesian to the digital, in 2D and 3D. There is a purity to her straightforward use of utilitarian materials, such as galvanized steel horse fencing, concrete cinder block, and graphite on paper. Untreated, these materials, which can be purchased from a hardware or tractor supply store, speak for themselves, and evoke the minimalist aesthetics and values of Sol Lewitt and Donald Judd, as well as the resourcefulness of California's early ranchers and homesteaders.

Together, this collection of works may be seen as a current reflection of the changing West and specifically American attitudes towards land and property ownership. Informed by the spirit and possibilities of the past, today's Southern California settlers are confronted with new challenges. With demand for housing on the rise, growing numbers of residents and tourists, and shifts in real estate, perhaps it's time to reevaluate some of the ideals so deeply rooted within our country and its identity, upon which it was founded. The vision of the West as endless expanse of space and land may be one that is fading into the sunset.

CHELSEA
DEAN

SPACE + LAND is an exhibition featuring the work of four female artists who employ architectural concepts to construct new realities. With the City of Los Angeles and its surrounding geography as their muse, each artist responds to the rich history of the built and natural environments around them that are simultaneously forming and eroding. Their use of transitional subjects emulates the gridded landscape through order and entropy, balance and fragility. By manipulating and reimagining these spaces, the artists create systems that offer alternative experiences of the grid.

Chelsea Dean's drawings and mixed media collages embody her attraction to systems that erode. By gathering and incorporating discarded elements from abandoned homesteads in the remote reaches of the Mojave Desert, she layers and builds them back into her collages, assigning new meaning with the addition of gold elements and embellished patterns. She carefully documents then reconstructs these spaces, offering

the viewer a spatially rich experience that responds to the original site. Memorializing architectural histories, Dean emphasizes sites in transition to re-contextualize and illuminate their inherent value.

Susan Logoreci's colored pencil drawings offer viewers dizzying versions of the city where, from a bird's eye view, the architectural grid and the buildings within it become simplified and warped. By methodically layering colors in thousands of tiny shapes, Logoreci's work reveals the massive expanse of the city and its individual components. Her drawings depict the underlying possibilities and anxieties produced and sustained in our shared spaces.

Susan Feldman's visually complex assemblages mimic the provisional structures that she's drawn to. Her practice mirrors the process of building, intuitively weaving and layering raw materials and imagery to construct personal narratives. The works manifest as installations, drawings, and mixed media projects. Feldman utilizes the grid through both medium and subject, calling attention to the pattern and rhythm of Los Angeles' frenetic energy.

Aili Schmeltz's sculpture utilizes the Cartesian grid as a framework, referencing architectural drafting systems and modernist art icons. The work simultaneously exists as a form imposed on the space, while also offering a grid through which the viewer experiences the exhibition space. Schmeltz articulates the absence of space and form via a dramatically different approach through her large-scale drawings. Her monumental works envelop the viewer with their seamless gradations and shifts in spatial orientation, where lines deviate and bend into pattern and form. The atmospheric light and space of the desert landscape coalesce as graphite on paper, recalling minimalist systems and twilight of the desert sky.

