

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY IN THE CITY OF NEW YORK

# COLUMBIA NEWS

## Four Columbians Win Guggenheim Fellowships

The prestigious prize will enable them to pursue independent projects of their choice.

By Eve Glasberg  
April 16, 2024



From left to right: Bruno Bosteels, Adama Delphine Fawundu, Jack Halberstam, and Nicola López.

Four Columbia professors will receive Guggenheim Fellowships this year to pursue an independent project of their choice. They are among 188 American and Canadian

scientists, scholars in the social sciences and humanities, and writers and artists of all kinds selected from over 3,000 applicants for a [2024 fellowship](#).

Since its establishment in 1925, the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation has given nearly \$400 million in fellowships to more than 19,000 individuals; over 125 of its alumni are Nobel laureates, members of all the national academies, and winners of the Pulitzer Prize, Fields Medal, Turing Award, Bancroft Prize, and National Book Award, among other top honors.

Here's what the Columbians plan to accomplish in the next year:

[Bruno Bosteels](#), Acting Dean of Humanities, and Jesse and George Siegel Professor in the Humanities, Department of Latin American and Iberian Cultures, will be writing about the social function of literature, and examining literature as a set of forms of reality.

[Adama Delphine Fawundu](#), Assistant Professor, Visual Arts Program, School of the Arts, will create an experimental film, *Circadian Rhythms*, filmed entirely in slow motion, which will provoke healing in a time of post-trauma.

[Jack Halberstam](#), David Feinson Professor of Humanities, Department of English and Comparative Literature, will be writing about a new generation of trans and queer artists who reach back to the 1970s to retrieve a vocabulary of unbuilding, unmaking, unbecoming, and undoing to represent sexual and gender variance.

[Nicola López](#), Associate Professor, Visual Arts Program, School of the Arts, will, through her artwork, *The Haunting*—a series of large-scale drawings with video projected onto them—explore the intersection of nature and the built environment.

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY IN THE CITY OF NEW YORK

## COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF THE ARTS

# Several 2024 Guggenheim Fellowships Go to Columbia Artists

By Lisa Cochran  
April 15, 2024



The [Guggenheim Fellowships](#) for 2024 have been officially announced, and several School of the Arts alumni across various disciplines have joined the ranks of this prestigious program. These awards—which are among the most prestigious,

competitive fellowships in the arts and humanities—grant recipients funding to pursue creative projects under "the freest possible conditions."

The 2024 recipients include Writing alumni **Mai Der Vang '14** and **Tracy K. Smith '97**, who both received fellowships in Poetry, **Thomas Beller '92**, who received a General Nonfiction fellowship, and **Emma Cline '13**, whose fellowship is in European and Latin American Literature.

Several Visual Arts alumni were also awarded fellowships, including Associate Professor [Nicola Lopez '04](#) and Assistant Professor [Adama Delphine Fawundu '18](#), who each received awards in Fine Arts. Adjunct Assistant Professor [Ben Hagari '14](#) also received a fellowship in Film-Video.

This year, many of the fellows' projects respond directly to some of the most pressing issues of our day, including democracy and politics, identity, disability activism, machine learning, incarceration, climate change, and community.

"Humanity faces some profound existential challenges," said Edward Hirsch, award-winning poet and president of the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation, in a press release. "The Guggenheim Fellowship is a life-changing recognition. It's a celebrated investment into the lives and careers of distinguished artists, scholars, scientists, writers and other cultural visionaries who are meeting these challenges head-on and generating new possibilities and pathways across the broader culture as they do so."

Approximately 188 fellows were chosen out of a pool of 3,000 applicants. This year's cohort was selected, following a multi-step application and rigorous peer review process, on the criteria of exceptional promise and prior career achievement. Guggenheim fellows include more than 125 Nobel laureates, members of all the national academies, and winners of prestigious prizes such as the Pulitzer, Fields Medal, National Book Award, and more.

# Tamarind exhibition uproots expectations

[abqjournal.com/1305035/tamarind-exhibition-uproots-expectations.html](http://abqjournal.com/1305035/tamarind-exhibition-uproots-expectations.html)

"Parasites, Prosthetics, Parallels and Partners" (5), 2017, multi-color monoprint collage assembled from lithographically printed elements by Nicola López. Collaborating printers: Ash Armenta, Thomas Cert. (Courtesy of Tamarind Institute)

ALBUQUERQUE, N.M. — Nicola López melds the natural with the manufactured, creating a language of parallels and paradoxes.

Now living in Brooklyn, N.Y., López regularly stops by Albuquerque's Tamarind Institute to create both editions and monoprints. The Santa Fe native creates with an anthropologist's eye, using printmaking, drawing, collage and installation to create maps of the physical and psychological experience of contemporary cityscapes.



"Parasites, Prosthetics, Parallels and Partners," her latest Tamarind series, runs through April 27. The prints show a series of trees entangled, propped up and webbed by ladders, poles and scaffolding.

"Growing up in Santa Fe and still being connected to Santa Fe is a really big influence," she said in a telephone interview from Brooklyn. "It's that push and pull between nature and the built environment."

López wraps her trees in a sense of mystery. It's not clear whether they are dead, dying or surviving.

She discovered her muse during a residency in Austria.

"I was making a drawing and somebody said, 'You need a tree,' " she said.

López made a sculpture of a tree, then cut it into pieces to reconfigure it.

"I showed the ladders and the scaffolding holding together this tree. It's not bursting with leaves and flowers."

The ladders and supports surrounding it could be castoffs from a building project.

"These two different worlds are coming together with this imagery," she said. "It's hard to tell where one is prosthetic to another one. As in the city, the roots are kicking up the asphalt and displacing what was built."

López majored in anthropology and then received a master of fine arts at Columbia University, where she now teaches studio art and drawing.

López has long worked with imagery delving into the accelerated growth of industry, architecture and technology.

Her next project involves animation of her own photographs of cities topped by her drawing.

"It's also about the built lands again —— how we define it and how it defines us. It goes from tangible sites to an intangible environment of dystopian cities," she said. "We live in a mass-produced world."

**WHAT:** "Nicola López: Parasites, Prosthetics, Parallels and Partners"

**WHEN:** 10 a.m.-4 p.m. Tuesday-Saturday or by appointment through April 27.

**WHERE:** Tamarind Institute, 2500 Central SE

**HOW MUCH:** Free at 277 3901; [tamarind@unm.edu](mailto:tamarind@unm.edu)

## At new Neiman Gallery exhibit, psychedelic prints bleed into negative space

[columbiaspectator.com/arts-and-entertainment/2018/10/23/at-new-neiman-gallery-exhibit-psychedelic-prints-bleed-into-negative-space](https://columbiaspectator.com/arts-and-entertainment/2018/10/23/at-new-neiman-gallery-exhibit-psychedelic-prints-bleed-into-negative-space)



“Absence Makes the Heart Grow Fonder,” on display at the LeRoy Neiman Gallery, pushes the printmaking medium to its limits and literally beyond, as the prints spill into an unconventional plane.

Until Oct. 30, the gallery is staging the exhibition curated by Cary Hulbert, MFA '16, and organized by Marie Tennyson, associate director of the LeRoy Neiman Center for Print Studies. Hulbert has brought an unusual group of artists together, including former Columbia visual arts professor Judy Pfaff, David Altmejd, MFA '01, Director of Undergraduate Studies Nicola López, MFA '04, Chris Ofili, and Dasha Shishkin, MFA '06.

Hulbert's determination to demonstrate the scope of printmaking in contemporary art is the driving force behind this exhibit. Hulbert says that one way to exemplify the contemporaneous nature of printmaking is by showcasing technological processes used by print artists.

"A lot of [the prints] are either laser cut or use digital techniques—which Nicola [López]'s do well," Hulbert said. "Some of them have rhinestones; some of them have pearls sewn into them. They are really pushing the boundary of traditional printmaking."

López's laser cut prints hollow out space among silhouettes of trees, backed by warm and citrus-hued sunsets. As the material between the branches disappears from the chine-collé, an extra depth is created from shadows that dance behind the excavated print.

In the case of Altmejd, his prints combine laser cuts and upside-down, vandalized, and photographed faces, with coffee stains and rhinestones trespassing the surrounding white border. One of the upside-down faces is associate director Tennyson herself.

Ofilí is famously known for his "The Holy Virgin Mary," situating the black Madonna on a canvas of elephant dung and close-up pictures of butts. In the Neiman gallery exhibit, Ofilí's photogravures bask in mists of inky darkness that are occasionally offset by a distinctly shaped eye or figure.

In addition to Ofilí's 16 contributions to the gallery, Pfaff, who specializes in sculptural installation, offered two pieces, "...The three fishes..." and "...and the crane thought..." In awe of the visual hallucinatory effects that the prints have, Hulbert is excited to be displaying Pfaff.

"It's very loose, trippy, letting it bleed off the border, the way the frame even is a continuation of the piece itself," Hulbert said. "It's organic but at the same time has tons of detail."

Like Pfaff's psychedelia, Dasha Shishkin's puzzle print "Hideous Potato, missed terribly, with likes and no hate" disorients the onlooker. Made up of nine separate pieces, Shishkin's artwork can be framed individually, rearranged into infinite options, or placed into a single portfolio.

"It's one of those works you can really get lost in," Tennyson said. "The more you look at it, the more you figure out—maybe—what you're looking at."

Bamboozling spectators and forcing them to get lost in a medium reputed to be mechanical is exactly the effect Hulbert desired for the show. Through exemplifying the depth and innovative charisma prints can have, the curator hopes people can see printmaking as breaking boundaries and crossing lines.

"Printmaking can often seem folkly or traditional," Hulbert said. "I chose the artists to show the students here at Columbia just how far the medium can be pushed."

Alejandra Quintana contributed reporting.

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# LESLIE SACKS GALLERY

Friday Feature  
IFPDA Spring Online Print Fair



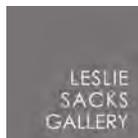
Image: Nicola Lopez, *Phase Change 1*, 2008 (right), *Phase Change 2*, 2008 (left), mixed media monotypes

## IFPDA FAIR

Leslie Sacks Gallery is pleased to announce participation in the **2021 IFPDA Spring Online Print Fair** taking place May 14 through May 28. The gallery will be presenting a selection of editions and works on paper by Post War and Contemporary artists.

