



KIM ABELES

Smog Collectors, 1987-2020



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Smog Collectors, 1987-2020

*Kim Abeles
William Fox
Jennifer Frias
Rachel Kaufman
Karen Moss*

Smog over Los Angeles, June 2021.
Photo: Jennifer Frias

This book accompanies the exhibition,
Kim Abeles: Smog Collectors, 1987-2020
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Cover Artwork:
The Smog Catcher (Thirty Days of Smog) II, 1992
Smog (particulate matter) on repurposed acrylic
15" x 13"
Collection of Michael A. Levine



KIM ABELES

Smog Collectors, 1987-2020

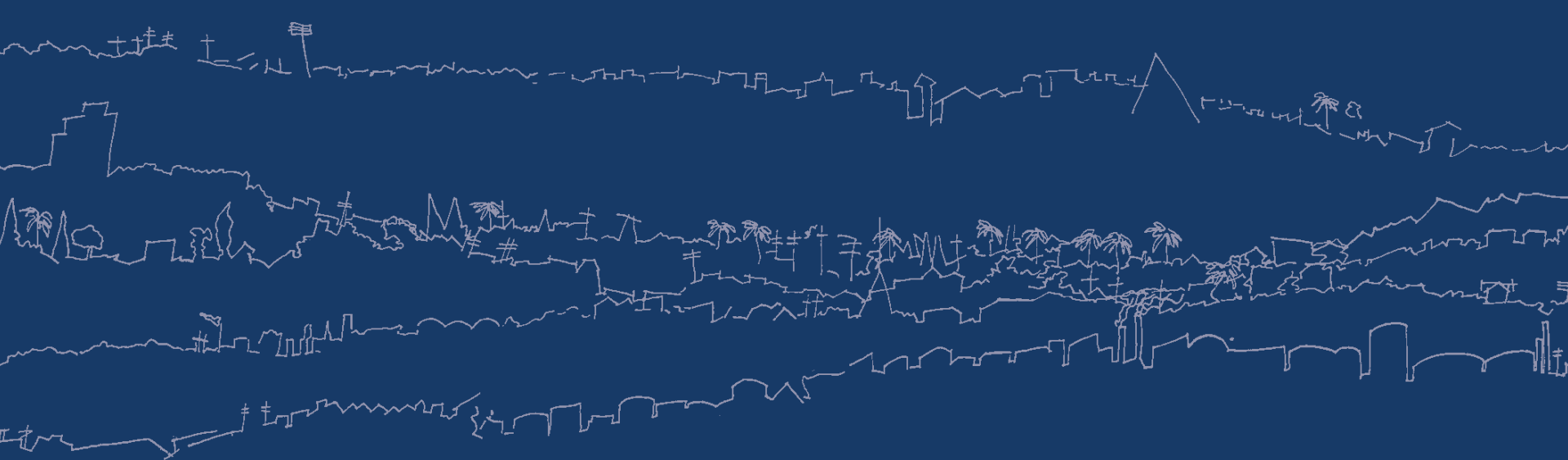


TABLE OF CONTENTS

Foreward <i>Jennifer Frias</i>	09
Kim Abeles' Environmental Art: Process, Poetics and Pedagogy <i>Karen Moss</i>	13
Counting Ashes <i>William L. Fox</i>	37
Smog Collectors for Community <i>Kim Abeles</i>	43
"Footprints of the sky" - Early Investigations	51
Mapping and Marking	59
The Human Body	69
Domestic Spaces	73
Politics	83
Installation Views	100
Environmental Resources and Tips	125
Kim Abeles Biographical Narrative	128
Acknowledgments	132
Exhibition Checklist	134
Bibliography	139



Upon exiting the campus for the last time before the quarantine closure, March 13, 2020, 3:28 pm.

Photo: Jennifer Frias

FOREWARD

By Jennifer Frias

Director/Curator, Nicholas & Lee Begovich Gallery
CSU Fullerton

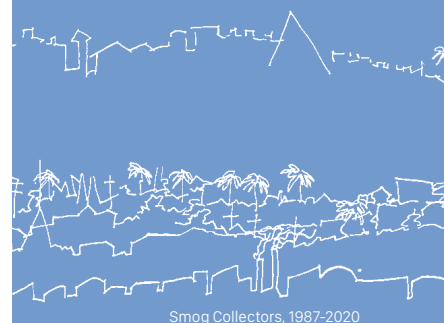
The final shipment of works loaned for the exhibition, *Kim Abeles: Smog Collectors, 1987-2020*, arrived at the Begovich Gallery the second week of March in 2020. Before the gallery staff and I could unpack the show, we were asked to take our belongings and head home. Like many educational institutions across the nation, CSU Fullerton responded to the spread of COVID-19 by switching from on-campus to online instruction over the following days. I took a few snapshots of the campus with my iPhone on my way out. One image of the gallery's facade under a partial, ghastly sky brings to mind what it felt like that day when the whole world was about to embark on a dystopic intermission. We were forced to postpone the exhibition previously slated to open on March 21, and the crates and boxes containing the *Smog Collectors* sat in the dark for nearly sixteen months.

The objects generated as part of the ongoing "Smog Collectors" series are literal and conceptual documentations of the state of our increasingly polluted atmosphere. A substantial body of scientific research has identified air pollution as harmful to the health of living creatures, and it is closely associated with climate change. Throughout the past thirty years, Abeles has investigated air pollution. She renews the project by adding new works to reflect the latest concerns and has shared her project with the public through exhibitions and public speaking.

Each object from *Smog Collectors* is predominately made of particulate matter, which illustrates and interprets air pollution data and its severity. This detritus of smog could be described as ethereal in contrast to the gravity of the issue—reminding us of our fragility and vulnerability. One of Abeles' investigations connects the catastrophe of our air quality to its effects on the human body. She addresses the disparities in environmental conditions affecting health in low-income neighborhoods. She used the density of smog as evidence to mark and map a place that reveals the significant correlation between the socio-political influences that shape the condition of the air we breathe.

