





Jacqui Den Hartog, *Gilded Space*
(installation view) (2022).
Image courtesy of the artist and STARS.

discontinuing the use of MHF, moving—a sort of forced relocation—is floated as the unspoken answer to the problem. Here, it is important to remember that moving and migration are also forms of extraction.

Back in the galleries at TAM, Matthew Brandt's warped chromogenic prints of Iceland's largest ice cap had scorched, cracked, and blistered surfaces. Achieved through exposure to fire and heat, *Vatnajökull* (2018–20) echoes the effect of warming temperatures on the glacier. A sense of cultural loss feels imminent, as ice carries within it not only a record of climate and time but also Icelandic history. Thus, the notion of invisibility carries throughout the exhibition and acts as a sort of prophecy. Jaramillo's depleting sculptures, Soterakis' desolate landscapes, Abeles' pieces of particulate matter, and the work of other artists in the exhibition reminds us of the intricate ties between violence and extraction and our indelible dependence on nature—without which we'd be reduced to mere ashes and dust.

1. "Extraction: Earth, Ashes, Dust @ Torrance Art Museum," SUPERCOLLIDER, accessed July 10, 2022, <https://www.supercolliderart.com/satellites/atmospheresdeep-zm8tg>.

2. At the time of the explosion, the refinery was owned by ExxonMobile.

3. Adam Mahoney, "'Slow violence that drives death': a California port city's struggle with pollution and shootings," *The Guardian*, March 31, 2022, <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/mar/31/california-port-city-pollution-gun-violence>.

4. Adam Mahoney, "One family, three generations of cancer, and the largest concentration of oil refineries in California," *Grist*, June 22, 2022, <https://grist.org/equity/wilmington-california-public-health-survey/>.

Jacci Den Hartog at STARS

April 2–May 28, 2022

The structures on view in Jacci Den Hartog's solo exhibition at STARS, *Gilded Space*, seemed simultaneously like effigies of the city's urban underground and emblems from a post-Anthropocene era. The series of organic sculptural forms, which take cues from Los Angeles' subterranean layer, were juxtaposed with watercolor paintings to accentuate a bracing tension between the city's industrial and biological elements. With a nod to minimalist philosophical frameworks, Den Hartog incorporates steel grids as armatures for her sculptures, subverting their order and control through the use of water-based materials that invite entropy and chance and reflecting alternative feminist futures onto our lived experience in Southern California: an environmental toppling of our industrial experiments in circumventing nature.

Works like *Drift* (2021) and *Fluvial* (2022)—which stood on pedestals throughout the front room of the gallery—are twisted constructions of dynamic color and metallic hue. Their initial visual impression is akin to something material emerging from the future, a space where the native matter has reclaimed industrial infiltrators. *Descent* (2022), a wild shape of curling edges and spiky tufts, reminiscent of the color of earthen clay, could be relic-like detritus from the bowels of a river, mixed and slicked with oils of

the city. *Transcorporeal* (2022) looks like a factory remnant, an alloy forged from steel and dust, that has erupted from the guts of urban infrastructure. Likewise, *Seminal* (2022)—a sculpture of blunt borders and folds with hints of silver amongst a palette of light green and gold—looks like it has traversed differing ecosystems, shaped by water and wind.

The hydrocommons, vast and complicated sewer systems that bring water to Los Angeles, is a touchpoint for Den Hartog, and certainly, the armatures for the sculptures serve as befitting stand-ins for the regulated, gridded systems that govern urban planning. I cannot help but see these grids as patriarchal proxies. Den Hartog works to subvert these systems, using gardening tools to bend and warp the armatures before adding fiberglass cloth dipped in Aqua Resin to shape the refitted forms. By permitting the material to act freely on the form—the results of which are intriguing moments of chance and gravitational impulse—I see Den Hartog as unleashing the biological terrain to break down outdated modes of social organization (perhaps my wishful desire to see archaic systems topple). Though Den Hartog's previous work has investigated the influence of water in natural environments (as in her 2015 exhibition *The Etiquette of Mountains* at Rosamund Felsen Gallery), here, she channels this power to symbolically deflate the city's industrial understructure; in the work, aleatory and organic growth has overtaken more ordered systems. The sculptures (which

the artist refers to as landscapes) are finished with a layer of acrylic, hand-painted on their wobbly surfaces. While minimalism (an apt comparison considering the movement's interest in the objecthood of 3-D works) championed an innate identity and simplicity of form, these works openly reference the natural world outside of the artist's studio, one in which strict formal rules rarely apply. Den Hartog's process instead points to feminist artists of more recent eras who critiqued minimalist sculpture by embracing biography, nature, and the handmade: Lynda Benglis' compounding of sculpture and painting; Eva Hesse's consideration for the subjectivity of the body.

A series of watercolors in the second gallery more directly illustrate Den Hartog's disruptions. In *Sinking* (2019), a grid of white rectangles floats within a sea of pooling blue and black pigment. The colors overflow and upend rigid contours, washing away something seemingly steadfast. One of the older pieces on view, *Inundation, Orange and Black* (2018), is a more literal image of a grid or net set against a sunrise-like background that begins to sag and combust within the frame, an immovable object crumbling on itself. Here again, the accumulation and gravity of water is a cataclysmic event, allowing us to envisage a potential future where our steel cities are engulfed by the very elements that we try so hard to control. It's an intuitive leap to apply a feminist lens to these interruptions, but water, and access to it, *is* a feminist issue. Perhaps water, with its vital potential to sustain and create life, is

a metaphor for that which might best combat patriarchy.

The era we occupy requires more than the mere observation of our shared space—it demands that we acknowledge the effect that we have on our surroundings. Through her use of water and gravity, Den Hartog's new body of work appears as a warning: try as we might to create fabulous networks of machinery and economic and political infrastructures, we can never fully control our natural environment. But, taking it a step further, she also welcomes wildness. The work is a feminist call to overtake the symbolic and rigid structures around us—concepts that might feel as ancient as the tunnels beneath our feet.