**Derrick Adams**  
**Georges Braque**  
**Will Cotton**  
**Jim Dine**  
**Helen Frankenthaler**  
**David Hockney**  
**Minjung Kim**  
**Nicola Lopez**  
**Eddie Martinez**  
**Robert Motherwell**  
**Jonas Wood**

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Above: Nicola López, Stolen Sky, 2020

## PPE

An Online Exhibition curated by Kaela Mei-Chee Chambers  
and Farah Mohammad

May 3 - July 2, 2021

PPE features recent artworks by 15 artist who work in and around the medium of printmaking. The show was conceived the week of the Covid-19 lockdowns in March 2020. In the months that followed, many of us permanently and abruptly lost access to people and places that significantly impacted our lives. For some printmakers, whose practice requires the use of shared workspace and equipment, the closures and new safety measures of the past year precipitated alternative ways of working. Globally we became united in the experience of physical or emotional distance, in grief, and in the recognition of injustices laid bare by the pandemic. With PPE we present the stories that brewed the artists' experiences of this time.

The title of the exhibition projects dual meanings on the acronym PPE: Personal Protective Equipment but also Printmakers in the Pandemic Era. Both themes are touched upon throughout the show. All of the works featured were made within the last year.

Artists included in the exhibition: Garrett Ball, Nathan Ng Catlin, Mark Dion, Juan David Hernandez, Cary Hulbert, Bicheng Liang & Yixuan Shao, Tahir Carl Karmali, Nicola López, Raphaela Melsohn, Lily Moebes, Golbanou Moghaddas, Jeremy Ruiz, Lane Sell, Kyung Eun You

**LeRoy Neiman Gallery  
310 Dodge Hall  
2960 Broadway at 116th St  
New York, NY 10027**

For more information, please visit our [website](#) or contact us at [neimancenter@columbia.edu](mailto:neimancenter@columbia.edu) (212) 854-7641.



## **PPE**

**May 4, 2021 – July 2, 2021**

PPE features recent artworks by 15 artists who work in and around the medium of printmaking. The show was conceived the week of the Covid-19 lockdowns in March 2020. In the months that followed, many of us permanently and abruptly lost access to people and places that significantly impacted our lives. For some printmakers, whose practice requires the use of shared workspace and equipment, the closures and new safety measures of the past year precipitated alternative ways of working. Globally we became united in the experience of physical or emotional distance, in grief, and in the recognition of injustices laid bare by the pandemic. With PPE, we present the stories that brewed with artists' experiences of this time.

We project dual meanings onto the acronym *PPE*: Personal Protective Equipment, but also Printmakers in the Pandemic Era. Both themes are touched upon throughout the show. All the works featured were made within the last year. You'll see hope conjured with images made from recomposing historic manuscripts, satellite images of abandoned refugee camps as a result of climate change, an installation staying balanced for as long as it can, and a sculpture imagining a new way of being: outdoors and without the bodies it was intended to interact with. PPE's artists demonstrate resilience through their art practices as they capture and imbue value in moments of connection.

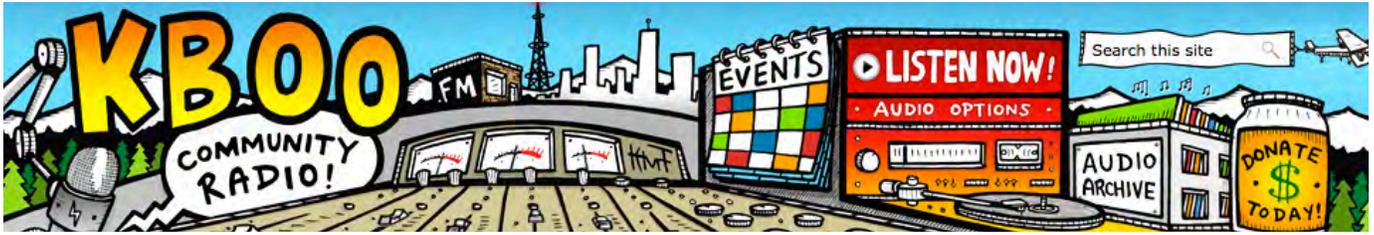
PPE brings together artists affiliated with some of NYC's most vibrant print communities: Shoestring Press, LES Printshop, and the LeRoy Neiman Center for Print Studies. We are thankful for these spaces that fostered a community of work and care even in a physically distanced time.

**Garrett Ball, Nathan Ng  
Catlin, Mark Dion, Juan  
Hernández Díaz, Cary  
Hulbert, Bicheng Liang  
& Yixuan Shao, Tahir  
Carl Karmali, Nicola  
López, Raphaela  
Melsohn, Lily Moebes,  
Golbanou Moghaddas,  
Jeremy Ruiz, Lane Sell,  
Kyung Eun You**

**Curated by Kaela Mei-  
Chee Chambers and  
Farah Mohammad**



Nicola López



# Joseph Gallivan interviews Nicola Lopez about her new show at Elizabeth Leach Gallery

## [Art Focus](#)

Air date:

Tue, 08/12/2014 - 11:30am - 12:00pm

Short Description:

Joseph Gallivan interviews Nicola Lopez about her new show at Elizabeth Leach Gallery

On Tuesday August 12, 2014, at 11.30am Joseph Gallivan interviews the visual artist Nicola López. López's work looks at the built environment and traces themes of collapse and regeneration. She will talk about her current show of collages, prints and videos called *FORECASTING an IMPOSSIBLY POSSIBLE TOMORROW*, which is at the Elizabeth Leach Gallery until September 27 2014.

From the press release:

Nicola López was born in Santa Fe, New Mexico, and currently lives and works in Brooklyn, NY. She received her undergraduate degree in Anthropology from Columbia University in 1998, attended the Skowhegan School in 2002 and in 2004 received her MFA from Columbia University. In 2011, López was invited to build an installation in the rotunda of the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum (New York, NY). López's work has been exhibited throughout the USA and internationally including, The Museum of Modern Art (New York, NY), Los Angeles County Museum of Art (Los Angeles, CA), the Museo Rufino Tamayo (Mexico City) and the Denver Art Museum (Denver, CO).

Joseph Gallivan has been a reporter since 1990. He has covered music for the London Independent, Technology for the New York Post, and arts and culture for the Portland Tribune. He is the author of two novels, "Oi, Ref!" and "England All Over" which are available on Amazon.com

Art

**IN CONVERSATION**

## Nicola López WITH PHONG BUI

by Phong Bui

On the occasion of her third solo show *After the Storm*, which will be on view till June 26, 2009, at Caren Golden Fine Art, the artist Nicola López stopped by Art International Radio to talk with Publisher Phong Bui about her recent body of work and more.

**Phong Bui (Rail):** I know that your mother's side of the family has strong roots in New York. So how did you end up in Santa Fe?

**Nicola López:** My mother was born in New York, but moved to New Mexico when she was about 12, so she really grew up primarily in the Southwest, and my father's family has lived in what is now New Mexico for several generations. I was born there and grew up in Santa Fe and it was really only through summer trips out east to visit with family that I started to know this side of the family more. In '93 I moved to New York to go to college. In between, I also lived in Hawaii for 3 years, from ages 9 till 12. Honolulu seemed like a big city moving out from Santa Fe. Otherwise I was a Southwest desert girl in my early upbringing.

**Rail:** Were there any early impressions of seeing works of art, or spending time in museums, that got you thinking about the possibility of becoming an artist?

**López:** I can't put my finger on any specific epiphany moment, but I was definitely very lucky in having parents who were interested in and supportive of the arts. My father was, among other



Portrait of the artist. Pencil on paper by Phong Bui.

things, a professional photographer before I was born, and has returned to it in recent years after having worked in arts administration at what used to be the New Mexico State Arts Division, and other nonprofit arts organizations in New Mexico. So I was always around art and it was a part of my world.

**Rail:** You went to Columbia University. What did you study there as an undergraduate?

**López:** Even though I had been interested in the arts growing up and I was lucky enough to have an excellent arts program in high school, I never really thought that I was going to be a visual artist. I didn't really see making art as my main occupation; if anything, I thought for a moment that I might be a pianist. I was serious enough to take a year off from college to study it quite intensely, but at some point I realized that it wasn't my road. Otherwise my main study was anthropology. I never had plans to be a professional anthropologist, but I majored in it because it was a field where so many interesting things crossed paths, including history, arts, art history, cultural studies, linguistics, and so on.

**Rail:** And you spent some time at the School of Visual Arts (Escola de Artes Visuais) in Rio, Brazil?

**López:** That was between my sophomore and my junior year, when I ended up taking six months off, and went to Rio. I had been studying Portuguese and wanted to put it into practice and get the larger scope of Brazilian culture. When I got there I found this fantastic school, as you mentioned, the School of Visual Arts in Parque Lage where I took some classes in life drawing, photography, and printmaking. I also did an internship at the Museum of Modern Art. It was a really cool community of people at Parque Lage, and I think it was there that I felt a little bit of independence as an artist for the first time, outside of a strongly academic context.

**Rail:** Did you get a chance to visit Brasília while you were there? I'm just mentioning that because of the incredible collaboration between Lúcio Costa and Oscar Niemeyer, which defined Brasília as a definitive utopian city of the future, and which resonates with what you have been doing in some ways.

**López:** I have never visited, but it's high on the list. What's interesting to me about Brasília is that it was a vision of a future that never really happened, and at this point that vision really belongs to the past. And yeah, I'm fascinated by that kind of slipping time where it was intended for the future as a part of the modernist orthodoxy, which has now been replaced by post-modernist and other contemporary ideas of architecture.

**Rail:** So when you came back, you decided to



continue your graduate schooling in printmaking, also at Columbia?

Nicola López "Factory-Fortress" (2009). Ink, watercolor, gouache, graphite, gesso, oilstick on paper; 40 × 93 inches. Courtesy of Caren Golden Fine Art.

**López:** In the four years after finishing undergrad, I spent some time working on projects outside of the U.S., then came back and moved into a raw space, which my partner, the artist Gandalf Gaván, and I turned into a studio/living space. It was important for me to be outside of school for a while working on my own. By the time I was ready to go back to school, I started looking around at MFA programs near the city because I knew that I wanted to stay in New York. Although I had been there before as an undergrad, Columbia seemed like the best program for me.

**Rail:** In addition to Tomas Vu, the Director who runs the LeRoy Neiman Center for Print Studies, were there any particular artists that you worked with whose work or teaching methods you felt congenial with?