The newest *Smog Collectors* are testimonies tied to the COVID-19 pandemic. The exhibition's postponement at the Begovich Gallery presented the opportunity to re-evaluate the project. Consequently, Abeles embarked on a new set of data visualization. In March and April 2020, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) reported that Southern California had the cleanest air recorded since the 1980s.¹ This condition was due to a substantial decrease in air-polluting emissions, caused by less traffic and reductions in industrial and commercial

¹ Yglesias, Matthew, Study: Small increases of air pollution makes coronavirus much more deadly: VOX, April 8, 2020.





Installation view of the “Human Body” section of the exhibition at CSUF Begovich Gallery.

activity. However, not long after this report was published, disastrous wildfires reversed the air quality improvements. With these extreme fluctuations on her mind, Abeles introduces two new works to emphasize changes over time. The first, *Smog Catcher 2020 (6 days of smog, 1 day of rain, and 8 weeks exposed indoors during quarantine)* is a reconceptualization of the almost thirty-year-old 1992 *Smog Catcher II (Thirty Days of Smog)*. Towering at approximately fourteen feet tall, it is positioned in the entry wall of the gallery greeting visitors as they enter the exhibition.

The second work was produced in the fall of 2020 when COVID-19 deaths and cases were at their all-time high while wildfires concurrently ignited southern California. A day after the Bobcat Fire began to blaze in LA County, Abeles started to collect accounts of the harmful air particles in the shape of silhouettes of deck chairs like those on the RMS Titanic. Abeles considered the dichotomy between industrial and environmental tragedies in *Deck Chairs on the Titanic (30 days of smog and ash from the Bobcat Fire)* (2020) by using European beechwood, the same wood type of the original loungers, as the base material.

2 Treisman, Rachel, Cremation Limits Lifted in LA Due to ‘Backlog’ As COVID-19 Deaths Skyrocket, *NPR*, January 19. 2021.
3 Mandavilli, Apoorva, Reaching Herd Immunity’ is unlikely in the U.S., Experts Now Believe, *New York Times*, May 3, 2021.

Shortly after the wildfires were controlled, the surge of COVID-19 deaths generated another grim environmental effect. National Public Radio published an article linking the coronavirus with environmental pollution from the backlog of cremations during December 2020 and January 2021, compounding an increase of breathing hazards. At the request of the county’s medical examiner, coroner, and public health department, the South Coast Air Quality Management District had to temporarily suspend its permits for crematorium operation.²

While the year has been characterized by melancholy, it was also marked by gradual growth and transformation. To give you a sense of the nation’s status during the production of this publication, much of the country is reopening with few restrictions. More than half of Americans are expected to be vaccinated, and it is projected that vaccinations in the United States will make the virus a manageable threat.³ In light of these developments, CSU Fullerton and other academic institutions are preparing to welcome students back for partial or full in-person instruction in the fall and art venues are slowly beginning to welcome the public back.



Installation view of the exhibition featuring the sections of “Early Investigations,” “Domestic Spaces,” and “Politics.” CSUF Begovich Gallery.

The Begovich Gallery is delighted to re-launch this momentous exhibition of Kim Abeles’ most noteworthy efforts in creating work that activates conscientious ideas through visual problem-solving. We are grateful to Abeles for her generosity and patience in working with CSUF students, gallery staff, and faculty to produce an exhibition, publication, and related programming during an unprecedented time. A definitive account of Abeles’ work wouldn’t be possible without the contribution of Karen Moss’ words and wisdom. Moss, who worked on Abeles’ publication, [Kim Abeles: Encyclopedia Persona A-Z: A Fifteen Year Survey](#) (1993-1997), was essential in providing the overview and the impetus of the *Smog Collectors* for this publication. In concert with Moss’ essay, William L. Fox examined the *Smog Collectors’* intersectionality between art, science, and the environment. Fox is the Peter E. Pool Director of the Center for Art + Environment at the Nevada Museum of Art in Reno, Nevada, and was responsible for archiving Abeles’ journals, artist books, and process documents into the institution’s collection. The 2013 exhibition, *Kim Abeles: From Studio to Street*, which Fox curated, draws heavily from the archive in Reno. Rachel Kaufman,

the project’s curatorial assistant, was instrumental in providing research and assembling didactics for the publication and educational materials for the gallery presentation.

Abeles once said that “historical moments have a habit of tying into the environment.” Over three decades of the *Smog Collectors* provides evidence that ongoing environmental degradation is an event that could have long-lasting, permanent repercussions for humans and living beings alike. As we gradually rebound from the pandemic and its effects that forced us to reconceptualize how we work, learn and interact, it is evident how fragile we are. It took most of the world working together for over a year to overcome the challenges generated by COVID-19. If that is proof of our collective resilience, there’s every reason to believe that we also can gradually put in the effort to reverse environmental pollution and ultimately breathe the air we all deserve.



View looking north toward a wedge of the San Gabriel Mountains (obscured by smog) as seen from Abeles' fire escape on Second and Broadway, Los Angeles. These are two examples of the 274 photographic attempts to eventually get a clear view of the Mountain Wedge. The image on the right was taken the morning of the celebration for the Los Angeles Lakers 1985 championship win over the Boston Celtics.



KIM ABELES' ENVIRONMENTAL ART: PROCESS, POETICS AND PEDAGOGY

By Karen Moss

Director of USC Roski, MA Curatorial Program,
Professor of Teaching, Critical Studies

When Kim Abeles moved to her studio in downtown Los Angeles just over 40 years ago, a thick blanket of white haze often resulted in "smog alerts." Perhaps this is why it took seven years for her to first glimpse a triangular wedge of the ridgeline of the San Gabriel Mountains from her studio's fire escape. Abeles became curious about how long it would take for her to see the mountain again, which initiated her series *Pilgrimage to the Wedge* (1981-87). From February 26, 1985 to March 17, 1986 she shot 274 photographs until she had another clear vista of the mountain, more than one year later. Then on September 10, 1987 she walked directly from her studio to the closest point where she could see the mountain. Traveling on foot "as the crow flies" she traversed 16.5 miles in 10 hours during a first stage smog alert, taking photographs until the wedge finally emerged at the foothills in Altadena. These two durational experiments—one visual and indexical, the other embodied and performative—resulted in a large-scale installation with ancillary artifacts, documents and sculptures.