CHELSEA
DEAN





Reflected In What's Left

2018

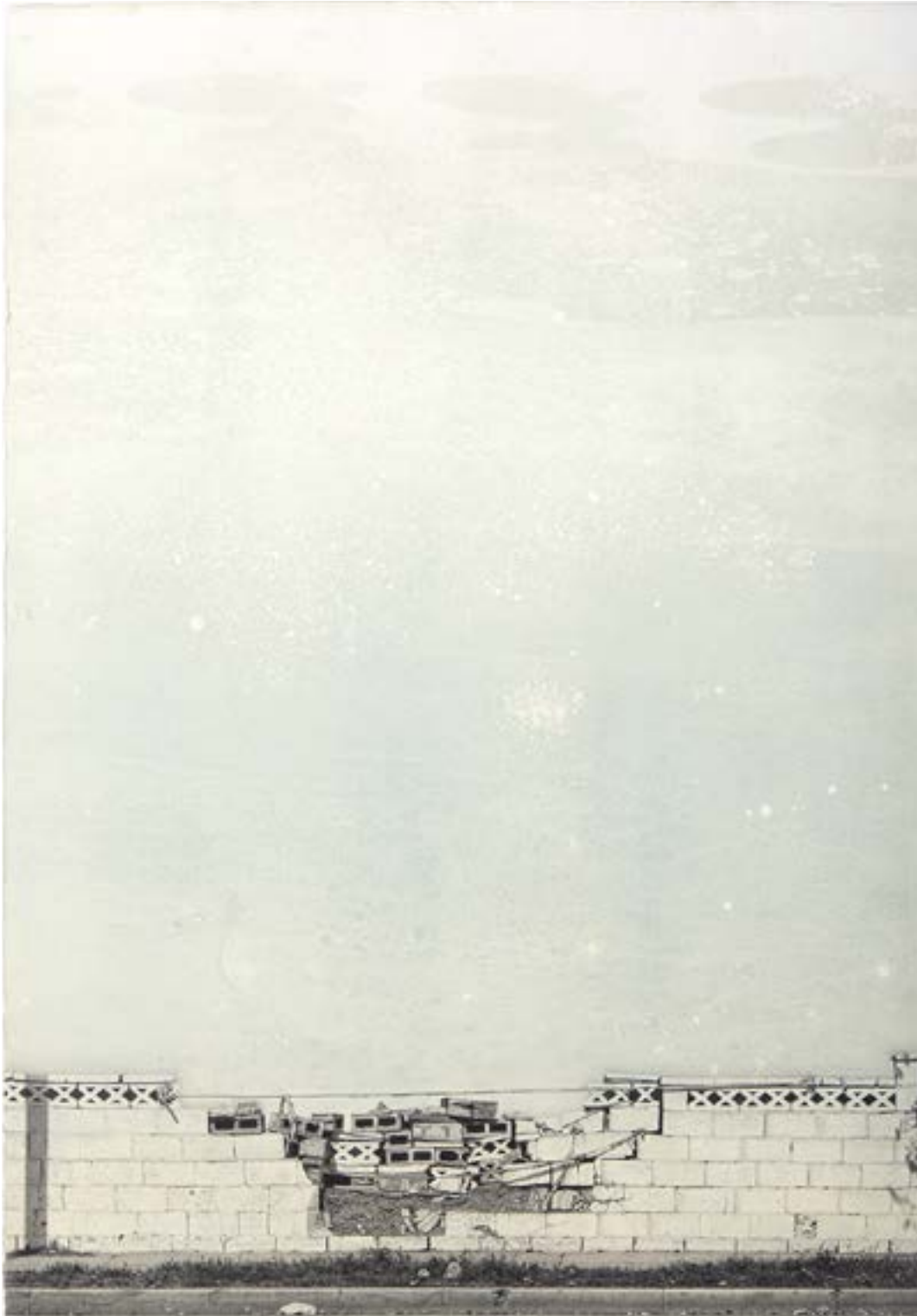
36" x 48" (diptych)

Watercolor, hand-cut photographs, contact paper, foam core, and found objects from abandoned homesteads on panel

CHELSEA DEAN is a Los Angeles-based artist whose work embodies systems that erode. She salvages history, suspending the architecture of Southern California in time with a process of carefully controlled chaos. By combining her photographs with experimental printmaking, drawing, and collage techniques, Dean elevates the conflict between order and entropy. Her most recent body of work focuses around her fascination with abandoned homesteads in Wonder Valley where she continues to meditate upon the allure of beauty and decay. Dean gathers and incorporates discarded elements from these spaces, assigning new meaning with the addition of gold elements and embellished patterns. She thoughtfully documents then reconstructs these spaces by dimensionally layering information, offering the viewer a spatially rich experience that illuminates the original site.