**López:** There were so many great people in the program. But for the most part the faculty that I've kept in touch with beyond school are probably the first people that I worked with even as an undergrad. They were Tomas Vu, Gregory Amenoff, and Jon Kessler, all excellent teachers whose work I admire and can relate to. Although Jon's materials and his way of making things are obviously very different from mine, I relate to his work's political content and the way he talks about the media- and technology-saturated world. It's pretty beautiful and frightening at the same time. And what I identify with in Tomas's work is the way that he builds up layers of imagery to create a world in which the organic and inorganic overlap. I think that we ultimately talk about similar things, although his world contains living organisms like plants and trees as well as satellite dishes and diagrammatic plans for space stations, while in my world the organic exists in the pipes and vents that twist and crawl as if they were vines.

**Rail:** The other difference, apart from his work being painting, is that his imagery is always floating in space, like a constellation, whereas your imagery is rooted on the platform of earth—you allow the dialogue between the printed page and the site-specific installation to feed one another back and forth.

**López:** Yeah. There is something very dream-like about his work. Mine is more about a physical—although often very skewed—reality. Anyway, Tomas once said something very dark and funny in reference to the type of news that fills the *New York Times*—how depressing the world is, everyone is going to war, the economy is collapsing, and so on—"Don't worry about it Nicola, all of that will keep people like you and me in business. "There's lots of material for us to work with." [Laughter.]

**Rail:** That's great. In any case, do you think that it was in graduate school where your idea of

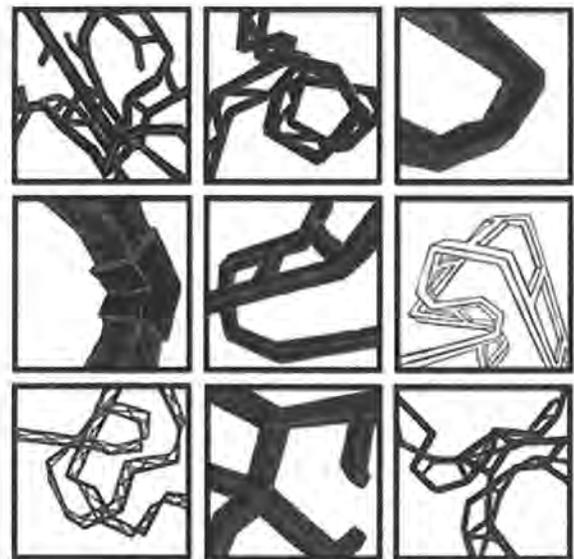
installation took place?

**López:** It was actually the summer of 2002 that I spent at Skowhegan [School of Painting and Sculpture] where I had taken a lot of materials just to do woodcuts, partly because it's a little bit more mobile and you don't need a press to produce the prints. What I did was to move them around the room and connect them to one another, but, instead of keeping the image within a rectangular format, I just let them go off the walls and the floor. In fact, I was looking through some old photos the other day and I saw some similar things I had made as an undergrad, so the thread was already there, but not until the Skowhegan experience did it really come together for me.

**Rail:** Also, it seems that prevailing tendencies, with a group of artists working within a similar mode of thinking, was in the air. In the late 80s, there was an artist from the older generation, for example, Fred Tomaselli, who proposes an artificial, immersive world that accumulates all visual references, from both high and low culture; or Bruce Pearson, whose system combines the overlapping of very highly specialized text with layers of outlined images, yet painted with such amazing tonal range in each color in between forms; or James Siena and his probabilistic algorithm, which injected this intense compressed vitality in his formal construction of repeating patterns or interlocking lines. All of whom, I think, lay out a new territory for which artists of the next generation, including Tomas, Matthew Richie,

Julie Mehretu, who in turn visualize further an imagined construct of various mappings. What I find interesting is that, while the former share a common interest in psychedelia and alchemy, the latter is more involved with technological resources. In other words, I don't regard Richie's installations as spatially fluid, since the paintings and what goes on the walls are being integrated. Except for Jason Rhodes, whose work was charged from his admiration for both Dieter Roth and Chris Burden. Whereas, from the pioneering effort by Judy Pfaff and Jessica Stockholder, that fed right into the work of Sarah Sze, Swoon, and yours, despite, again, the differences in form and content in each case, you all have a similar feeling for space site, specifically where the created objects and the environment become one.

**López:** It'd be hard to talk about all of their differences. In some ways, a lot of artists in my generation were the beneficiaries of what Judy Pfaff had done as early as the mid 70s. She



Nicola López, "Relics" (2009). Woodcut on mylar. 9 panels; each panel 23.5 × 23.5 inches. Courtesy of Caren Golden Fine Art.

definitely found a strong vision of her work and was able to carry it out through thick and thin. I was very pleased that she got the MacArthur in 2004.

**Rail:** Have you had any dialogue with her?

**López:** I actually got to know Judy through Gandalf, who studied with her up at Bard College when he was an undergrad, and I now teach there so I see quite a bit of Judy. She's been very supportive of what Gandalf and I and other students of hers have been doing. Nancy Spero, who I don't know, is another artist who has been very important to me and my work. I admire her tremendously as a woman artist who was so dedicated to her work during a time when few women artists were really being publicly recognized. I am drawn to the political content of her work and respect her as an artist for whom activism was inseparable from what she does in her art. I think that she is also really important in the history of printmaking in the way that she took the printed image off the page. She certainly did a lot of great work within that page-format, but she also did a lot of site-specific installation work where the prints were installed directly on walls, often putting her imagery into direct conversation with the architecture and other museum objects. Another artist that really has to be a part of this conversation about bringing printmaking into new territory is Kiki Smith. Although our subject matter is completely different, she has certainly done a lot of things with printmaking that have set the stage for what I am doing in that medium.

**Rail:** Yeah. We're definitely in debt to Nancy and Kiki. Anyway, when and how did this apocalyptic vision of urban environment come about before you found the way to extend it in your installation?

**López:** Little by little. Again, it wasn't just one moment when I said "Oh my God, it's all about the city falling down around us." [*Laughs.*] Perhaps my study of anthropology was my entry into that visual dialogue. I can look back to around 2000 when I was working a lot with maps, which overlapped with my interest in anthropology and its focus on how place and culture are experienced, understood, and communicated. Instead of writing ethnography, I was working visually. I realized that a map is really a document of a place that has the maker's mind, experience, prejudices, and priorities completely embedded in it. In my map-imagery, I started with an overall vision of a world as seen from afar. You could pick out shapes that were like continents and urban clusters in earlier imagery, and slowly individual forms like buildings, streets, satellite dishes, and other individual objects became visible, zooming in to where you can finally see the infrastructure of each building—the steel beams, plumbing, electrical wiring, and so on. I also think that being in New York and spending time in other cities, which are such compressed, dense spaces with so many layers of built structures and history, has a lot to do with my fascination with the urban environment.

**Rail:** So you found your idea of deconstruction/construction as a visual equivalent of excavation

in an anthropological sense?

**López:** In some ways, yes. I guess that building up layers of imagery could be like digging through the layers of cultural meaning or even the physical remains that an anthropologist or archeologist would encounter. Another discipline that has been important to my thinking is the broader field of architecture. When I was in grad school at Columbia I took a few classes in the architecture department, specifically in urban planning and urban studies. These classes gave me new ways of thinking about the urban landscape that I work with and how and why it is the way it is.

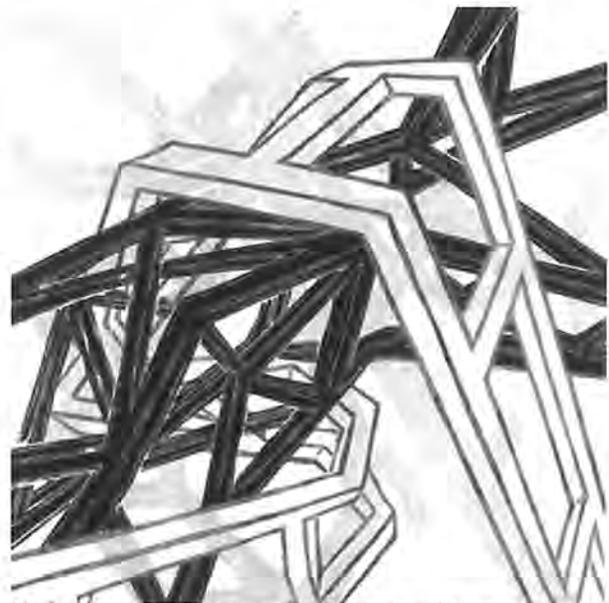
**Rail:** You spoke in the past of your work in reference to Fritz Lang's *Metropolis*, which was the most expensive silent film ever made at the time of its release, and numerous books by science fiction writers, including Philip K. Dick and J. G. Ballard. Can you tell us when that all began?

**López:** My interest in science fiction probably first began with my father giving me some Isaac Asimov books when I was in high school. All those books and films that you just mentioned are definitely among my interests, but I don't think of my work as specifically science fiction oriented or science fiction derived. Everything you take in has some way of leaking out in what you make. Of those authors, even though I loved Dick's *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*, which was made into the cult classic, *Blade Runner* by Ridley Scott, I relate most to Ballard, not only for some of his specific narratives, but primarily for the fact that he deals a lot with what you were calling a post-apocalyptic vision.

**Rail:** Dick always referred to himself as a fictionalizing philosopher. The first book I read was *Fourth Dimensional Nightmare*, his first short story collection, which was published by the legendary British publisher Victor Gollancz, the founder of the Left Book Club, who also published George Orwell and Ford Maddox Ford, among others whose work had some leftist leaning.

**López:** That makes sense. I also love Terry Gilliam's movie *Brazil*, which evokes this rather darkly-humored state of totalitarian society and its extravagant deterioration. Its aesthetic has been an important reference for me.

**Rail:** How about Archigram, partly because of the similar approach to survival technology while



Nicola López, "Steel Embrace (4)" (2009). Woodcut on paper with woodcut on mylar collage, 23 × 23 inches. Courtesy of Caren Golden Fine Art.

sharing a vision of a picturesque future of machine age, yet quite anti-heroic and pro-consumerist to some extent?

**López:** I find Archigram, Super Studios, and other collaborative groups working around the same time in the 60s very interesting, partly because they were involved with envisioning an architecture for a “future-present” time. A lot of the ideas that groups like these came up with were also very optimistic, which is a feeling that I would like to have more of as I look towards the future. You mentioned “survival technology,” which is something that I think of in relation to disaster: it’s something that you would develop in preparation for some worst-case scenario. When we think about these scenarios, it is easy to get into a doomsday mentality, to dream up terrible disasters and to think of futuristic and fantasy-remedies that really have little to do with reality. The truth is that I don’t think we have to search that far. We really are in the middle of some pretty dark stuff right now, globally speaking, and we don’t have any magic technology that will save us. Our fantasy-scenario is actually the world around us today. To go back to the earlier on in our conversation, the slip between different times is really at the root of a lot of fiction in general. Many fantasy-futures are easily seen to be metaphors for our present reality; in *Brazil*, for instance, it is our familiar world that has just gone terribly wrong. I’m interested in this slippery time-frame that belongs to our current world, a vision of the future and the world of imagination. I want my work to allow us to see our present more clearly because we approach it first as some other time and then slowly recognize it as our own.

