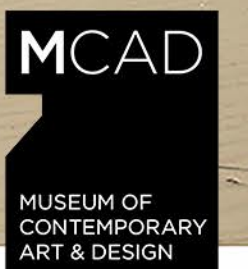
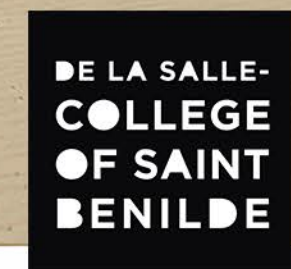


FLATLANDS

James Beckett | Hrair Sarkissian | Amie Siegel | Eugenio Tibaldi



Eugenio Tibaldi | Image courtesy of the Artist



FLATLANDS

The world is vast but delicate.

The world, Thomas Friedman declared, is flat. Thus “The world is flat” has become shorthand for globalization, of a world shrinking due to companies and institutions going global for market and labour; of the web and technology levelling and transforming how we respond to the world; a world that allows for forms of collaboration without regard to geography, distance or even language. This gleeful utopia where Bangalore, Boston or Beijing happily exchange and compete on a level ground, however, does not acknowledge the underlying complexities of histories of colonialism, cross-cultural exchange, access, power and personal freedom.

Flatlands brings together considerations that reflect upon efforts of decolonisation through readings of the constructed environments built for public housing or by private homes. From African buildings heavily influenced along Corbusian lines with its grids and protruding boxes shown in James Beckett’s project; to that of following the subtle incursion of Le Corbusier’s modern city, India’s Chandigarh, into the economies of contemporary society as filmed by Amie Siegel. Interiors of archives housing information unavailable to the public are explored through Hrair Sarkissian’s photographs and ‘illegal’ homes built by squats across the long strip of a Neapolitan beach in the town of Licola are observed by Eugenio Tibaldi. The works in the exhibition examine events that mark the course of these projects.

Across all these works, each of the artists engages with sites, whether these be cities or closed rooms, that have been considered at the edges, or worse, established as part of a ‘periphery.’ A periphery connotes a border that divides, according to Irit Rogoff: *The logic of the border is far less of containment than it is one of division.*

Edges are usually part of the whole, its center just another element of a surface. Nothing can exist without an edge, but many things are best served not to have peripheries. On surfaces that represent the urban environment, we must consider the geographies of the political fabric, perceived centers are imploding and the edges continue to fall away. **Flatlands** ascribes the idea of flatness to the percipience of each of the artists to produce a work that re-imagines “peripheral” sites as points of origin rather than as geographies marked only as colonized. The scars of colonialism will always be part of a colonized nation’s history—any pronouncements of liberation from a colonial narrative is naïve and unproductive. The artists in the exhibition, however, employ this ‘reverse travel’ to consider such narratives as urban planning and economic systems.

During the 14th century, the world was not flat. In a painting by Hieronymus Bosch (*The Garden of Earthly Delights*), a flat disc shown suspended inside a transparent globe is almost fantastical. The complexity of imagining the geography of the world depicted in a neat cross-section—a disc of flat land slicing through a sphere. No one ever falls off the disc’s edge because the world continues—the world is flat, and the lands which roll across it are delicate.