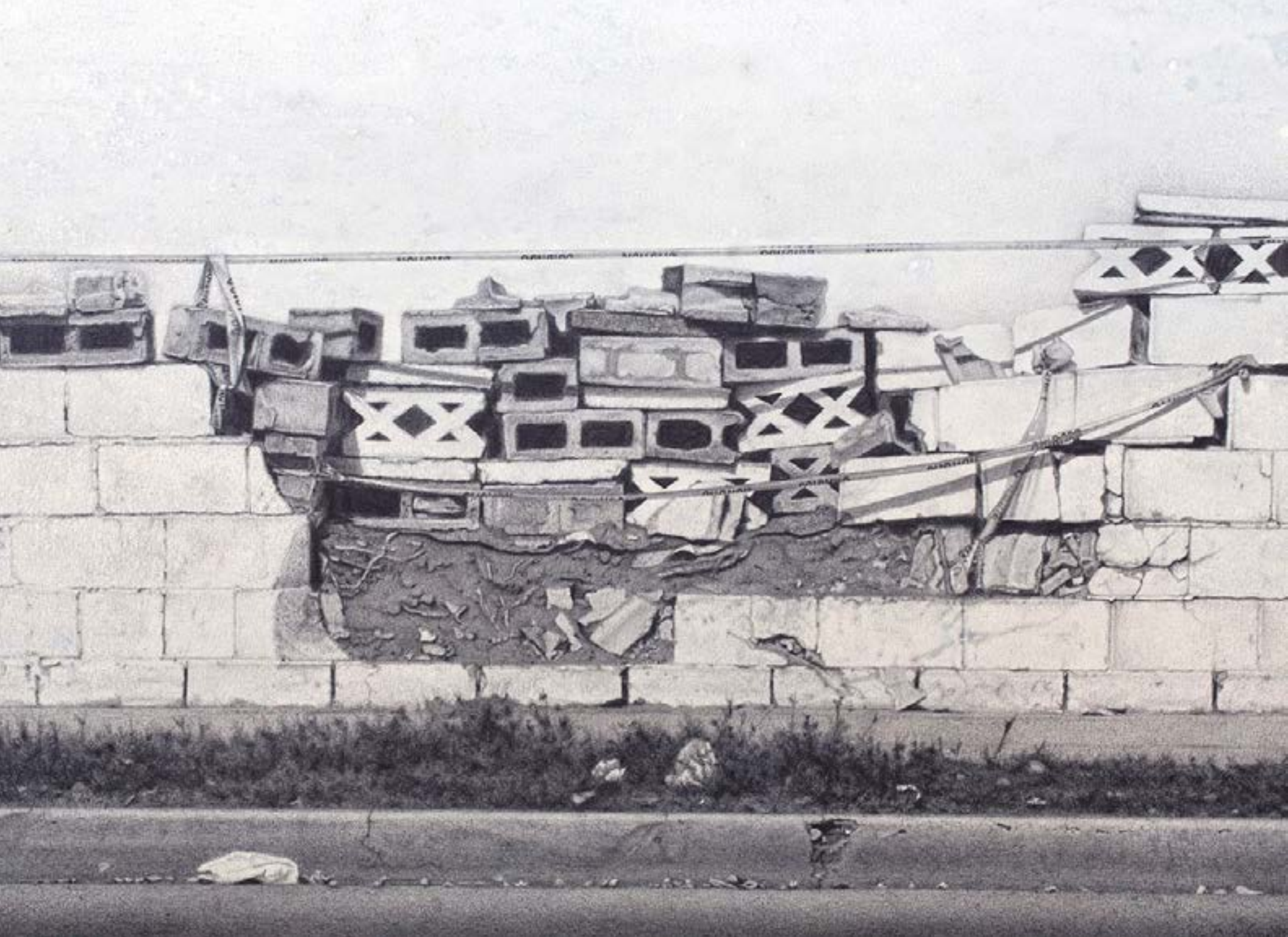


CHELSEA
DEAN



Prone To Bruising
2015
43" x 30"
Graphite on monotype

RIGHT:
Prone To Bruising (detail)



CHELSEA
DEAN

When Patterns Are Broken
2017
29" x 31"
Hand-cut photograph,
decorative paper, gold foil,
and foam core on monotype



CHELSEA
DEAN

SUSAN FELDMAN is a mixed media artist, working primarily with found wood while also using a wide variety of other materials such as yarn, colored string, and plexiglass.