**Rail:** Have you read Donna Haraway, the cultural theorist and leading thinker about the love and hate relationship between humans and machines?

**López:** I’m not familiar with her work, but I’ve read Ray Kurzweil, whose book *The Age of Spiritual Machines*, among others, is a great one on the subject. Like the first one, *The Age of Intelligent Machines*, his short-term predictions in *The Singularity is Near* are about his concept of radical life expansion. I’m fascinated by his interest in the overlap between humans and technology and the developments that he sees as inevitable: whether it’s through enhanced biological intervention or through computer technology that takes a leap into artificial intelligence. The only issue that I wish he would have gone further with is the social implication of this scenario, how the various sectors of society might be impacted and what this could mean in terms of social equality—or inequality. Another author I admire, who absolutely takes the social dimension of development into account—albeit in a completely different context—is Mike Davis. A favorite book of mine is *Ecology of Fear*, which deals with how the landscape and population of Southern California has been shaped by real and imagined disaster (and its denial).

**Rail:** There seems to be a strong shift since your last show in 2007. I mean there’s less of a whole vista that features everything from swirling plumes of vented smokes to toxic spills and stacked

televisions, among other industrial disasters. In this new body of work, which began with a show of a series of prints at Pace Prints last year, one sees more of a focus on structural elements, whether it's the interior of a building, such as steel beams, or facades that rise up or fall apart. It's as if there's an effort of regrouping in order to solidify some fundamental part of post-Cubist structure. Do you think that's true?

**López:** I think the shift in imagery coincides with a shift in my mode of vision that I was talking about earlier. The point of view in this recent work has gotten closer and closer and now we're inside the buildings or right up next to the toppled structures, as opposed to seeing them from afar. For me, it's another way of exploring physical space in a very distilled way. I wanted to create views into a world that has arrived at a moment of deep decay and I thought that making self-contained images—as opposed to installation—would be the best way to communicate this feeling of stillness and concentration. This doesn't mean that I'm moving away from installation; I've been doing a lot of installation recently and there is more that I will be doing soon. But for this show, I felt that keeping the work itself physically constrained within the frame would help to give it the feeling of static silence that I was aiming for. This silence is not necessarily an ending point; it is tied to a larger life cycle of growth—if this show were a season, it would be the winter. I think that cities, including New York, all have cycles in which growth and decay co-exist and feed one another. A lot of the images in the show are of fragments of buildings from both the exterior and interior, shown in various states of decay—but it is a decay that follows what was obviously a tremendous amount of construction and even exaggerated growth. At the same time that this world is apparently falling down, it is also possibly lying in wait for a new season. For example, metal pieces in some of the works seem to be either smashed or perhaps beginning to curve of their own will, acting almost like a living organism that possesses its own regenerative energy.



Nicola López, "Bone Dry" (2009). Ink, watercolor, gouache, graphite, gesso on paper and photolitho on mylar collage, 48 x 40 inches. Courtesy of Caren Golden Fine Art.

**Rail:** Well, it's a kind of metamorphosis for sure. For instance, if we look at a larger more complete drawing, like "Phantom Factory," "Factory Fortress," or "After the Storm," we see the whole image is built by rectilinear structure, which is different than your early work, in which you allow more curvilinear forms to predominate. I also feel that there is a balance between the

painted form and what is left unpainted, just showing the drawing on white paper!

**López:** That white paper space isn't something that I plan consciously from the beginning of a drawing. I think that in these works it ended up functioning as a "still space" that is a moment of beginning and ending—the drawing is barely fleshed out, so it is the very beginning, but it is also like a structure that has been stripped down to its most skeletal framework at the end of its life. The absence of the curving, swirling motion and the dominance of the rectilinear I think also serves to slow these images down. They are not about the world at the height of its spiraling, break-neck pace. They are about a world past its prime, showing abandoned, ghost-factories, as in "Bone Dry." I think that this slower pace is indicated in the more static composition and the fact that the drawing comes close to a full stop in those unpainted areas you were talking about.

**Rail:** That's true. What about the group of nine pictures, called "Relics," which I think function as alphabets of a larger language?

**López:** To tell you the truth, I didn't really know where I was going with it when I started out, which is probably the case with most of my work. In these pieces I just wanted to make some very simple woodcuts on Mylar, and see what I could do with them. My initial idea was to try printing them and layering them up on top of one another, which I actually did in the "Steel Embrace" pieces, but when I printed them I was surprised with how they looked individually, and felt that they could exist on their own as a group. In some ways, they're almost like details from the other images that are in the show. They are the most pared-down elements of building structures, like the bones that would be left behind if the flesh of the city were to disappear. I also like the way they operate between positive and negative space—it echoes the conversation about life and decay.

**Rail:** Yeah, that's how I see them as well. I've been told that you've been taking a welding class. Does that imply that you're intending to make your work into three-dimensional form?

**López:** Yeah, I've been taking this great class at the Third Ward out in Bushwick and I made a crazy looking attempt at sculpture. In some ways I think that it's a very natural progression. I mean I've been working with installation in ways that have become increasingly dimensional over the last four, five years. A lot of these prints on mylar have actually been piling up on one another, dispersed into space and even hanging off of steel armatures, but as a whole, they're still flimsy, and they're still representations of things, as opposed to being actual objects themselves. So in a way it would make perfect sense to just make the things out of metal. But that's a huge can of worms, which, once it gets opened, is a whole new world and set of issues to get into. It would completely shift the way that I address space and scale, among other things. We'll have to wait and see—for now, I have to get better as a welder.

**Rail:** Can you relate to both Chris Burden's and his wife Nancy Rubins's dense and compacted sculpture? Although unlike his "Medusa's Head," Burden had also made more open and dispersed objects in space like "All the Submarines of the United States of America" (1987).

**López:** I find both of their work very compelling in form and in content. Formally, they both work with these dense and gnarly agglomeration of objects in a way that conveys a great energy and sometimes even violence, or at least urgency. I love the way that Rubins's work is full of salvaged industrial and consumer products that are tied together to reveal this struggle between the materials and gravity. Although Burden's sculptural work is more narrative than Rubins's, they both speak to similar issues of consumption and waste, which is a conversation that I am engaged in too. In very different ways, both Burden and Rubins are talking about the way that human beings have shaped the world, but there is a complete absence of the human figure in their work.

**Rail:** So how does thinking about sculpture relate to what you think of this current show? Would that feed any stronger ideas for the welded form for the future?

**López:** I think that this show is more about basic structure than my work has ever been before. Part of that is a result of what I've been talking about, just getting closer in to this landscape so that you see the individual elements, and part of this is the pared-down nature of some of the works. I actually think that even in the more complex drawings that have a lot of imagery packed in, there is still a greater sense of structure in that it's much more linear and there is a strong axis up and down of gravity. Where the imagery is more distilled—like in "Relics," "The Space Between," "Closing In," and the four "Steel Embraces"—you see the skeletal structure very clearly. This structure is obviously 3-dimensional, described in 2 dimensions. I think that a lot of these images contain ideas that could be moved directly into 3-dimensional works. But I have to get a lot better at it first.



## Nicola López's Hugely Ominous *Transformation City*

Brooklyn artist conjures a daunting, deadly cityscape

**By Noah Sudarsky**

Tuesday, April 22nd 2008

For her spectacular exhibition at Pace Prints' new Chelsea space, Nicola López has created a 75-foot-long monoprint, *Transformation City*, that leaves viewers feeling as though they're being swallowed by an all-consuming metropolis. The installation is a series of 13 woodcut and linoleum prints, spread over four walls, depicting a fractured cityscape. López's vibrant, multifaceted technique provides an added sense of dimensionality and relief to the ensnaring, highly personal topography, in which the buildings float and collide along the contiguous panels, or else hang precariously in thin air. The multiple vanishing points, brutal inversions, and vertiginous perspectives are daunting, but they're also irresistible—relentlessly sucking in their viewers.

Though 9/11 is never explicitly mentioned, the work in López's show (she received her B.A. and M.F.A. from Columbia and lives in Brooklyn) seems clearly influenced by the notion of massive, unpredictable—if not outright destructive—forces. A truncated, upside-down version of one of the World Trade Center towers is a recurring motif in *Transformation City*. In *Fire*—one of four mixed-media prints from a separate series titled after the elements—skyscrapers are obliterated in a miasma of billowing flames and concrete blocks. The viewer's perspective is that of a pedestrian looking up at the exploding skyline above him, facing his own impending doom. The piece captures that suspended, timeless instant preceding death, demonstrating how effectively López has hijacked traditional woodcut and etching techniques as well as collage to create an organic, highly original vision bursting with almost intimidating graphic power. The elements series has an even greater 3-D virtual-reality quality than *Transformation City*. It feels like primal forces are reclaiming the city in an inexorable, coordinated attack.

# The New York Times

## Rembrandt and Modernists at a Weekend Red-Tag Sale

By Karen Rosenberg

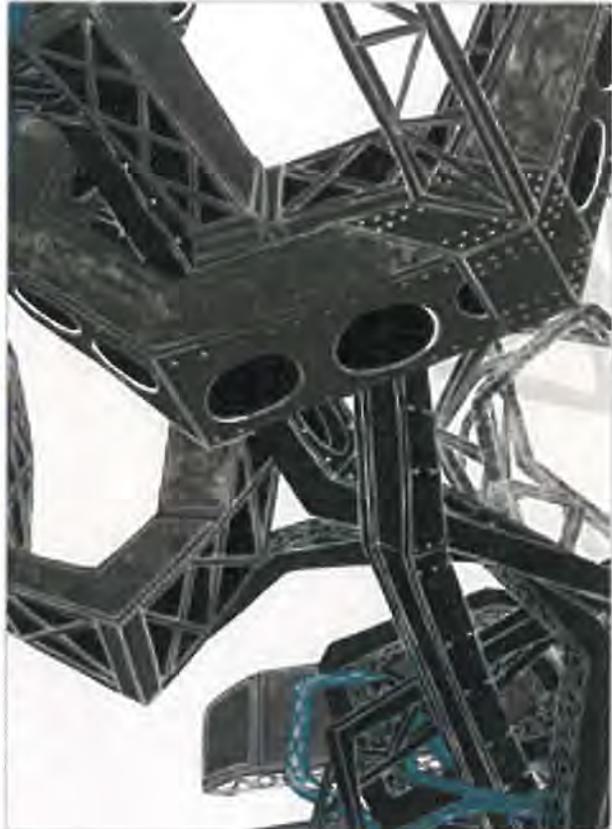
November 2, 2007

The annual fair sponsored by the International Fine Print Dealers Association can sometimes seem like a high-class jumble sale. Dealers tend to cram their booths full of art, hanging Rembrandt etchings next to Rauschenberg silk-screens and piling excess inventory into forbidding stacks. If you are accustomed to the minimalist pretenses of most contemporary art fairs, however, the print dealers' showcase may come as a relief.