Hrair Sarkissian | Image courtesy of the Artist

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Acknowledgement

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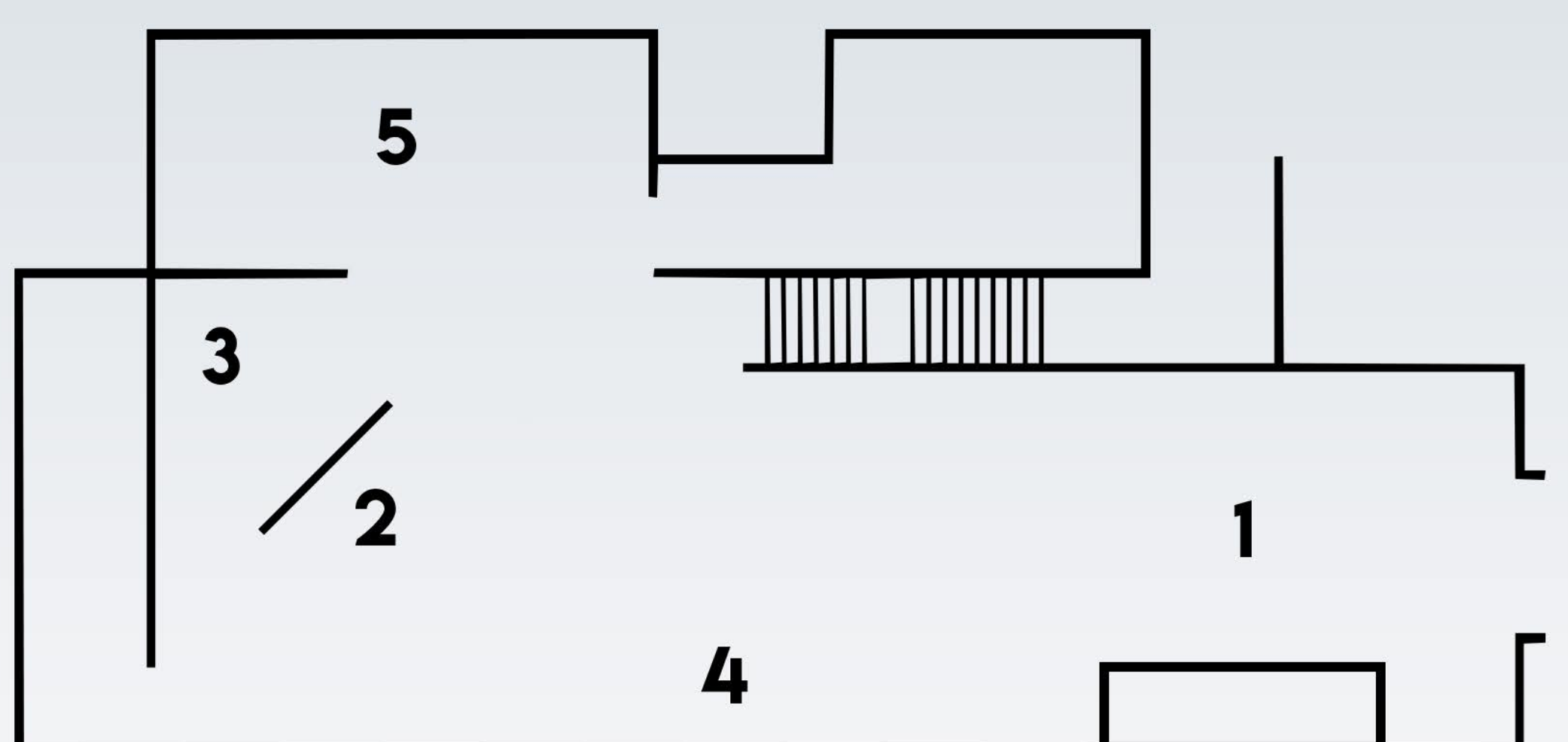
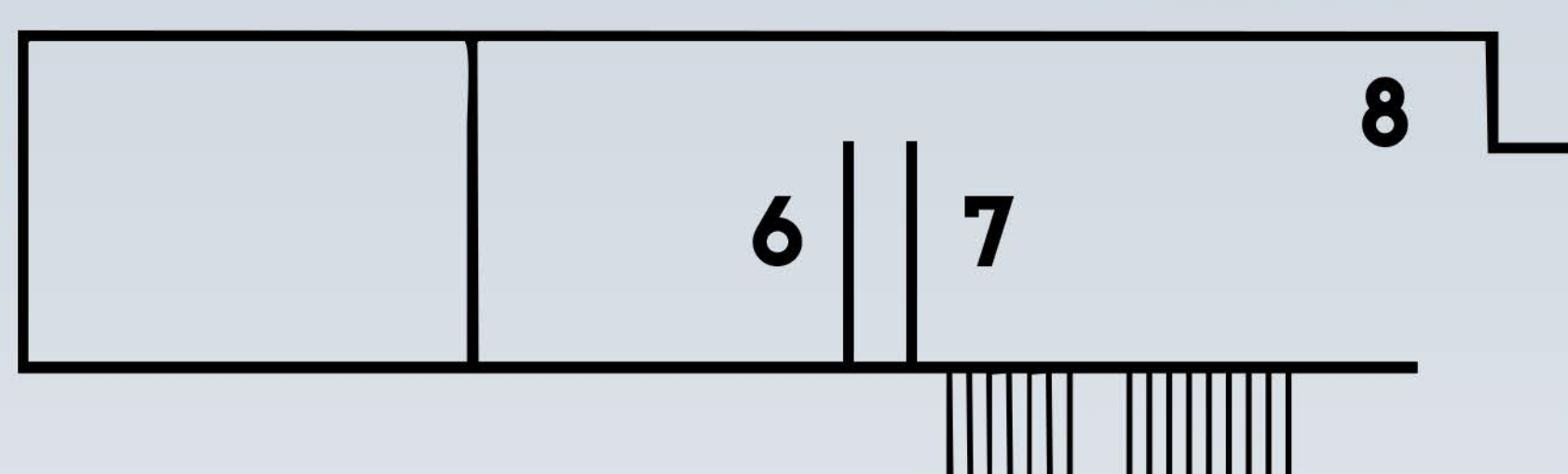
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MEZZANINE



