

Introduction Panel

Freeway Studies #2: Inside the Quad | Ben Maltz Gallery

Inside the Quad is the second in the ongoing Freeway Studies exhibition series. It features the work of thirty-one artists whose studios are located inside the area bordered by four major interstates: I-405, 10, 110, and 105. It includes the cities and neighborhoods of Inglewood, Culver City, Santa Monica, West Adams, Baldwin Hills, Palms, and more.

Freeway Studies is a multi-year, multi-exhibition curatorial endeavor launched in 2012 to survey the Los Angeles art scene one studio and one area at a time. Los Angeles County spans 4,038 square miles, is home to 88 individual municipalities, multiple unincorporated areas, including two off-shore islands, Santa Catalina and San Clemente, and is crisscrossed by 909 miles of freeway and highway. While this may seem an impossible area to survey, we follow the City's infamous traffic patterns and use the concrete freeway system as our guide.

In other cities or regions, many people share small talk about the weather. Angelenos talk about traffic, sig-alerts, and "best" routes in what must sound like a secret code to visitors, "Take the 405 to the 10 to the 110 to the 105." Saturday Night Live's "The Californians" made this local phenomenon national with ridiculously obsessive accounts of driving in Los Angeles. The local vernacular when referring to the Interstate freeways that pass through our city is to say "the 10" rather than "I-10." No other city takes this kind of local ownership of the national interstate system. Angelenos are also prone to saying they never go west or east of "the 405," north/south of "the 10," or below "the 105," connoting a wide range of emotions from pride to conceit or simply not wanting to deal with the traffic.

Each of the freeways demarcating the "Quad" is a significant thoroughfare that visually, physically, and psychologically divides the city between north, south, east and west as well as between coastal/inland, Westside/South Bay, or uptown/downtown attitudes. Because of the increase in traffic, today they function more as natural landmarks or barriers like rivers, ravines or mountain ranges used to navigate by and delineate regions. The I-405 is ranked as "the busiest and most congested freeway in America." As much as its 10-lanes connect people from point A to B, the highway also disconnects. The I-10 is the fourth longest interstate highway in the United States between Santa Monica and Florida and splits Los Angeles in two: "It's either north of the 10 or south of the 10." The historic part of the California I-110 (between Pasadena and downtown) was originally called SR 110 / Arroyo Seco Parkway in the 1930s before it extended down to the Port of Los Angeles in San Pedro, and it holds the distinguished honor of being the first freeway in the western United States. The 1960s transportation plan included the creation of the I-105 or "Century Freeway." It finally opened in 1993 and connects LAX/El Segundo to Norwalk, stopping shy of its parent freeway, the I-5. In acknowledging all these aspects of the project's borders, we are going with the flow and letting the freeways chart our course in exploring the identities, similarities and differences from area to area.

Rather than the Situationists' walking exploration of the urban environment, our curatorial *dérive*—the spontaneous exploration of urban landscapes guided by aesthetic instinct—combines the self-imposed geographic parameters with word-of-mouth referrals. We travel the highways, step into artists' physical work spaces and discover first-hand their ideas and modes of production instead of relying on a mediated experience. Our aim is to broaden the existing conversation about Los Angeles art, expand the creative network between artist and institution, and roam beyond the confines of a single rolodex.

While we strive to meet every artist and to show as much work as possible, we are confined by the limitations of time, space, and resources. In an effort to be collegial and transparent in our building of an analog network, we are also embracing the digital by documenting each studio visit on a blog (blogs.otis.edu/freewaystudies), making the experience accessible worldwide. As the project progresses over the next decade, the blog will continue to expand and be a living resource for the public at large. In addition to the blog, we have included information about each of the artists in a binder on the education table located in the gallery along with a selection of artists' publications. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to ask a member of the gallery's staff.

The next **Freeways Studies #3: In the Loop** uses the I-110, I-10, and I-5 freeways as its perimeter and studio visits are already underway.

Meg Linton, Director of Galleries and Exhibitions
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