Abeles' series demonstrates all the salient characteristics of her process-oriented, conceptual and interdisciplinary practice: she identifies a problem, devises a system to test a question or hypothesis, collects and documents evidence, then makes a series of art objects. She shares her acquired knowledge with her viewer in work that is both aesthetic and poetic—it is never purely didactic, but is pedagogical at its core, especially the art she has produced to inform audiences about the increasingly dire state of our environment.



Mountain Wedge, 1985-87

Acrylic on paper and wood camera bellows; canvas; 274 photographs looking north on Broadway in Los Angeles at the San Gabriel Mountains obscured by smog; lens; oil painting on canvas 94" x 78" x 184" (bellows)

On view at Occidental College, Los Angeles for the exhibition, *Tensions/Extensions*, curated by Stephen Eisenman and Linda Lyke, and funded by the Pasadena Arts Alliance.

Photo: Daniel J. Martinez

CONTINUED ON PAGE: 21

Path to the Wedge (as the crow flies),
2014 re-creation of the 1987 drawing
Ultrachrome print
52" x 23"

The map shows the route and missteps of the 16.5 mile walk from Second and Broadway, Los Angeles to the Mountain Wedge of the San Gabriel Mountains. The 10-hour walk took place on a First Stage Alert: Air unhealthy for everyone.

This 2014 print was created for the exhibition, *Following the Prescribed Path*, curated by Carolyn Peter at the Laband Art Gallery, Loyola Marymount University.



Details of *Pentipede*





Above and next page:
Pentipede, 1986-87

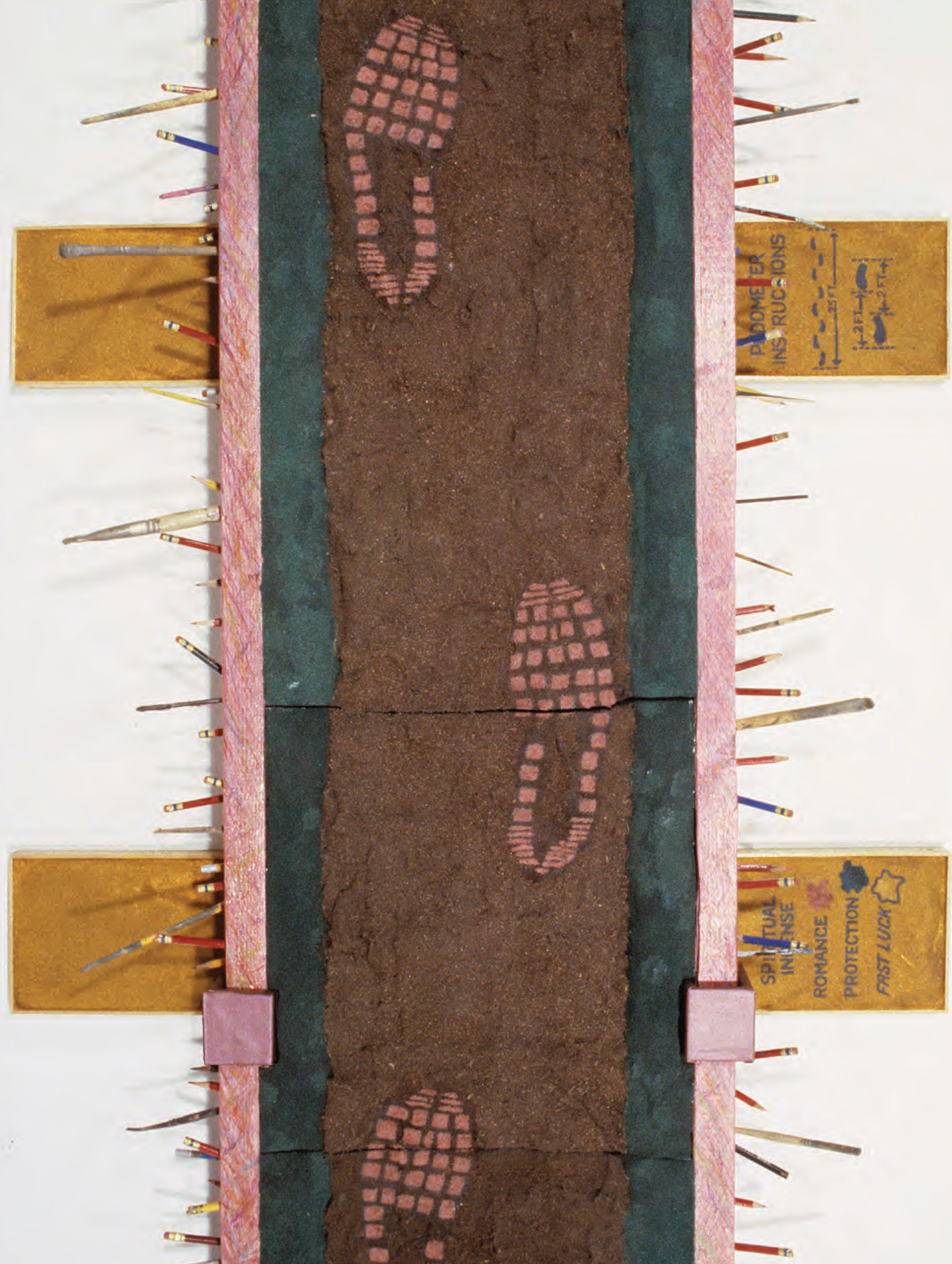
Acrylic and pencil on wood; soil; spiritual incense;
yardsticks; proofing pencils and brushes
36" x 194" x 4"

Abeles' sculptural contraption to measure her
stride in order to adjust the pedometer she used
during her pilgrimage to the San Gabriel Mountains.

