



# URBAN CONSTRUCTION

June 16 – July 12, 2011

ArtGate Gallery

Curated by Jae Yang | Art-merge

# CURATOR'S NOTE

Any discussion of urbanism today inevitably unearths a richly interconnected web of qualitative considerations—from the formal, environmental and technological to the experiential and even metaphysical. Perhaps nowhere in the United States is discussion of these considerations more vibrant than in New York and Los Angeles, the two cities from which the artists in this exhibition hail.

In *Urban Construction*, I've pulled together three extraordinary artists—**Peter Gregorio, Brian Cooper and Alexander Severin**—in an attempt to re-conceptualize and re-contextualize the abstraction, myths, and quantitative realities inherent in the built environment. Within each of these artists' work, multiple lines of questioning inevitably arise.

Is the urban landscape merely an outcropping of disinterested design, a series of containers and connections in which individuality is usurped by sheer mass, and personal expression gives ground to economies of scale? What role do symbols and structure—in law, logistics, markets and physical space—play

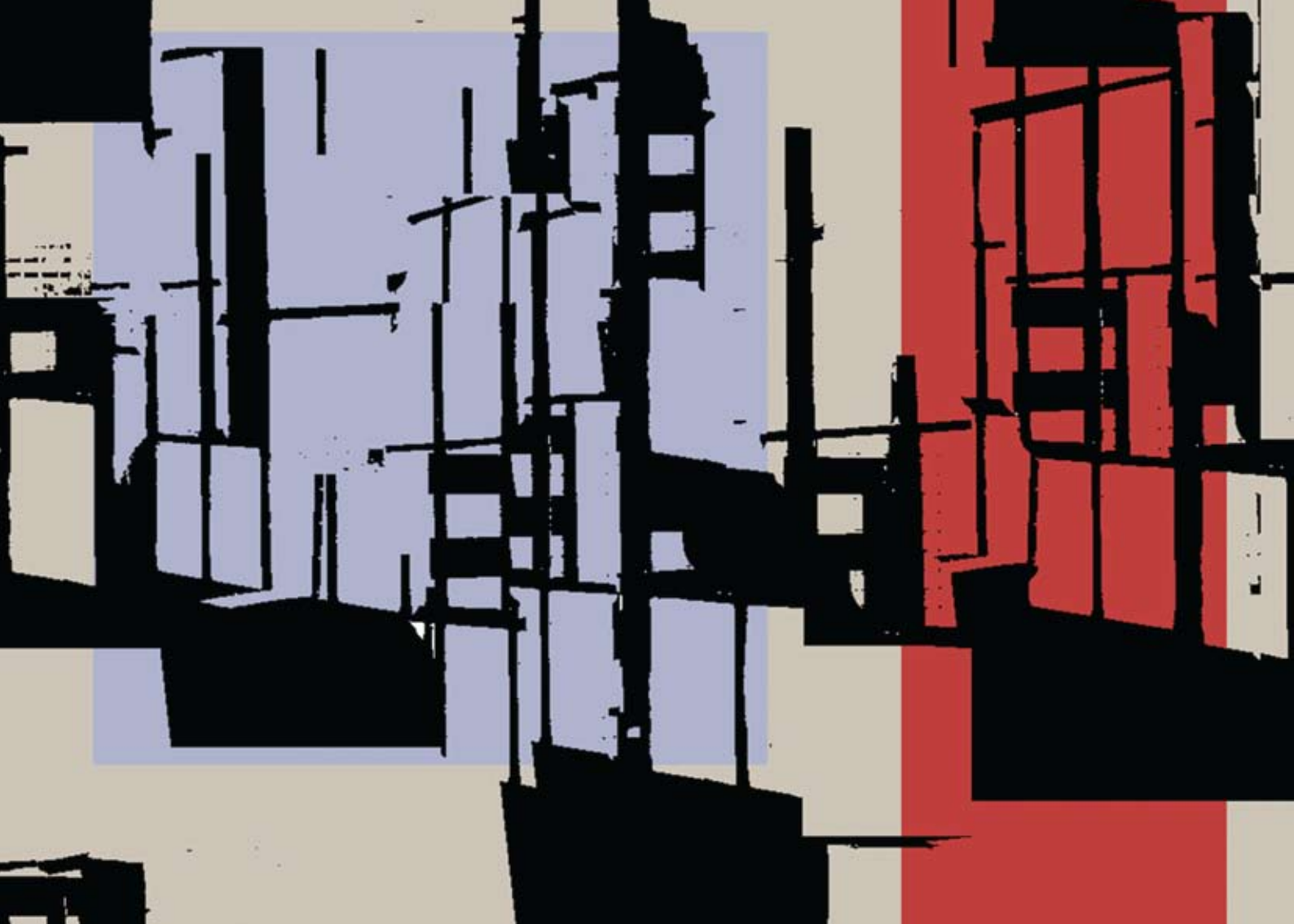
in our experienced lives? Do they inspire or do they merely sedate? Are modern memes indicators of our breakthroughs in understanding, or shortcuts to forgetting?