Feldman dignifies these discarded materials as environments of observation. Arranged as architectural plans, she transforms each assemblage into a rising structure that in turn references a metaphorical self-growth. These structured sculptures act as three-dimensional landscapes, evoking the stratified, fragmentary nature of history and memory.

Her current body of work was inspired by her meditation practice and visualizes the spiritual enlightenment of “rising-up.” These all-over compositions take the eye through various planes and materials, which parallel the obstacles and stages of progress through that journey. As opposed to utilitarian constructions indicative of the urban skyline filled with high-rises, Feldman designs structures of contemplation, memory, and hope.

Wired
2017
15" x 20" x 2"
Mixed Media



SUSAN
FELDMAN



Flat, side A
2016
44" x 80" x 6" (2 sided)
Mixed Media

ABOVE:
Flat, side B

RIGHT:
Flat, side A (detail)







LEFT:
Crosside
2018
19" x 14" x 3"
Mixed Media

Strung Out, 2016
21" x 19" x 2"
Mixed Media

SUSAN
FELDMAN

AILI SCHMELTZ's work examines the transformation of the Californian landscape through the lens of mid-century aesthetics using raw materials of environmental relevance. She produces material-based works researching the architectural history and cultural philosophy of the California dream as realized in the development of the city of Los Angeles. Drawing on her urban experiences, Schmeltz explores the evolution of the American landscape and human impact upon it. She analyses the environmental history of Los Angeles, a city born in the desert that often serves as a testament to human ingenuity despite depleting water resources from distant places. Her most recent body of work, *Object/Window/Both/Neither*, deals with ideas of objecthood, space, and seeing, where figure/ground obscurity takes place.



Cartesian Cube Object Window
2018
41" x 41" x 82"
Steel



ALI
SCHMELTZ

Cast Print II

2017

7" x 4" x 10"