GROUND FLOOR



James Beckett

Negative Space: A Scenario Generator for Clandestine Building, 2017

Installation | 300 x 111 x 380 cm
Courtesy of the artist and galleries
Wilfried Lentz, Rotterdam, NL and T293, Rome, IT

First seen in the Belgian Pavilion for the 56th Venice Biennale, the work makes use of a machine to retrieve and reconfigure wooden blocks to show how one's living or working space can be expanded, a practice known as clandestine building. In this reiteration of the work without the machine, the horizontal and vertical lines characteristic of modernist architecture delineate the space in which are placed blocks of various shapes. Though the negative space would conventionally refer to the area that surrounds the objects, in this work, it refers to the blocks of wood themselves. The blocks allude to parts of modernist architecture that were built in Africa and their arrangement are meant to be suggestions on how to repurpose them. In this manner, one is able to see what the artist mentioned in an interview about the usage and life of modern architecture being different from what it was intended.

Although it is industrial history that he looks into in such works as **Blinds (2011)**, Beckett does not go into narrative or didactic history. Using bits and pieces which he believes will have resonance and present other ways of understanding the accounts, a flexible history and a new significance are created.



Eugenio Tibaldi
Licola Pop Up, 2013
Mixed media | 125 x 77 x 58 cm
Courtesy: PREMIO MARETTI/
Italia_Cuba

Despite the playfulness of the work due to the use of pop-up techniques and watercolor, the implication of the transportability of a place and the possibility of relegating this to oblivion ought to give viewers pause. In the history of the town of Licola in Naples, these events create an ebb and flow of attention Licola has received. There seems to be a reference to some of these incidents in the work, the paper engineering done with the help of a young paper engineer named Giovanni Iafrate as a culmination of the immersion of the artist in the place.

Though people are missing in his works, traces of their activities -- settling aptitudes, behavior directed at changing a territory's aspect and to modify its urban layout -- are the subjects of Tibaldi's work. Some of these activities are deemed illegal such as the occupation of seaside houses by evacuees and people who have nowhere else to go to. The stretch of sand and the array of houses have undergone transformation, the last of which seem to be abandonment.



Eugenio Tibaldi
Sea Side Project, 2013
Pen and ink, inkjet prints mounted on aluminium composite panels
variable dimensions
21.5 cm height, length variable
Courtesy of the artist



Hrair Sarkissian
History, 2010
Archival inkjet prints | 147.3 x 186.5 cm
Courtesy of the artist

The artist goes back to the tradition of photography in the region by connecting his father's practice (which was also the artist's initial training ground) to the commercial studios in the region. The studio background documented in **Background (2010)** are from Amman, Beirut, Byblos, Istanbul, Cairo and Alexandria, and details in the photographs seem to refer to identity marks of each -- perhaps the books make reference to the library in Alexandria, the columns to the Jabar Al Qalaa in Amman, the garden background to Taksim Gezi Park in Istanbul, the piano to Cairo's music industry, the seaside background to Byblos, and the chair and the pink color to Beirut as center of fashion in the region. Like his **Execution Square (2008)**, the built environment contrasts with the social realities - the photography studio which produced portraits indicative of the sitter's status and/or aspirations was supplanted by images of war and wealth associated with the region, and accessibility of the camera.