Left:

Instructions for Stride Forward, 1987

Pedometer with instructions; air quality report
for the day of the walk; photograph of Abeles
measuring her stride
10.5" x 18.5" x 1.75"

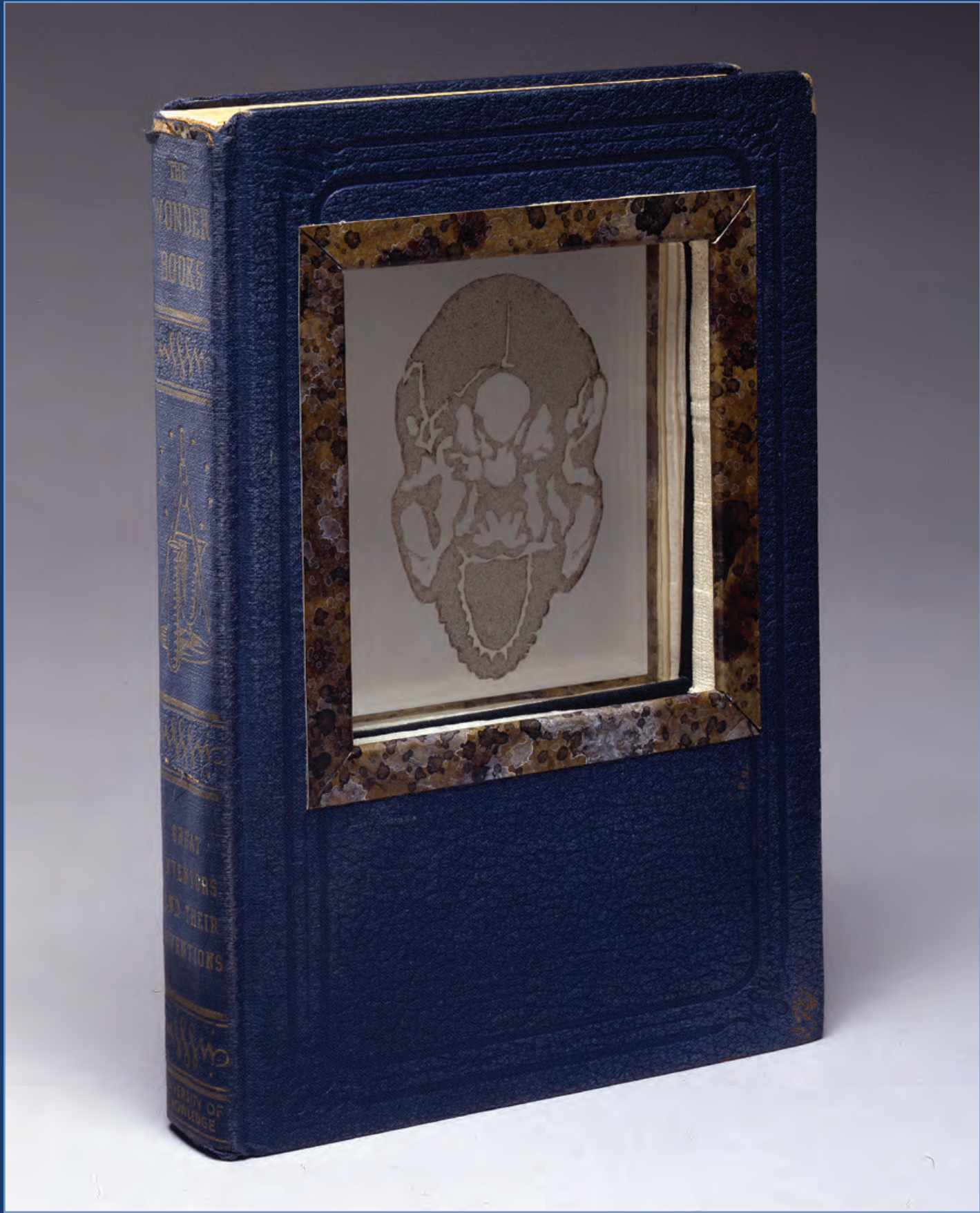




Left:
Wedge Watch, 1987
 Altered gas mask; cat hair;
 color photographs of the
 Mountain Wedge
 23" x 10" x 8"
Private Collection.

Right:
Fashioning a Smog Mask, 1981
 Series of three silver prints
 4.5" x 6.75" each
Private Collection.





When producing the *Pilgrimage to the Wedge* series in 1987 Abeles observed how smog accumulated on her car, she then experimented with her unique process. She cut stenciled images on plates or fabric and left them on her rooftop for specific durations, allowing the particulate matter to accumulate. She then cut away the stencils to reveal the image in smog. As Abeles has said: "To quote a stranger, they are 'footprints of the sky'. ... the *Smog Collectors* make visible the invisible air we breathe...¹ Abeles varies the exposure times, allowing the particulate matter to "etch" the images onto fabric, books, clocks, furniture, and other domestic objects. Some exist as singular works of art, such as *Smog Catcher (Thirty Days of Smog)* (1992), while others are combined in larger, room-size installations, such as *Forty Days and Forty Nights* (1991), which includes a dining table and chairs; plates with residual food; a bassinet and high chair that belonged to Abeles' daughter, and other images on the wall, all in smoggy silhouette. As Abeles has commented: "We live in the contradiction that the dangers are out

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¹ Kim Abeles quoted in *Kim Abeles: Encyclopedia Persona A-Z: A Fifteen Year Survey*. (Los Angeles: Fellows of Contemporary Art and Santa Monica Museum of Art, 1993), 86. This echoes artist Paul Klee's statement that "art does not reproduce the visible; rather it makes the unseen visible" (Creative Confession, 1920).