With 89 galleries, publishers and private dealers from around the world, the fair exhibits prints by contemporary artists alongside rare works from the 16th through 20th centuries. This year it also introduces an ambitious site-specific installation by the emerging artist Nicola López.

Ms. López has transformed the booth of Tandem Press into a landscape of crumbling infrastructure: flowers sprout from barbed wire and leaky pipes (all cutouts of lithographed Mylar). More conventional prints by Ms. López, featuring similar imagery, are also on display.

Other appeals to the contemporary market include more than 100 new editions. Bruce Nauman, Ed Ruscha and Richard Serra have new works at Gemini G.E.L., as does the architect Frank Gehry (lithographs of his scribbled designs for buildings, including one for the proposed Guggenheim Abu Dhabi). Pratt Contemporary devotes most of a wall to a series of drypoints by the Brazilian artist Ana Maria Pacheco, better known for her wood carvings; titled "Dark Event," it shows shadowy figures engaged in acts of violence and torture.



"Half-life Series No. 4," a lithography and relief on Mylar by Nicola López at the Print Fair.

Two Palms has a suite of intaglio prints by Chris Ofili (similar to those on view through tomorrow at David Zwirner) and editioned hand-painted collages by Richard Prince, who

## The New York Times

merges covers of nurse-themed pulp-fiction titles with images clipped from pornographic sources. The complete set of 19 includes a pristine white nurse's cap.

Artists whose prints hew closely to their paintings are too numerous to catalog; they include Carroll Dunham, Richard Estes, Chris Johansson and Amy Sillman. Yet sometimes, prints reveal an artist's lesser-known side. The Massachusetts dealer Abigail Furey has several lithographs by Grant Wood (of "American Gothic" fame), including the rare "Sultry Night" (1939). The publishers of this homoerotic image, which shows a nude man pouring water over his torso, had completed only 100 of the edition of 250 when the United States Post Office halted sales on a charge of obscenity.

Single-artist booths are the exception at this fair, but the dealer C. & J. Goodfriend devotes its entire wall space to delicately shaded etchings by James McNeill Whistler. Other American artists with a similar presence include Winslow Homer, whose dramatic rescue-at-sea depiction "Saved" (1889) is at Allinson Gallery, and George Bellows, whose testosterone-soaked scenes of boxing matches turn up frequently.

While Picassos are predictably ubiquitous, one of the fair's rarities is a signed impression of his etching and engraving "La Minotaure" (1935), at Frederick Mulder. From an edition of 55, it was (so the label says) a gift from the artist to the widow of the poet Guillaume Apollinaire.

French Symbolists like Redon and Post-Impressionists like Toulouse-Lautrec are always popular, but the British make a strong showing this year. The Philadelphia-based dealers Dolan/Maxwell have early engravings by the Surrealist Stanley William Hayter, who is best known as the founder of the peripatetic print workshop Atelier 17. The London dealer Osborne Samuel has etchings of heads by Lucian Freud, whose work in this medium will be celebrated in an exhibition opening Dec. 16 at the Museum of Modern Art. Y.B.A.'s abound at Alan Cristea, notably Julian Opie, Dexter Dalwood and the team of Langlands & Bell.

Traditional Japanese woodblock prints are one of the fair's main draws, as a category in themselves and as an influence on Western printmakers. Egenolf Gallery has a snowy view of Mount Haruna and other landscapes by Hiroshige; other fine examples can be found at the Art of Japan and Carolyn Staley. The Japanese aesthetic can be

seen in Alex Katz's prints of Maine landscapes (at Graphicstudio/University of South Florida) and in several domestic scenes by Mary Cassatt (at the Old Print Shop).

Old masters are also scattered over several booths, but the Rembrandts and Dürers at David Tunick deserve a close look. Viewing works like these in a fair setting can be a tricky proposition, but not much more so than jostling for a glimpse of the masterpieces in the Met's "Age of Rembrandt."

# BOMB

no. 100  
summer 2007

artists on artists

## TREVOR PAGLEN on NICOLA LÓPEZ

In the past hundred years or so, human activity has become the dominant geologic force on the planet. Large-scale enterprises such as dams, mining, urban development, and agriculture have done more to sculpt the surface of the earth than "natural" geomorphic processes such as erosion, plate tectonics, and glaciation. Earth scientists like Peter Haff at Duke University have argued that the earth has entered an "Anthropic" period, and that to understand the geologic forces at work in the contemporary age, earth scientists might learn something about economics, finance, land-use policy, and civil engineering, because these discourses actually have geologic implications. Enter here the work of Nicola López.

In drawings, prints, installations, and collages, López addresses the excesses of the Anthropoc period. Abandoned urban environments appear in a state of decay, or perhaps left half-finished. Architectural forms lie atop one another as if forged together by the creative destruction of plate tectonics rather than the rational hand of an urban planner. In *Excerpts from the Flood I*, cylindrical buildings spew greenish-blue water in a swirl around a pile of empty urban architecture. In *Monument II: Intaglio*, the broken leftover of an elevated urban highway towers like a latter-day Colossus of Rhodes above the remains of an urban landscape. López's collapsing built environments suggest the fact that someday, all of human history will be encapsulated in a few intriguing layers of rock strata—a Burgess Shale of human history un sentimentally fossilized in the earth's recesses.

But this is not to say that López's work is either dystopian or pessimistic. Instead, its tone is of cool resignation. In her series of "unnatural disasters," the mangled skeletons of human infrastructures point out the oft-ignored dialectics of human production and the natural world. Indeed, as López shows, there can be no such thing as a "natural disaster," because the concept of disaster is itself hopelessly anthropocentric.

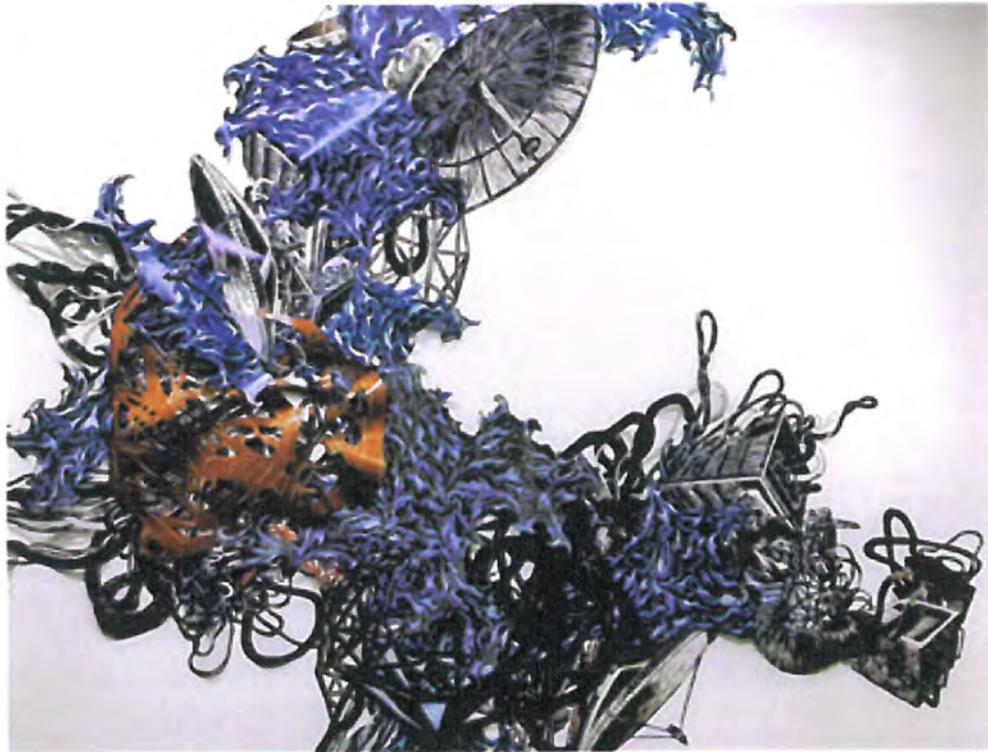
López's images remind me of a comment made by Kurt Cuffey, a leading glaciologist and global-warming researcher based at U.C. Berkeley, during a series of interviews I conducted with him a couple of years ago. He said that from a geologic perspective, the history of the earth is ultimately indifferent to the mass extinctions, global warmings, ozone holes, and "natural disasters" of the human era. The notion of deep time, Cuffey told me, brought him a degree of solace even as his research showed humankind quickly creating the conditions of its own destruction. In López's images, as curious as it might sound, I find a similar sense of solace.

*Trevor Paglen is an artist, writer, and experimental geographer working out of the Department of Geography at the University of California, Berkeley.*



# BOMB

no. 100  
summer 2007



Ursula Dismier: *The Flood* (detail), 2006. Woodblock on nylon, 12 x 14 x 5 inches



LEFT: *Better Clouds*, 2005. Ink gouache and graphite on paper, 41 x 35 inches



RIGHT: *Mis-Communicated*, 2006. Ink and graphite on paper, 50 x 40 inches

# Art in America

The World's Premier Art Magazine

April 2007

## Nicola López at Caren Golden

For this exhibition, titled "Over-Growth," Nicola López produced mixed-medium works on paper depicting structures and landscapes scarred by rampant technological growth, lack of maintenance and random industrial disaster. She also recycled some of these images to create installation pieces. In the drawing *Overgrown* (2006), topsy-turvy lines and color washes coalesce into a disorienting, circular narrative of unstable steel structures verging on disintegration, including storage tanks and pipelines spewing forth brownish muck. The drawing describes a system of energy transfer that uses more power and materials to

sustain itself than are necessary to serve its function. As such, it is reminiscent of Robert Smithson's imaginary industrial ruins and his other explorations of technological and industrial entropy.