Concrete

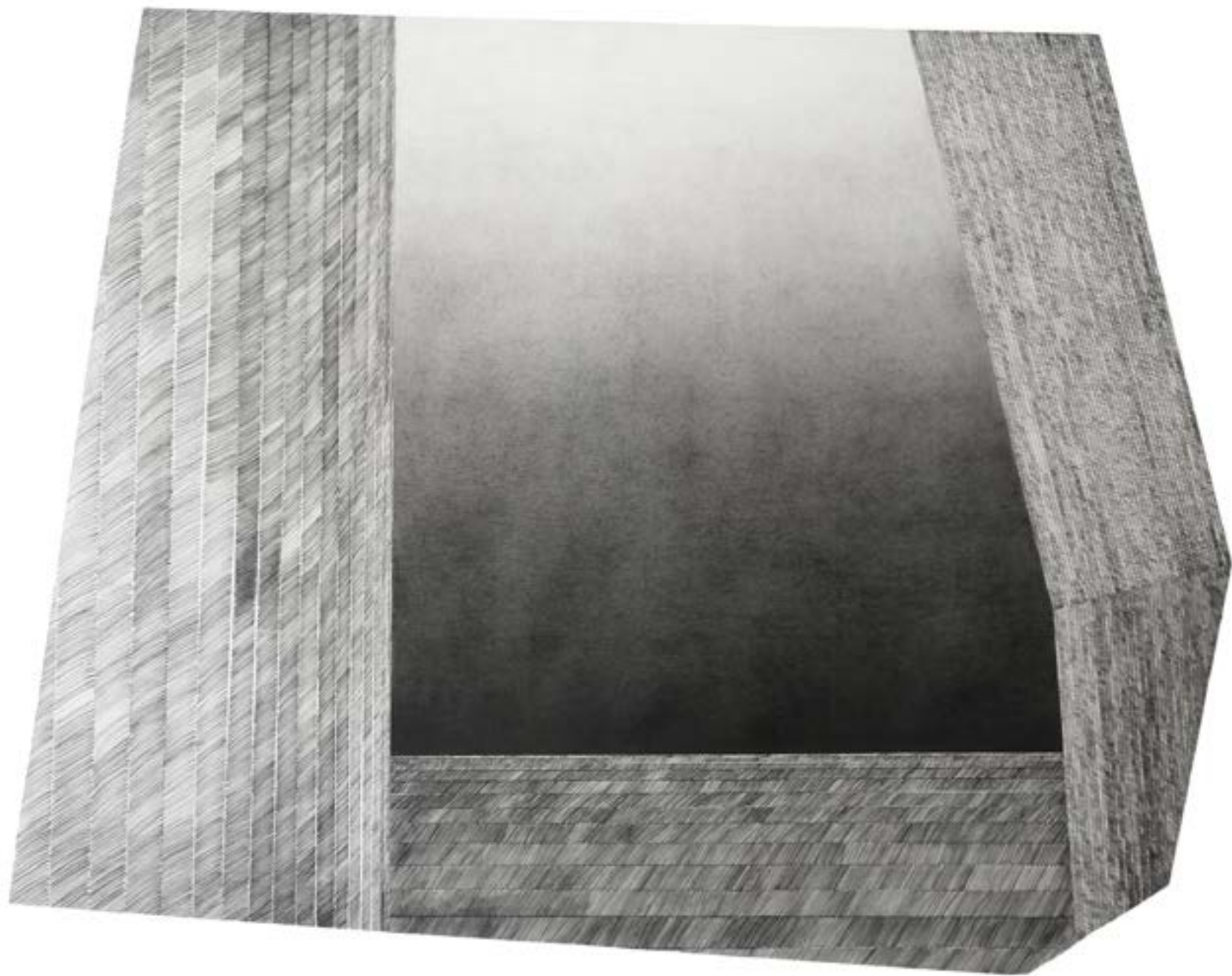
RIGHT:

Object/Window/Both/Neither XXXVIII

2018

72" x 60"

Graphite on paper



ALI
SCHMELTZ

SUSAN LOGORECI makes drawings of contemporary urban landscapes. Her art deals with themes of uncertainty and optimism within our cities. When you look at her colored pencil drawings up close, you see every individual window and roof that makes up a city. From a distance, you see an intricate grid that is as planned and stable as much as it is fragile and disordered.

Recently, she has been incorporating abstraction and geometric pattern into her work to create an underlying structure that discusses these issues formally, conceptually and psychologically. Like contour lines on a map, these designs squeeze and stretch streets and neighborhoods.

Logoreci's drawings depict the intrinsic anxieties and possibilities that are frequently revealed in our built spaces. Often using Los Angeles as a blueprint, her work calls attention to these sensibilities, awakening people to the contrasts and possibilities in their cities and themselves.



Flowing Grid (Pool Time)
2018
12" x 12"
Colored pencil on paper



SUSAN
LOGORECI

Neighborhood Warpage
2018
36" x 60"
Colored pencil on paper

RIGHT:
Neighborhood Warpage (detail)





