

VENUS

MANHATTAN LOS ANGELES

CONCRETE ISLAND

March 11 – May 20, 2017

VENUS

601 South Anderson St.
Los Angeles, CA 90023



(Los Angeles, CA) – CONCRETE ISLAND: *The Antidote for Civilization.*

“Alone in this forgotten world whose furthest shores were defined only by the roar of automobile engines...an alien planet abandoned by its inhabitants, a race of motorway builders who had long since vanished but had bequeathed to him this concrete wilderness.”

– J.G. Ballard, *Concrete Island*, 1974

Welcome to Concrete Island: an overlooked city within a city, an entropical paradise where leisure is lean. Careen off the highway and into the cushion of your airbag to arrive at this bleak no man’s land, where you’ll be marooned in plain sight. No one will hear your cries against the tide of commuter traffic lapping at the shores of our deserted island, nestled between two lanes of howling interstate. This vestigial location is your vacation destination, boasting all the sights and specificities of any cultural petri dish. Come and brave this new world. This here and now – this moment – could last forever.

MENTAL HYGIENE

Come to Concrete Island and leave your worries at the roadside. Our island is a duty-free zone, set far apart from the taxing pressures of civilization and sanity. You’ll feel better in no time: the surrealism of total solitude arrives faster than you’d think. Boredom and desperation begin to take hold, and you’ll remember what it means to notice your surroundings. Let us guide you; a new pantheon of visual culture will rise before you, delivering you to that enchanted realm of magical thinking.

Listen to our walls: they speak in a rare blend of hobo shamanism and contemporary primitivism that captures the texture of the urban psyche. Fine-tuning the aura of the found object, the animistic sculptures of Blair Saxon-Hill, Lazaros and Jon Pylypchuck remind you that pareidolia really *does* enrich the sociality of your environment. Sterling Ruby’s early video work, the *Transient Trilogy*, forages against the odds, and pushes you through satisfying bricolage with no clear purpose, right toward a set of new rituals. Stop and explore Daniel R. Small’s cargo cult artifacts: his petrified versions of vital objects will remind you of life before Concrete Island. Kim Gordon’s crumpled canvases covered in glitter dance with Kelly Akashi’s ritual altars that pay homage to discarded materials.

Concrete Island is home to Ry Rocklen’s ancient idol dedicated to dreams of the Michelin boy, a terracotta index of tire treads from all points in history. Matt Johnson’s massive, repurposed building materials recall public sculpture, divorced from the hectic city you left behind. Nancy Rubins’ blossoming gargantua of canoes has the ambition of an architect designing for *Mad Max: Fury Road*; her logic of accretion provides rejuvenating ideas for what our cities could look like. Totems by Jason Bailor Losh punctuate the property, reaching skyward with crockery bound in basket weave.

SMOKE SIGNALS

It’s hard to ring home from Concrete Island – the phone lines are down, and they’re not set to be fixed. Your efforts to be heard will pass in vain, but eventually someone will stumble upon evidence of your existence. Jason Matthew Lee’s hardwired zombie phone booths don’t make calls, and Will Boone’s cryptographic warnings subliminally tell you to “stay put.” At night, you can hear the Crenshaw Cowboy calling from the side of I-10.

LUSH ENTROPICS

On Concrete Island, you remember that nature always wins. Ruben Ochoa’s grand gateway of dilapidation welcomes you to the land that time forgot. Weeds will outlive all infrastructure – even ours – and Tony Matelli’s bronze dandelions are no exception. They sprout amongst the shadows of Sam Falls’ tree painting, situated near the grove of tree lamps by Pentti Monkkonen, made from cell towers that ape the palms that grow along the freeway. Chris Wiley’s photographs document the surface and texture of our natural world, and framed like postcards, these images are specimens that echo their environs.