And what about the idea of the city as an evolutionary player itself—urbanism as organism—with genetic impulses seeping from every window and doorway? What are the repercussions for the occupants of a city that has become autonomous, even sentient?

Architecture and public spaces are, like art, human-born creations that result in an often dizzying, oblique, even abstract experience—but can the built environment ever truly inspire in the same way that art does?

Fittingly, *Urban Construction* does not answer these questions. By definition, the built environment is ever-changing. It is at its most dynamic when its biggest critics are also its most creative re-envisioners. Let this exhibition introduce three such people.

JAE YANG // [ART-MERGE.COM](http://ART-MERGE.COM)



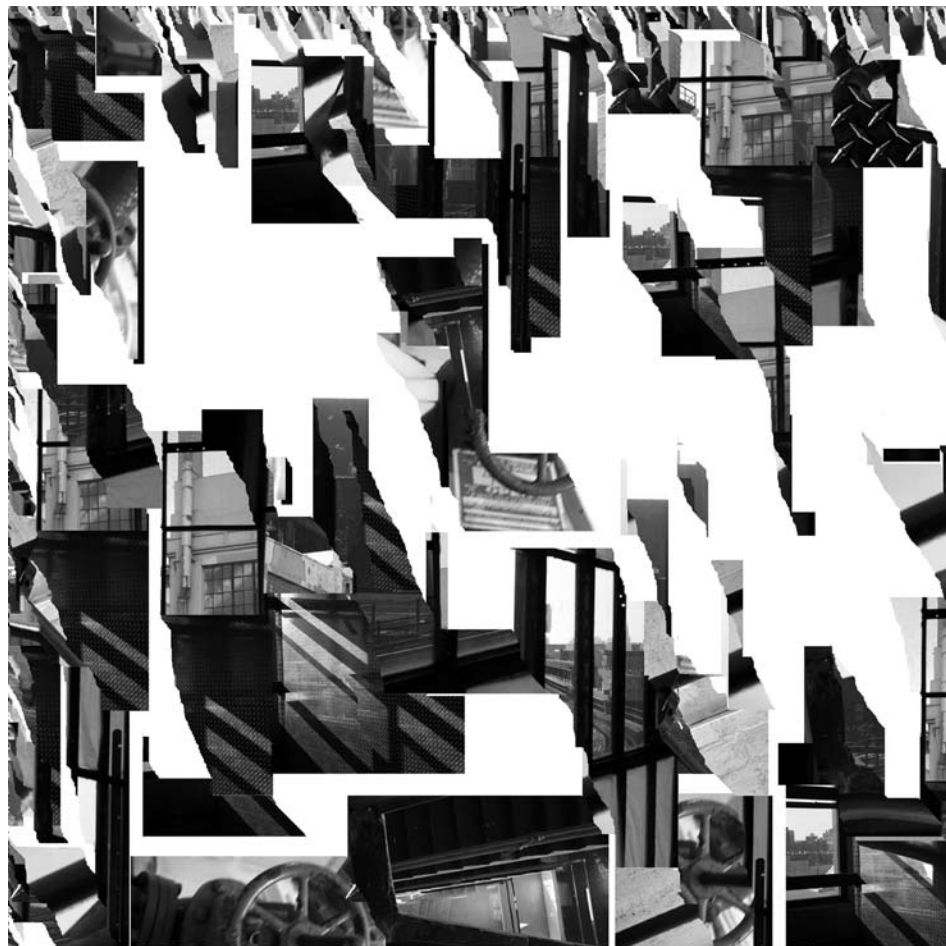
# PETER GREGORIO

*Imagine the city as an evolutionary player—urbanism as organism—with genetic impulses seeping from every window and doorway. What are the repercussions for the occupants of a city that has become autonomous, even sentient?*

*Mμ2pia*, 2011, Oil on linen, 60" x 60"

Futurists assert that a time will come when technology progresses beyond human understanding—a singularity in which machines know best. Peter Gregorio's work is a prescient reminder of this time. Reflecting the artist's interest in theoretical cosmology, his video and photographic collages and oil on linen paintings depict vaguely navigable territories, flattened renderings of physical space at the edge of the event horizon. Gregorio's interdisciplinary approach—one which pulls from science, science fiction, information theory, and experimental music—results in an unexpectedly nuanced, mutable and beautiful vision of the dystopian landscape.

Peter Gregorio received an MFA in Fine Arts from the School of Visual Arts. He has exhibited extensively in New York and New England, with additional shows in Berlin, London, Oslo, Genova, and across the United States. Gregorio is the recipient of the Joan Mitchell Foundation Award, the Paula Rhodes Award, and grants awarded through the National Endowment for the Arts, Massachusetts Cultural Council, the Northampton Arts Council, and the University of Massachusetts Arts Council. He is Founder and Editor of VECTOR Artist's Journal, recently completed a residency at the International Studio and Curatorial Program, and is currently an Artist in Residence in the Chashama Studio Program. He lives and works in New York.