Forty Days and Forty Nights (Forty Days of Smog), 1991
Smog (particulate matter) on plexiglass; auto mufflers; detritus; chiffon chairs; and wood
Installation view at the California College of the Arts, Oakland, CA.
Photo: Ben Blackwell

Previous page:
The Wonder Books (Forty Days of Smog), "Great Inventors and Their Inventions", 1991
Smog (particulate matter) on altered book
9" x 1" x 6.5"
Private collection.

Next page:
Zoë's Bassinet (Twenty Days of Smog/ Ten Days of Acid Rain), 1991
Altered bassinet with toys created in Smog (particulate matter) and car mufflers for legs
47.5" x 32" x 33"
Collection of the City of Los Angeles.



World Leaders in Smog , 2019

Smog (particulate matter)
on porcelain plates
10.5" diameter each

The series includes ten world leaders who presented speeches at world climate summits from 2011 to 2018. The quotes are written on the plates in the language originally presented.

The project was created in collaboration with the exhibition, *The Coming World: Ecology as the New Politics 2030–2100*, curated by Snejana Krasteva and Ekaterina Lazareva for the Garage Museum of Contemporary Art, Moscow, Russia. Sets of the stenciled plates were placed on rooftops for an average of one month in Los Angeles and Moscow. Individual plates collected smog in the capital cities of London, Washington DC, Berlin, Paris, Ottawa, and Moscow with the help of Abeles' friends and colleagues living in the cities.



Photo: Los Angeles/KA

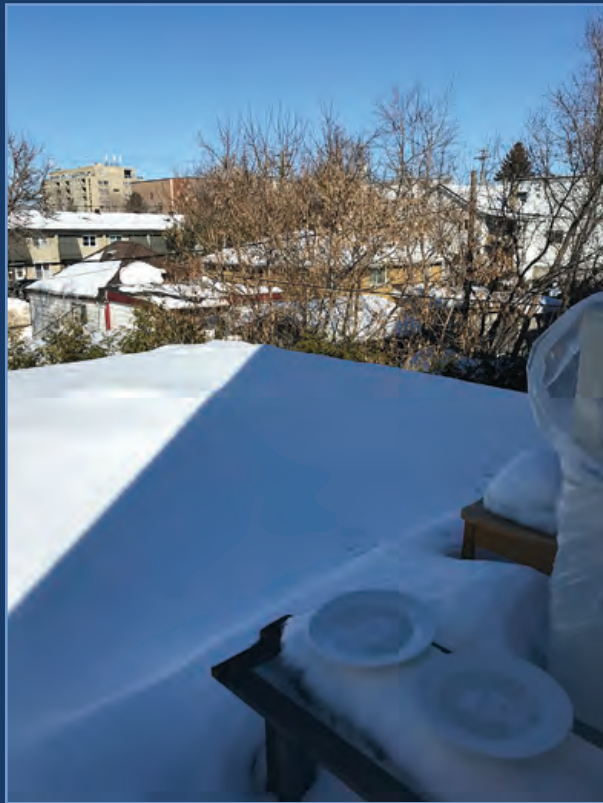


Photo: Ottawa/Trish Plamondon



Photo: Washington, D.C./Patricia D. Burns



Photo: Berlin/Eva von Schirach



Photo: Moscow/Valentina Osokina

there, beyond, and that we are safe in our homes. Since the worst in our air can't be seen, *Smog Collectors* are both literal and metaphoric depictions of the current conditions of our life source. They are reminders of our industrial decisions: the road we took that seemed so modern."

Abeles' most well-known series, *Presidential Commemorative Smog Plates* (1992) (See pages 86-93) depict thirteen from William McKinley to George Bush, their faces rendered in smog on white china, with quotes from each president hand-painted in gold around the rims. She left the plates out on the roof for different durations: a lighter dusting of particulate matter for presidents with more pro-active policies and more dense, darker accumulations for those with "violation or apathy toward the distressed environment."² For her recent exhibition at the Garage for Contemporary Art in Moscow (2019) Abeles returned to her *Smog Collectors*, producing portraits of ten world leaders who presented speeches at climate summits from 2011 to 2018. (See pages 94-99). Making stencils from the official, government portraits, she exposed them to smog and wrote quotes from the leader's speeches in their native language, an intentional gesture to underscore their nationalism. By inscribing their words at this critical stage of awareness about the severity of climate change, she holds them accountable in the future: did their actions speak louder than their words?³ This new series underscores the changes since the first *Smog Collectors* in the 1980s-1990s: in our globalized



Photo: London/Alicja Rogalska and Kola Śliwińska

CONTINUED ON PAGE: 29

2 Abeles, *Encyclopedia Persona A-Z*, 86.
3 This project was also presented at the 2019 Chicago Expo, sponsored by National Resources Defense Council.



Run-Off Dolphin Suitcase, 1995
 Beach trash/stormdrain run-off; steel welded by Abeles as a functioning suitcase; satin 16" x 64" x 22" (closed)
 Funded in part by the Santa Monica Bay Restoration Project, the sculptural suitcase is used to teach youth and community about the stormdrain system, littering, consumption, and plastics.
 Collection of the Lux Art Institute, San Diego, CA.



HIV/AIDS Tarot
5.75" x 23" (open)

A pamphlet of tarot-like drawings and information that instruct about safer sex. The First printing was funded by the City of Los Angeles Department of Cultural Affairs, 1992; Second printing was funded by SMART ART PRESS, Santa Monica, 1995; Third printing with updated HIV prevention information was published by ONE Archives, Los Angeles, 2018.

Photo: ONE Archives/Ian Byers-Gamber



world with ever-more urgent environmental crises, the stakes are much higher and the time is much shorter. Abeles smog-etched plates with their ghost-like residue now become *memento mori*—a reminder of the ephemerality of life and the existential dilemma that awaits us if we do not take action now.