In *Eye of the Storm* (2006), López uses her pictorial vocabulary to tell another tale of unregulated industry and technological sprawl. This drawing's depopulated, post-industrial, high-tech landscape consists of swirling plumes of vented smoke, twisted pylons and steel scaffolding, bits and pieces of anachronistic industrial architecture and a glimpse of closely packed office buildings. These elements, ordered by a spiraling, baroque perspective, are rendered in a style that combines Thomas Hart Benton-like mannerism and 1960s comic books. Using analogous imagery and stylistic diversity, in *Carried Away* (2006) López creates a doughnut-like composition consisting of arabesques of snaking cables combined with images of oil derricks, toxic spills and stacked televisions. Despite the visual density of these elements, they float weightlessly over a dappled sky-blue field.

López's installation pieces tell a slightly different story in that they are made up of assemblages of printed elements hung unconventionally from overhead pipes or twisted together into creeping vines that climb up the walls from floor to ceiling. These large, irregularly shaped woodcut and silkscreen prints depict engineered structures such as high-energy transmission towers. The installations *Parasite* and *Interloper* (both 2006) sport cutout prints of satellite-communication dishes that droop down from the ceiling like giant exotic, though potentially toxic, flowers. Given López's involvement in mediums with long histories (drawing and printmaking), one can't help wondering if her musings on technology's relentless drive toward a dystopic future isn't also a self-conscious, melancholy commentary on the fate of art in such a world.

—Saul Ostrow



Nicola López: *Carried Away*, 2006, mixed mediums on paper, 45 1/4 inches square; at Caren Golden.

# ARTFORUM

DECEMBER 2006

I N T E R N A T I O N A L

## The Artists' Artists **BEST OF 2006**

# BEST OF 2006

### **JONAS MEKAS**

Nicola López, "OverGrowth" (Caren Golden Fine Art, New York) Of all the contemporary art shows that I managed to see this year, the most enriching for me was López's. I was pulled into its amazing intricacies, totally and irresistibly. I got lost in it. It took me into the depths beyond understanding. I was traveling, and I liked the travel.



## NICOLA LÓPEZ

### OVERGROWTH

Al este de Estado Unidos, dos clases de enredaderas, llamadas glicinia china y japonesa, se han usado para decorar los cenadores y las cercas. Si no se vigilan con cuidado, rápidamente se tragan los árboles colindantes, cubriéndolos de una gruesa capa de follaje que obstruye toda la vida subyacente de la planta y tapándole toda la luz, destruyendo con saña cualquier cosa que se encuentre por debajo.

Un efecto similar dentro del ambiente creado puede verse en el arte de Nicola López. Sus cinco instalaciones (usando bloques de madera y grabados sobre Mylar), seis dibujos de diversos medios, y un grabado intaglio representan un mundo caótico de tecnología artificial – antenas parabólicas, aparatos de televisión, torres de acero, tuberías redondas, y cables enroscados – que ha fracasado.

Como la glicinia, sus instalaciones serpentean alrededor de las pistas de luz, los tubos de la calefacción y los conductos del agua sobre las paredes de la galería, literalmente consumiendo la arquitectura. Los armazones de acero montados en la pared impulsan hacia delante más grabados dentro del espacio de la galería y los derraman por el suelo. Mientras la imaginaria en *Blighted*, *Parasite* e *Interloper* quedan esparcidas como despiadadas enredaderas, los altavoces y las torres de acero con enrejado de *Mirage* no se enroscan, ni se doblan ni se mueven, en vez de eso quedan colgadas de forma extraña y sin fuerza. Como su título, la mitad de *Under Its Own Weight* se hunde en el suelo, mientras su estructura gemela queda fijada hacia el cielo. Como en el reino de las plantas, incluso las estructuras aparentemente más estables tienen una perpetuidad limitada.

Los dibujos caóticos de López, con sus líneas ocasionalmente delicadas, retratan escenas industriales y urbanas similares a las instalaciones pero de forma más controlada. *Eye of the Store* muestra un agujero negro que colapsa rascacielos y chimeneas desatascadas con vigas sólidas; otras obras representan tuberías que expulsan acres humos y aguas residuales entre un laberinto de maquinaria y fábricas. Son escenas desagradables, pero es imposible apartar la mirada: existe belleza entre el caos. También podemos apreciar un subyacente sentido del humor que impregna la obra de López, pero no tanto una sensación de esperanza.

López de forma crucial escoge una infraestructura industrial anticuada pero no obsoleta todavía como tema de su obra. En comparación con la tecnología avanzada actual (pensemos en los diminutos teléfonos móviles y el diseño arquitectónico asistido por ordenador), esas torres de acero y las pesadas antenas parabólicas son dinosaurios. Los usos y abusos de estas reliquias han provocado problemas medioambientales, sociales y económicos en la actualidad.

Christopher Howard

*In the eastern United States, two types of climbing vines, called Chinese and Japanese wisteria, have been used to decorate gazebos and fences. If not carefully controlled, they quickly engulf surrounding trees, shrouding them in a thick web of greenery that chokes all underlying plant life and blocks out light—viciously killing everything underneath.*

*A parallel effect in the built environment can be found in Nicola López's art. Her five installation works (consisting of woodblock and lithographic prints on Mylar), six mixed-media drawings, and one intaglio print depict a chaotic world of manmade technology—satellite dishes, television sets, steel towers, round pipes, and twisting cables—that has gone horribly awry.*

*Like the wisteria, her installations snake around the lighting tracks, heating pipes, and water ducts above the gallery walls, literally consuming the architecture. Wall-mounted steel armatures push forward more prints into the gallery space and spill onto the floor. While the industrial imagery in *Blighted*, *Parasite*, and *Interloper* spread like vicious vines, the loudspeakers and steel lattice towers of *Mirage* fail to curl, bend, and sway but instead hang strangely limp. Like its title, half of *Under Its Own Weight* sags to the floor, while its twin structure spikes skyward. Like the plant kingdom, even seemingly permanent structures have a limited life span.*

*López's chaotic drawings, with their occasionally awkward lines, portray industrial and urban scenes similar to the installations but in a more controlled fashion. *Eye of the Storm* shows a collapsing black hole of skyscrapers and smokestacks sucked inward with solid beams; other works depict pipes spew acid smog and sewage among a labyrinth of machinery and factories. They're ugly scenes, but it's impossible to look away: there is beauty among the chaos. There is also an underlying sense of humor pervades López's work, but not so much a sense of hope. López crucially chooses outmoded but not yet obsolete industrial infrastructure as the subject of her work. Compared to today's advanced technology (think tiny cell phones or computer-aided architectural design), these steel towers and plodding satellite dishes are dinosaurs. Importantly, the uses and abuses of these leftovers have brought on environmental, social, and economic problems of the present.*

Nicola López. *Blighted*. Cortesía del artista



Exposición realizada en Caren Golden Fine Art (Nueva York) desde el 7 de septiembre hasta el 14 de octubre.



Nicola López with her woodblock on Mylar installation *Parasite* (2006), at Caren Golden Fine Art

"She captures the chaos and danger of modern living as well as the effects of new technology," says MoMA's Judy Hecker.

## NICOLA LÓPEZ

It's the day before Nicola López's second solo show opens at Caren Golden Fine Art in New York, and the atmosphere in the spacious Chelsea gallery is chaotic, to say the least. Phones are ringing, a stepladder stands abandoned and a jackhammer intermittently pounds on the other side of a wall. Fittingly, López, whose art explores the disorienting effects of a world besieged by technological and mass-produced clutter, looks right at home.

Through drawing, printmaking and mixed-media installations, the 31-year-old artist creates images of telephone wires, satellite dishes, television sets and other industrial detritus that converge into dense thicket of urban flotsam. Often her vertiginous installations snake up entire walls onto the ceiling. "From a thematic standpoint, her art is very relevant today," says Museum of Modern Art assistant curator Judy Hecker, who included one of López's installations in a printmaking show at the museum this year. "She captures the chaos and danger of modern living as well as the effects of new technology and how it has worked for and against us."

López cites her own experience of adjusting to the overstimulated and overwhelming pace of city life as a key source of inspiration for her pieces. "When I came to New York, I was like, Oh my God, what is this crazy thing going on around me?" says the Santa Fe, New Mexico, native, who moved to Manhattan to attend Columbia University,

where she received an undergraduate degree in anthropology and a master's in fine art. "It probably impacted me a lot more than if I had grown up around it." Today, López considers her work abstract "maps" of her surroundings. "In a way it's a very personal relationship for me," she explains. "I mean, this is about me trying to find a way to relate to it and connect with it."

Since graduating from Columbia in 2004, López's reputation as a skilled draftsman and printmaker has grown rapidly in the art world. Less than a week after the opening of her solo show, all but one of the drawings, which range from \$1,500 to \$11,000, had been sold. To date, the Brooklyn-based artist has been included in group shows at New York's El Museo del Barrio and P.S.1 Contemporary Art Center, as well as internationally at galleries in Mexico, Puerto Rico and Peru. And while some of her admirers see López's vision as poetically dismal, the artist insists it's not that simple. "In the broadest sense I hope that my work shows the depressing view of where we're going but also that there's a beauty in it," she says. "You walk down the street one day and you're like, The plight of humanity! And then the next day, you see that people are actually building some pretty great things and there's some really amazing applications of technology, and you're like, God, the world's amazing."

—EVELYN CROWLEY

# ART = CONSCIOUSNESS

words | amy walter

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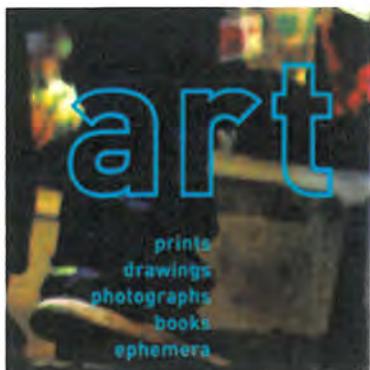
NICOLALÓEZ

Ever since the door opened for female artists to make socio-political statements with their art, those statements have been restricted, for the most part, to comments on gender, equality, and a woman's place in the world. No doubt still important topics, there is an emergent crop of female artists who are going beyond the Cindy Sherman and Vanessa Beecroft realms of the art world. Indeed, those artistic territories are far from passé or cliché, but the new millennium has freed female artists up to talk about things that matter to everyone, not just women, in a variety of mediums ranging from stark photography to beautifully complex paintings, designs, products and clothing. And people are listening - not because the message comes from female activists, but because this new art is born of talented artists with a strong voice.