"The emphasis on disappearance is tied to a spectral concern: of phantom and ghosts, of shadow and light," wrote Omar Kholeif of Sarkissian's works. As important as discussions on the care of archives is the archive and record-keeping structure that enable access for purposes other than research. His grandfather's story of being forced to leave his village in 1915 and the Armenian genocide would have been denied or affirmed by access to these archives but as the artist was, the viewers are also given very little access as the photographs **History (2010)** do not give them details of the items in the archives other than that these seem rarely opened.



Hrair Sarkissian
Background, 2010
Archival inkjet prints | 180 x 230 cm
Courtesy of the artist



Amie Siegel
Lot 248, 2013
HD video | 6 minutes, color/sound
Courtesy: Richard J. Massey

First shown in the group exhibition **Brute**, the work is a result of extensive research and delves into the speculation stimulated by the acquisition of objects. Similar to her works **DDR/DDR (2008)** and **Empathy (2003)** which looked into a design chair from East Germany and an Eames lounge chair respectively, **Provenance (2013)** examines the journey of different kinds of Chandigarh furniture designed by Le Corbusier and Pierre Jeanneret for the buildings of Chandigarh, one of India's early planned cities. In an interview published in Art in America, Siegel said "... I knew immediately I wanted to make a film that would perform the movement of objects through the global marketplace, highlighting difference between cultural, monetary and use values. A few weeks later, reflecting on my own role as an artist in the economy of objects, I decided to auction **Provenance (2013)** and make a second film, **Lot 248 [2013]**, depicting the sale of the work. Thereafter, the two films would be exhibited together."

Fascination with the theatricality of display, proximity and distance, repetition and remaking are evident in the equipment that she uses and the movement of the camera, the order in which the chairs are presented to the viewer, the display of the items in the house, in the shoot for a catalogue, and the creation of another work that goes into the art market.



Amie Siegel
Provenance, 2013
HD video | 40 minutes, color/sound
Courtesy: Richard J. Massey

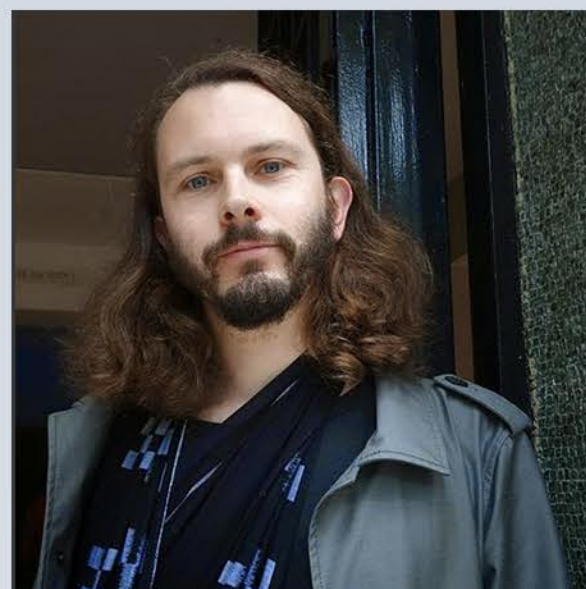


Amie Siegel
Proof (Christie's 19 October, 2013), 2013
Ink jet print, lucite | 65.8 x 47 cm
Courtesy: Richard J. Massey

ARTISTS' BIOS

JAMES BECKETT

James Beckett (b. Harare, Zimbabwe, 1977) creates environments which incorporate performance, painting, sculpture, embroidery, text and print through installations. He has also given sound a central role in his work with outputs ranging from radio documentaries to mock ethnic bands, and museum displays. This has been part of a research-based activity which documents the cultural and physiological effects of noise. He co-founded the Hurdy-Gurdy outfit and The FRÈDERYCK NUYEGEN Seaside Memorial Band.