Since the 1990s Abeles has produced work on other types of environmental pollution, often in workshops in schools, museums or community-based organizations. Her sculpture *Dolphin Run-Off Suitcase* (1995) (Pages 26 & 27), made from refuse she collected from the beach, was designed specifically to educate children about the effects of throwing trash into storm drains. At the Harvard-Westlake School in Los Angeles in 2009 Abeles collected their five weekdays of trash, then cleaned, ironed and assembled it into a work of art, demonstrating to students the extent of their waste but also the potential for recycling in subsequent collaborative workshops. This preceded her even more ambitious project *Paper Person*, a 5' x 40' x 48' hanging sculpture made from trash generated by visitors to California Science Center on Earth Day 2009, (Page 30). In these examples Abeles educates audiences—often students and non-artists—about critical environmental issues, then invites their active participation as co-producers in her work. Her dialogical and participatory process evokes educator/philosopher John Dewey's premise that the best type of learning occurs when we "learn by doing."

Though my work addresses a broad scope of environmental and social concerns, the soul of the art always engenders a discussion about the role of the individual in society.⁴

—Kim Abeles

Long before the term "social practice" entered the discourse of contemporary art, Kim Abeles' artistic production has informed audiences about critical socio-political issues from her early pivotal work on HIV/AIDs and freedom of speech (See page 28, Top), to her continuing engagement with the environmental issues discussed in this essay. Her powerful artistic practice—grounded in process, poetry and pedagogy—provides a palpable resistance by educating the public about both the practice of art and the critical issues of our time. Her ultimate message is a dual call to action about the creative potential of humanity and everyone's individual role in the stewardship of our planet.

Wars Stories (Peace in Progress), 1991-93
Altered fold-up table; soundtrack of telephone responses to the question: "What comes to your mind most when you think about the Gulf War?" asked of people listed in the upper left- and right-hand corners of the Los Angeles telephone directory; momentos of war; excerpts from the Constitution; artificial grass; and fabric
56" x 72" x 70"

Photo: David Familian



Detail of War Stories (Peace in Progress)
Photo: David Familian

⁴ Kim Abeles as quoted in an interview in Ennyman's Territory, accessed February 26, 2020 at: <https://pioneerproductions.blogspot.com/2016/07/ten-minutes-with-la-artist-kim-abeles.html>



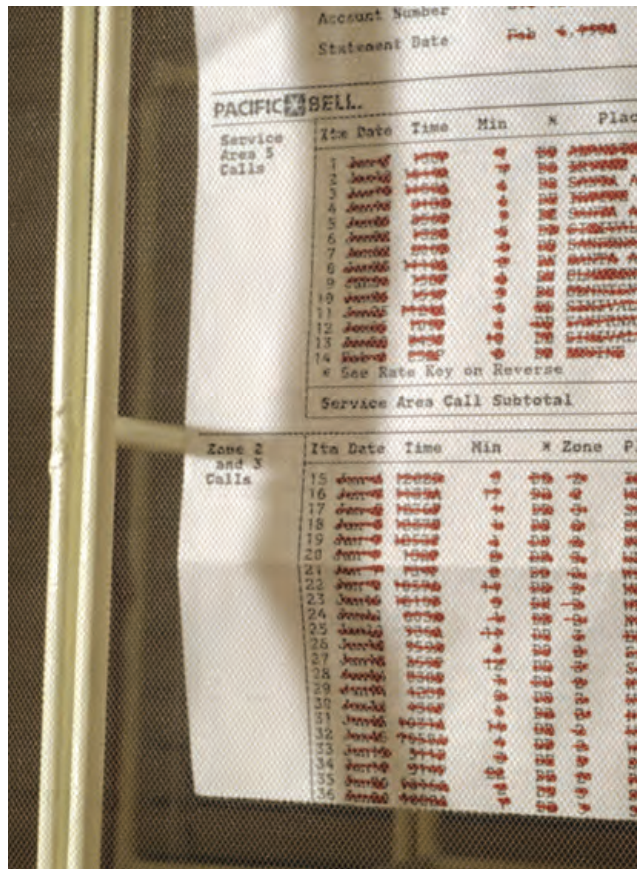
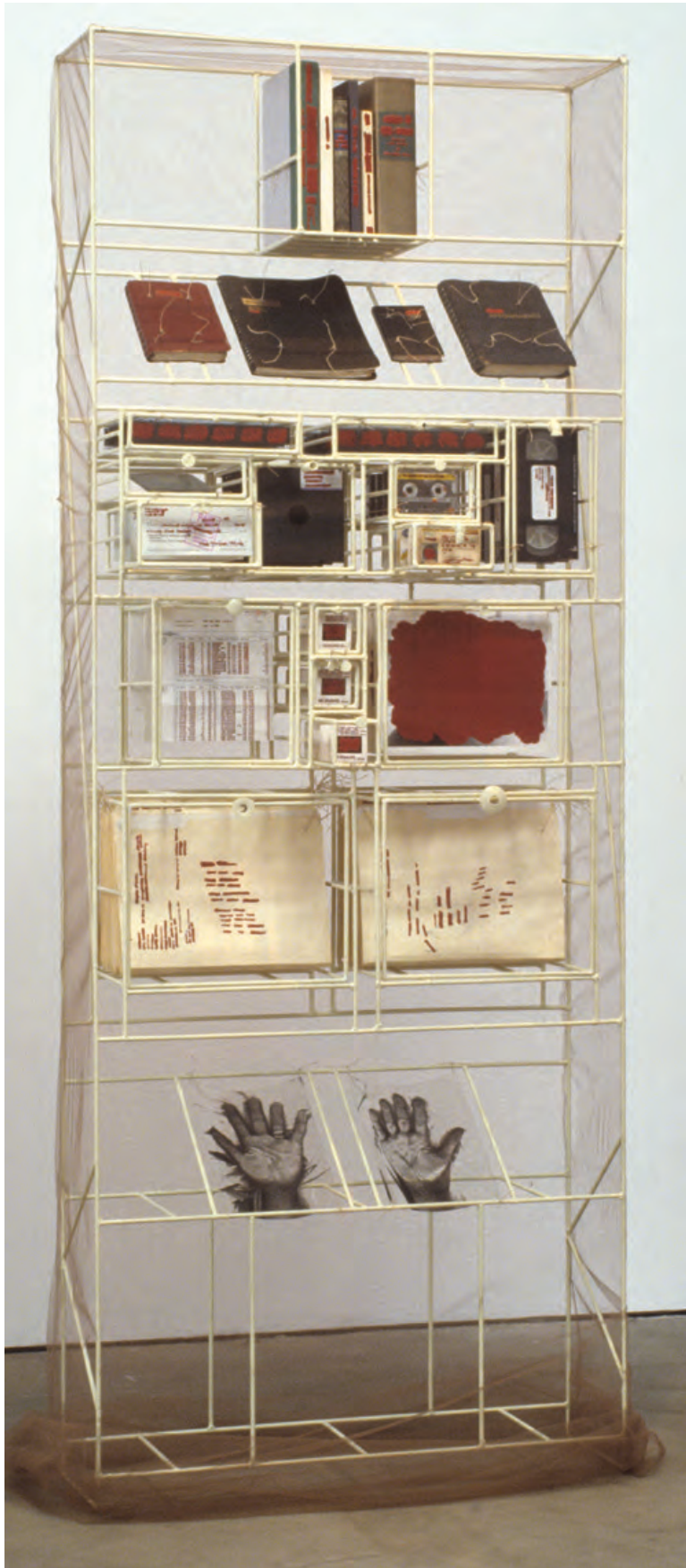
Left:
Paper Person, 2010
Sculpture made from paper trash that was generated by visitors to California Science Center on Earth Day 2009
5' x 40' x 48'
The size of the figure is based on the amount of trash, and it is a permanent installation at the Eco-Systems building of the CSC, Los Angeles.
Photo: Ken Marchionno