VENUS

MANHATTAN LOS ANGELES

AESTHETICS OF SURVIVAL

"These days one needed a full-scale emergency kit built into one's brain, plus a crash course in disaster survival, real and imagined." – J.G. Ballard, *Concrete Island*, 1974

Concrete Island makes sure to furnish you with carefully considered, top-of-the-line products. Emergency Survival Weapons from Harry Dodge provide stunningly real protection for those moments when flight is just no option. Each implement is assembled at a moment's notice from materials within arm's reach. The tools will quickly immobilize your enemy and keep you safe until sunrise. For bodily warmth, Lazaros presents a humanitarian aid tarp from Haiti that he kept during his initiation into the Voodoo priesthood, displayed here to recall Barnett Newman's meditative zips.

THE META-CITY

On Concrete Island, your world becomes abbreviated, synthesized... simpler. Jaime Davidovich's video of Gordon Matta-Clark shows him on one of his "fake estates," a speculative real estate venture where the artist becomes an architect of forgotten places, much like Concrete Island itself. And with their finger on the pulse of non-place development, the Center for Land Use Interpretation is on site to give us a work that welcomes everyone – and no one – to uncharted territory.

PRIMAL DOMESTIC

On Concrete Island, you can fill your house with anything you want. Catharine Czudej's handmade soap paintings are a local specialty, and decorate walls with color, scent, and function. William Anastasi's splash of black industrial varnish on the wall is a different approach to domesticity, and highlights the more poetic and anarchic aspects of Concrete Island. Matt Johnson's cosmic drop cloths strike a balance between decoration, accident, and the infinite, puncturing your home with reminders of the scale of all things. Look deep in the mirror: Kaari Upson's *Shadow Work* is a domiciliary recall providing the pleasures of intimate moments with inanimate surrogates, proving that companionship is still possible on Concrete Island.

SYNTROPY – THE PRIMORDIAL SOUP

Plunging us headlong through a vivisection of decline, Jedediah Caesar's new series is a literal stop-motion sequence of materiality's strata in cinematic detail. Like a sublime and anarchic loam dedicated to previous civilizations, Francesca Gabbiani's collage records a DIY shelter in its final moments, a whisper before its soft return to the elements. Within the glossy ooze of Analia Saban's seemingly damp work on canvas, you'll find nutritious rubble, concrete particles, and luscious paint. Strung up like a carcass from a recent hunt, Max Hooper Schneider's shopping cart, which he found burned beyond recognition on the side of the road, is painted with a candy coat, like a monument to our sacred eternal return.

GET LOST!

Caught between the proverbial here and there, you can sleep under the stars, delicatise primordial soup, regard the mushrooming possibilities of budding civilizations, or degrade luxuries back into raw material. This is a vacation that will *never* end, no matter how hard you try!

CONCRETE ISLAND: WHERE SURVIVAL IS AVANT-GARDE

ARTISTS: Kelly Akashi, William Anastasi, Vern Blosum, Will Boone, Jedediah Caesar, Center for Land Use Interpretation, the Crenshaw Cowboy, Catharine Czudej, Jaime Davidovich, Harry Dodge, Sam Falls, Francesca Gabbiani, Kim Gordon, Matt Johnson, Lazaros, Jason Matthew Lee, Jason Bailer Losh, Tony Matelli, Pentti Monkkonen, Ruben Ochoa, Jon Pylypchuk, Ry Rocklen, Nancy Rubins, Sterling Ruby, Analia Saban, Blair Saxon-Hill, Max Hooper Schneider, Daniel R. Small, Piotr Uklanski, Kaari Upson, Chris Wiley

ABOUT VENUS: Founded in 2012 by Adam Lindemann and with spaces in both Manhattan and Los Angeles, VENUS is dedicated to curated exhibitions both historic and contemporary, which cast a unique and often iconoclastic view on the work of established artists, or artists whose works have been somewhat overlooked. The gallery continues to collaborate with prominent artists, foundations, estates, and galleries.

For further information about the exhibition and availability, please contact the gallery at info@venusovermanhattan.com

For all press inquiries related to the exhibition, please email press@venusovermanhattan.com