

VENUS

MANHATTAN LOS ANGELES

Black, Ezraha Jean, "Concrete Island - Venus Over Los Angeles," *Artillery*, May 18, 2017

ARTILLERY



CONCRETE ISLAND – VENUS OVER LOS ANGELES

by Ezraha Jean Black ·

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Not long ago, I recommended a show, entitled, *Concrete Islands* (plural), which, although it didn't exactly shy from the allusion to J. G. Ballard's dystopian novel of contemporary urban life, was more specifically inspired by Marcel Broodthaers and the concrete 'islands' and chasms of language and meaning. Inspired not a little by that previous show, **Aaron Moulton** (who some of us may know from the Gagosian Gallery), has assembled a group of artists whose works play more specifically off themes and motives that parallel elements of the Ballard novel. If the show occasionally seems a bit sprawling and unfocused, it is more than redeemed by the range and quality of the work. From **Kelly Akashi** (a kind of pyre of brick that might be a ritual desecration of Carl Andre) to **Chris Wiley** (*Dingbat*) – 46 works by 38 artists in all – there's scarcely a loser in the bunch. The spirit of the show uncannily reflects the spirit of the downtown street it's situated on (South Anderson), with its sense of continuous discontinuity, displacement, disconnection and alienation, random violence, and late capitalist entropy. The viewer is immediately greeted by a kind of concrete-locked surveyor's compass or level bipod re-choreographed into a *Pinky Swear* (2017) by **Ruben Ochoa** and **Max Hooper Schneider's** melted (literally) *Shopping Cart* (2017), while **Nancy Rubins'** giclee collaged detritus seems ready to take flight. **Matt Johnson's** 'baby aqua' *Drywall #5* (2017) was like Noguchi coffee table improvised out of a lean-to. **Harry Dodge** assembles some Emergency Weapons that might just come in handy in the surreal pre-Road Warrior actuality unfolding on Anderson (and Every) Street. What carried through forcefully and consistently through this projected dystopia (not too distant from current actualities) was an evolution in notions of both space and identity. **Kaari Upson's** 2009 *Shadow Work* video built upon much of this terrain, which she has explored extensively in previous work. **Kim Gordon's** work was a fresh discovery among the well thought-out 'ruins' here – untitled, quasi-semaphoric souvenirs of the glittery ruins we're all rapidly leaving in our wake.