Nicola Lopez thinks the world has become a little

hectic. We're constantly communicating in any number of ways (billboards, TV, cell phones, PDAs, computers), all of which seem to take us farther and farther away from simple human contact. We are always on the go - on buses, in cars, on bicycles, and metaphorically, moving onwards and upwards toward some abstract goal we've created for ourselves. The modern insistence on development and growth as progress has created an atmosphere of chaos and panic, especially in urban centers, and Ms. Lopez finds both fear and a certain beauty in that. Her art takes the form of maps - not of actual places, but of the general character of the world around us. She uses signs of modernity (road signs, satellite towers, tires, buildings) to "convey the sense of wonder and vertigo that is inevitable as we face the landscape of today's world." As she states, her maps "represent how our actual world is

structured, not on a literally geographical, but on an experiential level." As with the others in the group, Lopez's work draws the viewer in with its beauty, then hits us with the message, leaving us to wonder why we're all in such a rush.



March/April 2006 • VOL. 10 • NO. 4 • US \$8/CAN \$10

# art on paper

Amanda Coulson / first impression

## A Beautiful Mess

Nicola López's vertiginous look at the world

For someone who seems to be captivated by orgiastic chaos, Nicola López's studio is surprisingly organized. There is plenty of clear space. Some of her massive relief woodblock carvings are stacked neatly in rows, prints from them are tacked up on the walls, and her tidy work surfaces contain sheets of paper, reference books and, today, a group of open ink pots because López is in a drawing mood. Although she is a master of both intaglio and relief techniques, she often works out her themes in drawing, a process that allows for a greater fluidity, and in which her shapes can take form more rapidly and grow into eerie, congested cities.

López is a former student of anthropology, so it makes sense that she is fascinated by the almost organic development of our cities, in which state-of-the-art technology is deposited over the old. Gleaming buildings sit over stinking sewers; sunken ISDN lines run alongside antiquated telephone poles and New York's ubiquitous steam pipes. López imagines these pipes, cables, and wires taking on a life of their own and overrunning the city, as they did in Terry Gilliam's film *Brazil*, the production design of which López greatly admires. Our societies try to cover the mess, to engineer it so that we don't have to confront it, whereas López aims to expose it. In beautiful colored pen-and-ink drawings, such as *Pressure Zones* (2005) or *Riding the Wave* (2004), the delicacy of her touch contrasts with the subject matter: graceless metropolises that are overcrowded with gigantic twisted telegraph poles, used truck tires, black and filthy oil pumps, miles of tangled cables, and wires that seem to form spider webs. In other works, jet fighters or helicopters populate the skies, hurtling between soaring nuclear chimneys that billow green or yellow toxic fumes.

She often examines individual elements in single intaglio prints. *Monument II*



*Vertigo*, woodblock, silkscreen and intaglio on mylar and paper (dimensions variable), 2005. All images courtesy the artist and Caren Golden Fine Art, New York

(2004), for example, depicts an incomplete section of a freeway overpass dwarfing the teeming cityscape below, the black roiling clouds suggesting that the hulking form is not unfinished but has been destroyed,

either by war or natural disaster. In *Monument III* (2004), a huge tower of used and abandoned televisions looms ominously over the town, perhaps used for emergency alerts, safety warnings, or some form

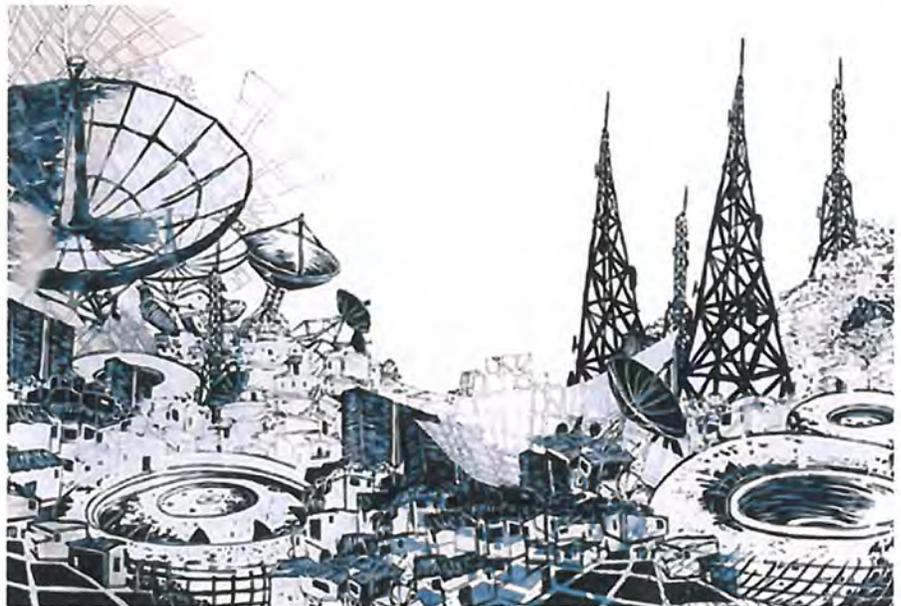


*Strange Skies*, woodblock and silkscreen print collage on paper and mylar (83 x 88 in.), 2005

long strands of printed paper and Mylar that pooled back down on the floor. Tires hung from the ceiling, jet fighters shot past the wall's upper limit. At P.S.1, groups of prints exploded outward from the gallery's corners, colored smoke and steam billowed across the room, and long paper chains connected the different parts.

In her drawings, prints, and installations, López communicates her fear of and fascination with the world. Although some might find the work bleak, she believes that there is an optimism in the very act of creating, of having the capacity and interest to engage and think about the world at large. "The maps and images that I create do not propose a clearly navigable territory or a clear destination," she says, "but ask the question of where we really are and where we might be going."

of propaganda. Whatever is going on, the overall feeling is unsettling. López delights in the use of printmaking as a reference to the mass production and automation of our modern society and for its potential for variation. She often mixes a variety of techniques—such as woodblock, silkscreen, and intaglio—as well as different types of paper in a single work. But López really lets loose in her huge room-size installations, such as those in her solo show at Caren Golden Fine Art and the installation at P.S.1's "Greater New York" exhibition (both 2005). Here the elements seem to breed and proliferate in the same manner as their subjects. At Caren Golden Fine Art, she overlaid her manifold prints and drawings and let them snake up the walls, pouring up over their top edges and spreading onto the ceiling. The gallery's snaking air-conditioning vents vomited



*On The Horizon*, woodblock and silkscreen print collage on paper and mylar (40 x 60 in.), 2004

# ARTFORUM

OCTOBER 2005

I N T E R N A T I O N A L

## REVIEWS

WASHINGTON, DC

### NICOLA LÓPEZ

IRVINE CONTEMPORARY ART

The engagingly chaotic drawings exhibited recently by Nicola López pose a disturbing question: What happens if technology supplants nature and develops the ability to evolve? López is one of the scores of New York-based artists currently getting a career boost from their inclusion in P.S. 1 Contemporary Art Center's expansive "Greater New York 2005." Her first show at Irvine Contemporary Art featured five ink, gouache, and graphite drawings and one somber print in which she ponders the possible consequences of a contemporary urban addiction to new technology. Devoid of human presence, the world she depicts is overrun by an anarchic tangle of pipes, ductwork, telephone lines, satellite dishes, vehicle parts, oil rigs, tires, and batteries that meet, mate, and mutate.

In each of López's tableaux, familiar human structures—houses, neighborhoods, whole cities—are rendered subordinate to machines. Puny and defenseless, they're almost obliterated by the technological maelstrom that surrounds them. As in Escher, perspectives are tilted and rotated; disorientation is the norm; and unadulterated nature virtually disappears. The multicolored but muted drawings feel darkly conspiratorial—depictions of a cabalistic technological force comprising selfish, omnivorous mechanical mutants who metastasize unchecked across a despoiled landscape.

López's handling of her chosen media is deft and authoritative, making the experience of reading each landscape more like a controlled roller-coaster ride than the head-on crash it could have been. Emerging from multiple acute perspectives, characters writhe, snake, spew, thrust, stretch, and contort across the picture plane. Reticular piping coils through portions of *Tailspin* (all works 2005), recalling Louise Bourgeois's skein drawings, while ductwork vomits up a miasma evocative of Ralph Steadman's blood-and-guts illustrations. The most fully realized work in the show, it suggests a radar image of a hurricane's eye encircled by a swirling vortex of technology.

Importantly, comedic and whimsical elements prevent such works from descending into wild-eyed Luddite rants. López extrapolates from the illogical, lobs in some gallows humor, and creates new absurdities. *Just a Little Spill* (the amusing title sounds like PR spin conjured up in the aftermath of an environmental catastrophe) features a spreading inky mass that is obviously far from innocuous. But in López's world, no alarm is registered—this is the darkly funny norm. *To the Last Drop* (a clever elision of the Maxwell House coffee tagline) features the vast, gaping maw of a pipe dribbling out what may just be the last drops of water left on the planet. The incongruously deadpan *Fallen Giants*, a multipart woodblock print on Mylar and paper, has the same aleatory characteristics as the drawings but is executed in the black, brown, and blue of an architectural plan. This utilitarian, even somber, coloration, coupled with a support gently buckled into lethargic, arrhythmic waves, creates a visual calmness and uniformity that runs counter to the colorful, animated chaos of the drawings.

Representing a more understated approach, *Fallen Giants* may be the most effective representation yet of the artist's concerns. What remains unclear in the development of her composite narrative is its subjects' ultimate destiny. Certainly, anything remotely "natural" will shrivel and die, and if her mutant characters are at all dependent on an organic host, then they too are doomed. López's is a portrait of elements too powerful to stop but too dumb to realize that they're evolutionarily screwed. Remind you of anyone you know?

—Nord Wennerstrom



Nicola López, *Fallen Giants*, 2005, woodblock print on Mylar and paper, 9 x 9 x 1".

# **BROOKLYN RAIL**

CRITICAL PERSPECTIVES ON ARTS, POLITICS AND CULTURE APRIL 2006



**ARTIST PROJECT:** Nicola Lopez "White Noise," ink on paper, 2006.

## Nicola Lopez *Overgrowth*

Caren Golden Fine Art September 7–October 14, 2006

As the title of Nicola Lopez's current exhibition *Overgrowth* suggests, much of her work is devoted to the negative transformation of the environment by our glorification of technology and the ever-accelerating pace of urban development.