*Technopolis One*, 2011, Duraclear print on poly(methyl methacrylate), 36" x 36"



*Technopolis Two*, 2011, Duraclear print on poly(methyl methacrylate), 36" x 36"





# BRIAN COOPER

*Art and architectural  
practice can produce an  
oblique, dizzying,  
even abstract result—  
does the experience of  
these disciplines inspire,  
or does it sedate?*

*Monumental Abstraction, 2008,  
Oil on canvas, 32" x 52"*

In every art-viewing experience there exists also the possible moment of emotional rapture—and a push and pull between the conscious admission of factual reality and the beauty of disbelief. Brian Cooper's work invokes this struggle with a set of assumed rules or perspectives which the artist establishes only to break repeatedly. There are surreal sculptural dimensions to Cooper's paintings in his attention to implied volumes—many of them irrational or physically impossible—and yet there is something classic in his work too. Cooper's paintings marry the palette and subtlety of pre-Renaissance Flemish and Italian painters to the abstract compositional frenzy of 20th century artists such as Wyndham Lewis, Lee Mullican and Theo Von Doesburg.

Brian Cooper holds a BFA in Studio Art from San Francisco Art Institute and an MFA from USC. His work has shown at the Santa Monica Museum of Art, the Sweeney Art Museum at UCR, and the Scottsdale Museum of Contemporary Art. He has shown extensively at commercial galleries, including Sam Lee Gallery, Cirrus Gallery, Raid Projects and Track 16 in Los Angeles, and Guerrero Gallery in San Francisco. Cooper lives and works in Los Angeles.





*Stacks of Near and Far*, 2011,  
Oil on canvas, 32" x 48"



*Transcend the Finite*, 2009,  
Oil on canvas, 36" x 48"



# ALEXANDER SEVERIN

*Is the urban landscape  
merely a series of contain-  
ers and connections,  
an outcropping of  
disinterested design?  
What role do symbols  
and structure play in our  
experienced lives?*

*BLDG/DNA1, 2009, C-print,  
Edition of 5, 36" x 28"*

The fine art work of Russian-born, New York-based photographer Alexander Severin is deeply rooted in his background in digital design tools and commercial architecture photography. His current BLDG/DNA series of photographs depicts repeating patterns of office and tenement facades. These digitally manipulated photographic reconstructions of probable but unlikely architectural events can be read as lines of coded civic data or urban DNA. As the veracity of the photographs is betrayed by closer inspection of their impossible geometries, Severin's images begin to question the semiotics of the contemporary urban experience as a whole. Is the built environment a vital participant in the game, or just an abstracted map upon which our lived experiences play out?

Alexander Severin was educated in architecture and computer science at Columbia University. While working with several architecture firms after graduation in New York, Severin became interested in the power that images have over architecture, and pursued an MFA in Photography from the School of Visual Arts. His architectural photo studio Razummedia is committed to investigating and expanding the pursuit of photographic representation of the built environment. His fine art photography represents the vanguard of that exploratory work.





*BLDG/DNA2*, 2009, C-print, Edition of 5, 24" x 36"

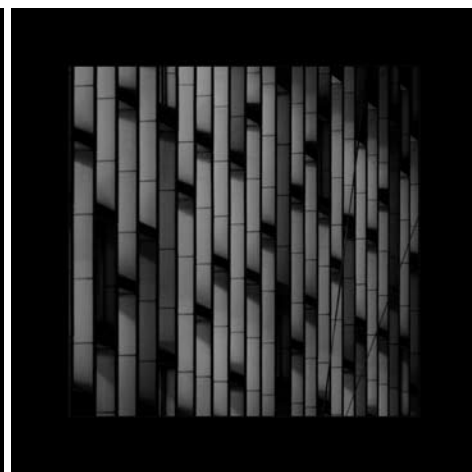
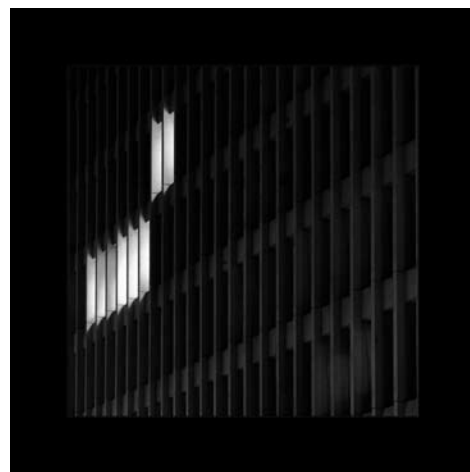
From top left:

*Plane Series 3*, 2007, Pigment print,  
Edition of 15, 24" x 24"

*Plane Series 4*, 2007, Pigment print,  
Edition of 15, 24" x 24"

*Strip Series 3*, 2008, Pigment print,  
Edition of 15, 20" x 20"

*Strip Series 4*, 2008, Pigment print,  
Edition of 15, 20" x 20"







**ARTGATE GALLERY**

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