Above:
Paper Person (Harvard Westlake), 2009
Sculpture made from paper trash that was generated by students and staff at Harvard Westlake School in one day
20' x 48"
The size is based on the amount of trash generated and the sculpture was exhibited in the school's gallery along with other artworks created from their trash so that students could see the way consumption adds up.



Found Voices (Dedicated to People with AIDS), 1989
Sculptural components by Kim Abeles, interviews by Kim Abeles and Peter Bergmann, sound design and editing by Barbara McBane. Table and chairs made of wood, soil, felt, and satin; suspended chiffon chair; objects belonging to PWAs, small photographs of objects with handwritten alphabets found globally
7' diameter table

Photo: Patrick Newcombe



Above:
Documents K through 12, 2004
Handcrafted table with personal artifacts and digital printouts of documents including landmark court cases for establishing the equal rights for an education in the US 6' diameter
Collection of the California African American Museum, Los Angeles, CA.
Documents K-12 was created for the 2004 exhibition, *Through the Gates: Brown vs Board of Education*, curated by M.U.L.E. (Isabelle Lutterodt and Karin Pleasant) for CAAM.

Left:
The Truth Palace, 1991
Welded steel, netting, identification documents marked with red pigment 78" x 35" x 12"
Collection of Barbara Cohn.
Photo: Robert Wedemeyer





Abeles removing a stencil after the polluted
Smog Collector was taken down from the roof.
Courtesy California Science Center, Los Angeles, CA.
Photo: Ken Marchionno



COUNTING ASHES

By William L. Fox

Peter E. Pool Director,
Center for Art + Environment,
Nevada Museum of Art

It's early October 2020 as I write this essay for Kim Abeles, an artist I consider as prescient as any I know. The entire west coast of the United States is enveloped in smoke from forest and brush fires, an atmospheric layer so deep and persistent that it threatens the pulmonary health of citizens from the Gulf of Alaska south to Baja California and east to the far side of the Rocky Mountains. The worst air pollution in the world a few weeks ago was not in Beijing or Mexico City or Kanpur, India, but in Oregon. Large particulate matter—dust and ash pieces large enough to see with the naked eye—rose to more than 500 parts per million. At that point the sun rises and sets as an orange ball and it is never really daylight.

That's what the afternoon light in downtown Los Angeles was like the year when Kim Abeles moved there after she graduated with her MFA from the University of California Irvine forty miles to the south. Karen Moss in her essay in this catalogue outlines how Abeles reacted to the oppressive air quality by documenting a walk through the smog in 1987, and also by laying out various items on the roof of her studio building where smog and other particulates (such as dust) would accumulate. Part performance art, part installation, this was the initiation of her long-running *Smog Collectors* series. With stencils placed on the objects, the particulates accumulated in the cutouts creating droll commentary on the air pollution.

Smog is both acidic and particulate, etching the surfaces it lands on while also accumulating like dried pigment. The culprits are volatile organic compounds emitted by everything from cars to power plants, furniture polish to paint and paint remover. In sunlight the "VOCs" form ozone, which promotes the formation of fine particulates. Unlike the large particulates, which can look like ash to the naked eyes, their fine cousins, defined as smaller than 2.5 microns in diameter, are invisible individually, but make the atmosphere a visible haze and worse. Leave a car uncovered in Beijing and the tiny falling debris will slowly chew it down to raw sheet metal as it gets dustier and dustier. Worse, the particles are so small that they are inhalable. Imagine what they do to your lungs.



Smog Collectors on Abeles'
studio roof circa 1990s





Stenciled portraits of Theresa May, Prime Minister of the United Kingdom (2016-2019) on a rooftop in London.

Photo: Kola Śliwińska and Alicja Rogalska

In 1992 Abeles debuted thirteen white porcelain dinner plates etched by fallen smog. On the edges of each plate were quotes by the elected officials. The worse the environmental record of the individual president, the longer the exposure to smog. The portrait of Teddy Roosevelt is faint, the level of pollution during his tenure relatively light. Ronald Reagan's plate (See pages 86-93) is so dark it could have been painted with ink. So there's an element of time, both contemporaneous and historical, evoked in the process. She sharpened the role of time in her work by letting the faces of watches and clocks with the portraits accumulate smog, doubling down on her criticism implicit in the *Smog Collectors* series.