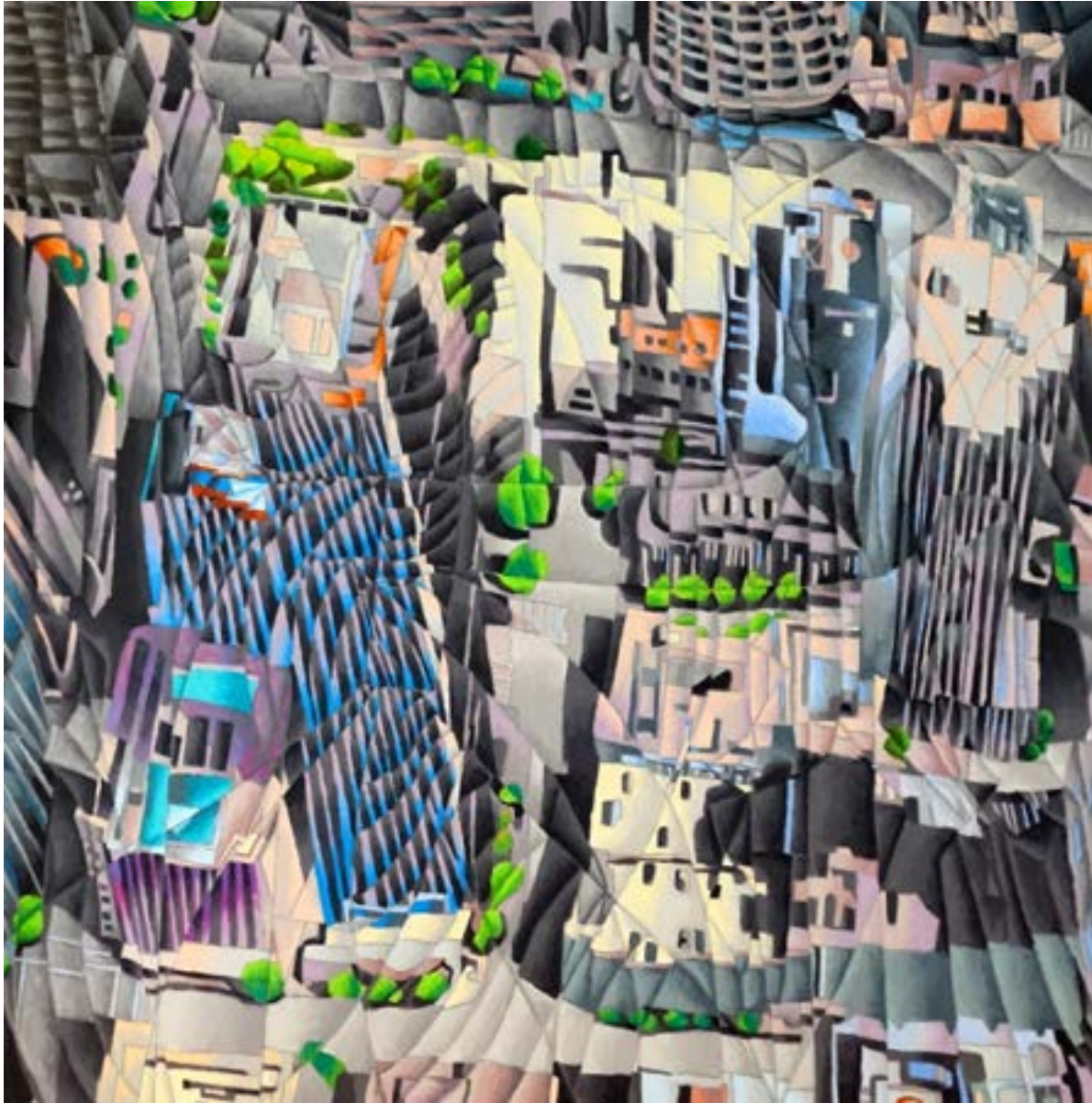
SUSAN
LOGORECI



LEFT:
Fractured Grid (Housing Density)
2018
12" x 12"
Colored pencil on paper

Fractured Grid (Manufacturing)
2018
12" x 12"
Colored pencil on paper

SUSAN
LOGORECI



SUSAN
LOGORECI

Flowing Grid (DTLA)
2018
12"x12"
Colored pencil on paper

