

ABOVE: DAVID LEVINTHAL
COVER: PETER GARFIELD

Acknowledgements

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We thank these galleries for lending work:

Paul Morris Gallery: Oliver Boberg, David Levinthal

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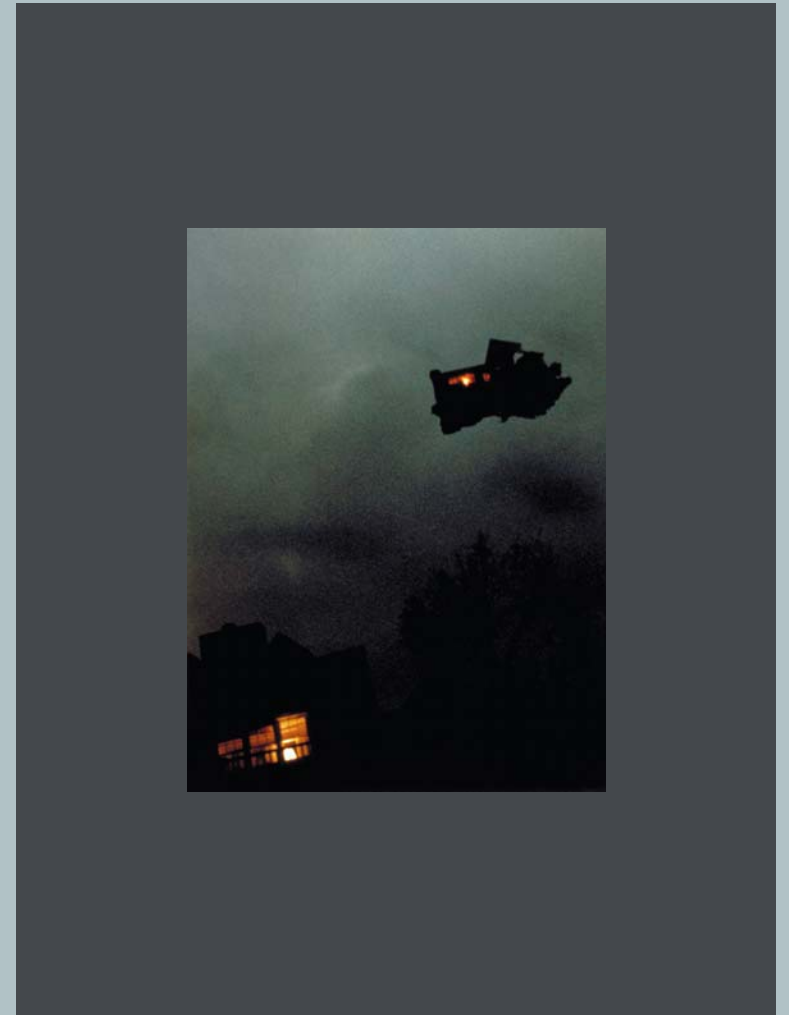
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499 Park Avenue and **Hines**, through their exhibition program, actively contributes to the cultural community as an expression of ongoing commitment to excellence in the visual arts and architecture.

For more information about this show, please contact Dinaburg Arts, LLC, 212.807.0832.

staged realities

Jeremy Blake, Oliver Boberg, Peter Garfield, Kim Keever, David Levinthal



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Reality is real, but it doesn't exist.

As Albert Einstein noted, "Reality is merely an illusion, albeit a very persistent one." People, by nature, like to believe that there must be an "objective" state, and artists often try to communicate it, through writing, story telling, photography, and other visual art forms.

Sometimes they work so hard to understand it, manipulating what they perceive as actual, that they create their own reality. After all, uncontextualized facts have little meaning. The fascinating result is that what these artists often produce is something more authentic than objectivity.



OLIVER BOBERG

The twentieth-century photographer Robert Doisneau, for one, staged many of his dramatic Parisian tableaux, intensifying romance, mystery, and even "fact." And today, photographers rebel against the medium's ostensible truthfulness using many different means.

German photographer **Oliver Boberg** makes small models of urban settings and then photographs them to pose as representations of everyday scenes. He portrays highways receding into nowhere, barren landscapes, and empty, desolate parklike places and buildings, setting them into neutral backgrounds with no specific identifying characteristics. The effect is the decontextualization of images: they exist in no time or place. Boberg's is a "true" representation of a worldview, if not a world. He highlights his depictions of reality by maintaining a flat-tone background in the manner of fellow German photographers Bernd and Hilla Becher.

Reducing his view of places, movements, and narratives to color and abstraction, the painterly video artist **Jeremy Blake**, through all manner of digital manipulation, captures many levels of reality simultaneously-offering a virtual synesthesia of the senses. The effect is surreal, even hallucinatory, with colors the equivalents of emotional and physical states. By using technology to stunning esthetic effect, he creates a universe out of time – one that links the earthly and spiritual, the past and future.

In fact, a surrealist sense underlies much of these artists' production, playing the so-called truth of photography against obvious fabrication and a desire to convey the subconscious.

Blake has explained that he "uses digital technology in order to combine techniques inherited from painting (e.g., using layer upon layer of translucent color) with lighting effects that recall photography." He plumbs the world of architecture, constructing from it imagined images that lead to implied, abstracted



KIM KEEVER



JEREMY BLAKE

narratives about the architects and the beings who inhabit these structures. As he has said, "I also borrow here and there from Hollywood's psychic dustbin," using "cheap special effects and the prefab accoutrements of success (hot tubs, vacation homes, powerful drugs)."

While many photographers—such as Gregory Crewdson and Jeff Wall—stage reality as a form of theater or film, others simply build their own worlds using any means available. **Peter Garfield**, for instance, portrays houses falling or flying through dark spaces, fragmented and with no visible context. Ominous, playful, disconcerting, and speculative, the fantasies he suggests are more typical of Surrealist paintings than photographs. For his "*Mobile Home*" series, Garfield produced his eerie fiction by photographing, in a real landscape, a model of a house suspended from a fishing line in front of the camera. It's a child's nightmare of being thrown into space by a tornado or some unearthly force. With the house as symbol, it's also the artist's critique of the flimsiness of our lives and values.

The model has long served **David Levinthal**, too. What could be more real than the distillation of an idea, a memory, an event, or a personality? Levinthal purveys a concentrated reality undiluted by context or ambiguity, using tabletop figurines and then capturing them with a Polaroid image.

His baseball stars—Babe Ruth after hitting a home run, Jackie Robinson stealing home, Yogi Berra looking up at a pop fly—presented mid-action standing on a tabletop of sand solidify the excitement and emotion, momentousness, and heroism inherent in the game. And at the same time, they have a funerary quality to them, as time arrested necessarily must.

Using a different approach, **Kim Keever** creates dramatic fictional landscapes and geological formations that are highly filmic and painterly, building his scenery from plaster models set in a huge fish tank illuminated with colored lights and limned by pigments he pours over them. The effect is much like that achieved by nineteenth-century Luminist or Hudson River school painters, or earlier by the German artist Caspar David Friedrich, or by science fiction filmmakers. These uncanny scenes of nature's violence are convincing replicas that challenge the audiences' perceptual skills. They convey, in a most romantic fashion, a sense of time past in the absence of any modern context, and they are a celebration of artifice.

Perhaps these attempts to reproduce or create reality reflect poet T.S. Eliot's observation, "Humankind cannot bear very much reality." Fortunately for us, as John Lennon wrote, "Reality leaves a lot to the imagination."

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