Lopez presents several large works on paper depicting familiar yet bleak and unsettling landscapes. In these collaged, composite images, chaotic multiple perspectives aggravate a sense of vertigo, while dark, acrid colors intensify feelings of anxiety and (dis-)ease. Unstable and collapsing worlds seem overrun by technology. "A Little Fallout" (2006) features industrial buildings under attack from cannons apparently operated by machines falling from the sky, while "Silver Lining" (2006), a small intaglio print on paper, offers a singular, less dizzying point of view that enables the artist to be specific about a particular technology. Here she depicts two menacing nuclear reactors ludicrously located in a densely settled urban center, spewing filthy dark smoke like ancient coal furnaces into the sky. The reactors dwarf the city below, underscoring the monumental threat lurking in nuclear energy, as the two inky plumes, seductive in

their crisp, velvety detail, dominate the image. But in a clever twist the artist includes some small elements of relief. Floating amid the smoke are flowers and fragments of reticular branches, perhaps signaling that the reactors may be "giving up the ghost."

Five woodblock-on-Mylar collages, shaped into three-dimensional mutant hybrids of communication towers, space stations, and electrical generators, are installed throughout the gallery. Individual pieces with satellite dishes for heads ooze from the ceiling and cling to the exposed heating and ventilation systems and gallery walls. "Mirage" (2006), a large woodblock print pinned to the wall, resembles a horse with lattice-like towers for legs and monitors for a head and body. It appears to be carrying a rider of similar design on its back. Lopez once asked the question: What would happen if technology developed the ability to evolve? Well, it appears at least in this case, that it would behave not much differently from its flesh and blood counterparts. In the robot world, some creatures would be mules and some would be masters.

—Jennifer Riley



Nicola Lopez, "Silver Lining" (2006). Intaglio on paper, image size 24" x 19.5", paper size 30" x 25.5". Edition of 10. Courtesy of the Artist and Caren Golden Fine Art

## How to Spot the Kubrick in Edvard Munch

**Six artists on the angst and influence of that 'pop star' from Norway.**

Is Edvard Munch a great painter? Is he over the top? Is he still relevant? Do we feel his pain? Or is he just weird? Those questions and more were discussed recently by six artists who took a tour of the Munch retrospective, "The Modern Life of the Soul," that opened last month at the Museum of Modern Art and continues through May 8. Their comments ranged from a riff on stealing paintings (a reference to the theft of "The Scream" in Oslo in 2004) to an examination of the relationship of Munch (1863-1944) to advertising and cinema, especially horror films.

The artists all live in New York, although only one was born here; their fields encompass drawing, painting, sculpture, photography, video, printmaking and performance. All have had gallery shows and four of them are in the 2006 Whitney Biennial; one was in the 2004 Biennial and another is represented in the print collection of the Modern. Starting in front of a landscape, "Spring in the Elm Forest III" (1923), the artists mused playfully on Munch's temperament and style and on why his work still resonates today. Here are excerpts.

ANNETTE GRANT



**NICOLA LÓPEZ, 30, born in Santa Fe, N.M.;** produces exuberantly bleak landscapes and industrial wastelands in drawings, collages and prints.

There is some optimism here, but I can't get away from the anxiety and melancholy that is a large part of what is

going on in this entire collection of Munch's work. It's easy to say they're heavy-handed and obvious, but they're also very honest.

There is also a lot of despair and angst going around these days, and I think we'd be silly to say there isn't an edge of desperation about where the world is going in general. The self-portraits are moving because they have intensity accessed through an internal rather than a predictable imagery. I think a lot of his work is very scary.

# HARPER'S

HARPER'S MAGAZINE / AUGUST 2006 \$6.95



*Mis-Communicated*, a drawing by Nicola López, whose work will be exhibited next month at Caren Golden Fine Art, in New York City.

# PLANET

GLOBAL CULTURE AND LIFESTYLE

## ART NICOLA LÓPEZ

Nicola López isn't the first artist to show us how our obsession with technology and building up cities will forever (negatively) affect our society and psychology. She is, however, the first to artistically map out just how we're going about messing up the world. With a mix of intaglio, woodblock, and drawings — all hand-done work that contrasts nicely with her machine-made subjects — she creates beautiful "maps" structured more by experiences and objects than geography.

Much like Ryan McGinness, Nicola uses detailed handiwork to recreate the mass- and machine-produced symbols and high-tech look of modern society in order to show both the beauty and the damage that such modernity can create. Just as cities are built, Nicola's art starts with basic, natural layers, then builds upon them with increasing complexity, both in the art itself and in the materials used to create it. The final layers are often various depictions of our urban detritus — TVs, power stations, tires — and her installations are known for taking up entire gallery walls. In López's own words, "The maps and images that I create do not propose a clearly navigable territory or a clear destination, but ask the question of where we really are and where we might be going."

Having already made a mark in North and South America and Morocco, López is still best known in her current home base, New York City. You can currently view her work in *Dreaming of a More Better Future* at the Reinberger Gallery at Cleveland Institute of Art through December 22, 2005 and *The (S) Files/The Selected Files* at El Museo del Barrio in New York City through January 29, 2006. KRISTINA SIBLEY



"BITTER CLOUDS", 2006

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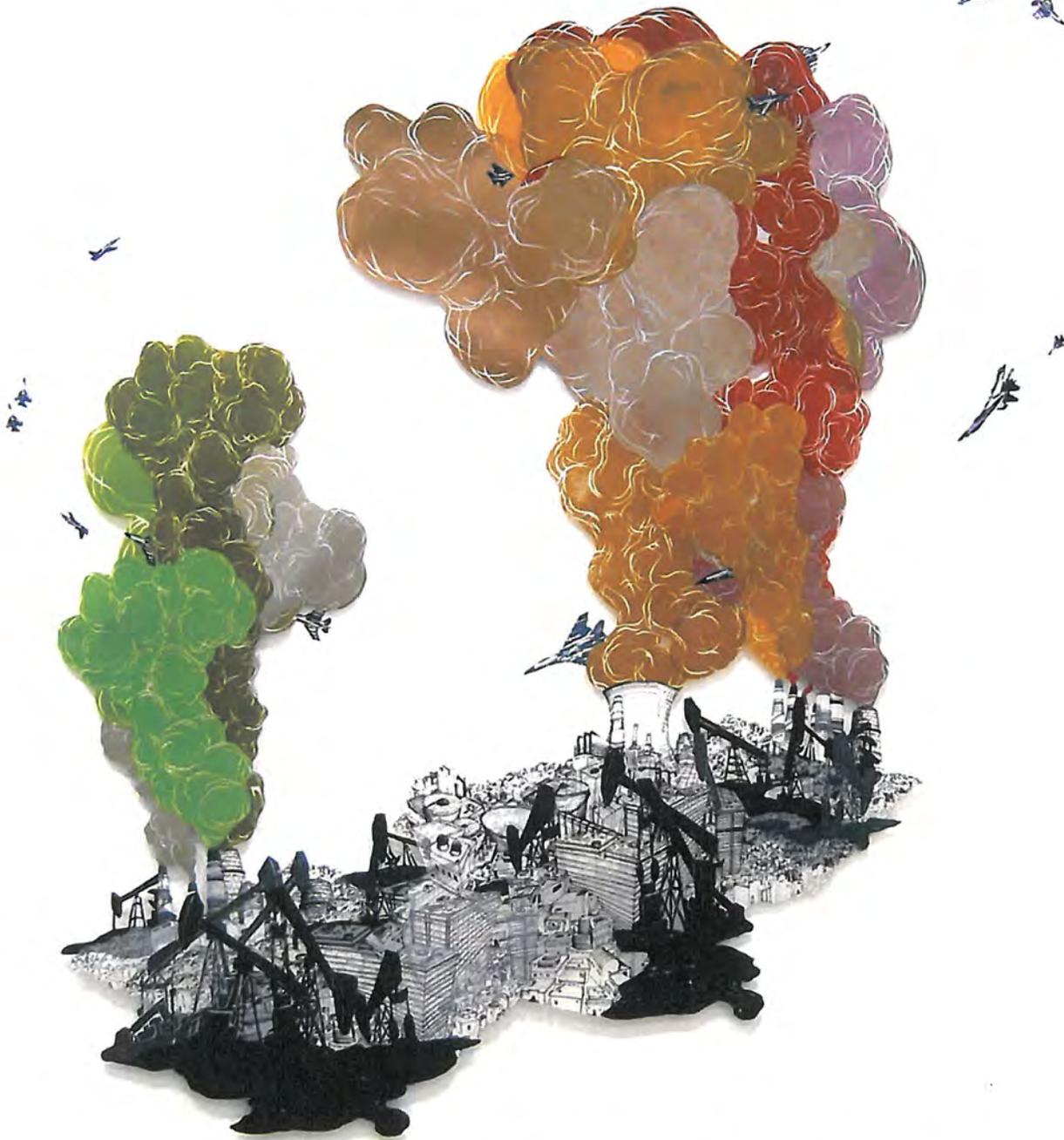
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December 2005

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De radical a establecido From radical to mainstream



Nicola López, *Strange Skies*, 2005, 83 x 88 inches, Courtesy of the Artist & Caren Golden Fine Art, NYC

# Art in America

JUNE/JULY 2005

## REPORT FROM NEW YORK I

### Return to the Real?

*A youth-oriented survey at P.S.1 presents work, much of it politically aware, by 160 New York City artists who have emerged since the millennium*

BY ELEANOR HEARTNEY

Greater New York 2005 took up residence at P.S.1 just in time for the opening of a flurry of spring art fairs in New York City. The sprawling exhibition was preceded by a buildup of expectations based in part on the freshness of the first edition of this show in 2000. Once again, Greater New York was posed as a full-scale collaborative effort between the curators of P.S.1 and the Museum of Modern Art. It includes more than 160 artists selected from a pool of over 2,000 submissions generated by both professional recommendations and an open call for proposals. The curatorial team that selected the final show was composed of P.S.1 director Alanna Heiss, MOMA director Glenn Lowry, P.S.1 curatorial advisor Robert Nickas, P.S.1 curator Amy Smith-Stewart and MOMA curator Ann Temkin, and headed by Klaus Biesenbach, who is a curator at both museums.

Nicola Lopez's installation *A Promising Tomorrow* (2004) is a collage-drawing of an explosion emanating from a corner before spreading throughout the small room in which this work is displayed. Spilling outward are images of various bits of industrial and urban detritus—chains, tires, satellite dishes, radio towers, batteries, and, at the outer edges, tanks and military helicopters.



*Detail of Nicola Lopez's installation  
A Promising Tomorrow, 2004, ink, gouache and  
acrylic on paper, dimensions variable.*