His recent shows include the 56th Venice Biennale, Belgian Pavilion (IT); Utopia/Dystopia, MAAT (PT), 5th Thessaloniki Biennale (GR); Artspace, Auckland/Physics Room, (NZ). He has published two monographs: "Works of James Beckett with Constant Interjections by Frank Key", TWAAS/Koenig books (US); "James Beckett", Kehrer Verlag (DE). In 2003 he won the Prix De Rome for art and public space, and currently works with galleries T293 in Naples, Lüttgenmeijer in Berlin and Universal Studios in Beijing.

Beckett currently lives and works in Amsterdam and London.

EUGENIO TIBALDI

Eugenio Tibaldi (b. Alba, Italy, 1977) combines drawing, photography, and installation in his works, which discuss geographical space and put it in the context of politics. The monograph "Eugenio Tibaldi. Geografie Economice", edited by Sabrina Vedovotto in 2014, describes Tibaldi's complete works. Since 2001 he has collaborated continuously with the Umberto di Marino gallery, Naples.



His important solo shows include "Questione d'appartenenza", curated by Fabrizio Tramontano, MADRE museum, Naples, Archeologia / Contemporanea _02 -, in the Museo Archeologico Statale, Ascoli Piceno, 2013; "Transit - 4", State Museum of Contemporary Art, Thessaloniki, 2011; - "Project Room MADRE - Museo d'Arte Donnaregina", Naples, 2010. Among group shows are: "4th Thessaloniki Biennale of Contemporary Art; Tradition - Reversal", curated by Katerina Koskina and Yannis Bolis, "Transient Space: The Tourist Syndrome, Bucharest", curated by Irina Cios, Marina Sorbello, and Antje Weitzel, International Centre of Contemporary Art, Bucharest; "Tabula Rasa: 111 days on a long table, a special project of Manifesta7, a cura di Denis Isaia", in collaboration with Raqs Media Collective, Ex Alumix, Bolzano; "Laws of Relativity / La legge è relativa per tutti", curated by Anna Colin and Elena Sorokina, Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo, Turin.

Tibaldi is currently based in Naples, Italy.

HRAIR SARKISSIAN

Hrair Sarkissian (b. 1973, Damascus, Syria) attended the École Nationale Supérieure de la Photographie and earned his BFA in Photography at the Gerrit Rietveld Academie in Amsterdam in 2010. Sarkissian's works follow the rules of documentary photography while taking a critical stand against the limitations of the medium. His photographic works explore ideas around transition through time and space. The strange undertones exuded in the scenes bring forward the absence and presence of human figures in the atmospheric landscapes.



Sarkissian has had solo exhibitions in at KADIST in San Francisco, USA (2017), Fondazione Carispezia in La Spezia, Italy (2015), and SALT Beyoglu in Istanbul, Turkey (2011). His group exhibitions include the "Disappearance at Sea - Mare Nostrum" at the Baltic Contemporary Art Centre in Newcastle, UK (2017), "ATLAS of the ruins OF EUROPE" at CentroCentro in Madrid, Spain (2016), and the 10th Bamato Encounters, the African Biennial of Photography in Bamato, Mali (2015).

Sarkissian currently lives and works in London.

AMIE SIEGEL

Amie Siegel (b. 1974, Chicago, IL) attended the Bard College and later earned her MFA at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago in 1999. Siegel has produced works in photography, video, film installations, and feature films for the cinema. Her videos and feature films have been shown in various festivals such as The Cannes Film Festival, Berlin International Film Festival, and the New York Film Festival. Siegel is a recipient of the ICA Boston's 2010 Foster Prize and the 2012 Sundance Institute Film Fund Award.



Siegel's solo exhibitions include "Amie Siegel: Provenance" at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, NY (2014), "Black Moon Art house" at the Austin Museum of Art in Austin, Texas (2012), and "Berlin Remake" at the Carpenter Center for the Visual Arts, Harvard University in Cambridge, MA (2007). She has been part of group exhibitions such as "Infinite City" at the Zabłudowicz Collection in London, England (2014), "The Future's Not What It Used To Be" at the Chapter Arts Centre in Cardiff, Wales (2012), and the Cannes Film Festival at Semaine de la Critique, in Cannes, France (2011).

Siegel currently lives and works in New York and Berlin.