For an exhibition in Moscow in 2019, Abeles used the smog of Moscow to create portraits of ten world leaders who gave speeches at climate summits from 2011 to

2018. This time she rimmed the plates with quotes from their speeches in the language used (See pages 94-99), but also translated the words into English to make the point that environmental fallout drifts across all geopolitical boundaries.

Abeles continues to make diverse *Smog Collectors*. In July 2020 she documented the pollution that leaked into her studio during quarantine through *Smog Catcher* (6 days of smog, 1 day of rain, and 8 weeks exposed indoors during quarantine). The fifteen-by-five-foot wooden panels kept indoors collected the particulates arriving via her studio window.

Smog in Southern California is now less of a threat than it was thirty years ago; environmental regulations on automobiles, refineries, the paint industry, and many more businesses have addressed that pollution to one



Smog Catcher (6 days of smog, 1 day of rain, and 8 weeks exposed indoors during quarantine), 2020

Smog (particulate matter) on wood panels that were kept indoors to collect the particulate coming through the studio window 15' x 5'

degree or another, at least in the first world countries. But there are other producers of airborne particulates that are deadly, most notably smoke from the fires mentioned at the start. The west coast of North America has an extensive natural history of fire, and most of the state of California before the arrival of humans burned cyclically over the course of several years in multi-million-acre fires. Those conflagrations were low-intensity events because they were frequent and didn't allow much burnable material to accumulate either on the ground or in trees.

Native Americans abetted these natural cycles to encourage new plant growth of certain fire-adapted species that also attracted small game. The practice of cultural burning as a resource management tool was banned, however, both here and around the world in



Shown here is the artwork with the stencil partially removed.

places such as Australia as settler cultures colonized both land and people. Suppression created an overload of fuels, which led to hotter and more widespread catastrophic blazes that cook even the seeds below ground. And that encouraged the growth of invasive weedy species, such as cheat grass, which in the American West outcompetes everything else in favor of fire. Cheat grass is so robust that it can burn one season and regrow before anything else can recover, only to burn again the next season. Very few other plants can withstand that cycle.

The smog, even though it is much less visible downtown on most days than forty years ago, is still very much there; and the more frequent and massively large fires of Southern California pile on an additional particulate load that is almost immeasurable by existing public



Deck Chairs on the Titanic IV
(30 days of smog and ash from
the Bobcat Fire) September 12
— October 11, 2020
Smog and ash (particulate
matter) on wood
9" x 6"
Collection of Sharon Kagan
& Terry Holzgreen.

health standards. The fires on the West Coast are getting worse every year because of global warming, which promotes drought and the subsequent die-off of trees. The warming is driven, in large part, by humans burning everything in the environment from fossil fuels to forests being cleared for agriculture. All this creates what is now understood to be an existential downward spiraling synergy.

By mid-September this year, not even halfway through the fire season, the Bobcat Fire was burning in the forest and chaparral in the San Gabriel mountains just above Pasadena where Kim Abeles and her husband now live with four generations of family. She has been cutting out stencils based on vintage photographs taken

of the deck chairs on the *Titanic* and applied them to recycled wooden boards atop the house. It doesn't take long for the drawings to fill in. The reference to futilely rearranging deck chairs on the *Titanic* is a sharp *riposte* to the previous federal administration's hostility to the reality of global warming.

But...but... just like with smog, there are intelligent responses to the mega-fires. The U.S. Forest Service and fire agencies in the West are revising their protocols to expand selective burning that both lowers fuel loads and preserves habitat for threatened species—and they are working with Native American tribes to do so. Some of the tribes in California have recently been allowed to burn tribal lands governed by traditional practices.



Cut stencils of Titanic deck
chairs attached to wood
and placed on the rooftop in
Pasadena during the Bobcat
Fire in 2020.

The reason fire is so widespread throughout human history is that it is the cheapest method by which to release energy. It is a great equalizer deployed by people for hundreds of thousands of years who had no other means of obtaining heat energy, whether in a fireplace or for a kiln producing porcelain plates. It releases calories in meat, which allowed humans to develop larger brains, and creates electricity so we can read in the dark, which changed the face of civilization.

You get the point: Every single source of energy comes at a cost, a release of heat. Learning how to balance the equation—just enough burning in whatever form to take care of just enough people without overwhelming the planet with greenhouse gases—is key to how long we can live on the planet.

It is amazing, necessary, and fortuitous that artists can break down entropy, the largest dynamic of the physical universe, into small enough pieces that we can grasp its nature. A Kim Abeles smog plate is a sublime example of how to do so. She chooses porcelain, which is earth transformed through fire, to create a physical record of combustion that laces together politics and physics, the environment and the economy, to where you live and your own body. It is completely satisfying to know her work, to know that it reflects so powerfully on the world with grace, anger, humor, and beauty. The Governor of California recently announced that the sale of gas-powered vehicles in the state would be banned by 2035. Kim Abeles' *Smog Collectors* are one of the metaphors driving our culture to undertake such a profound shift.

SMOG COLLECTORS FOR COMMUNITY

By Kim Abeles
Artist, Activist, Educator

The origin story for the *Smog Collectors* has been told to scores of audiences since 1987, and in hindsight it leads me to think that from the beginning, its meaning was intended as a voice for all of us, beyond my role as a studio artist.

When I arrived in Los Angeles in preparation to begin graduate school at UC Irvine, I had travelled from my home in southeastern Ohio. The home was a 3-story grain silo near Athens where Ohio University is central, and a rural place called “McDougalville” where I spent my days gardening, canning, and experimenting in order to write and illustrate *Crafts, Cookery and Country Living* published by Van Nostrand Reinhold in 1976. To complete the picture, imagine the clay soil covering my pants, the dogs, the goat, and saved urine in the barn to use as a mordent for natural dyes.

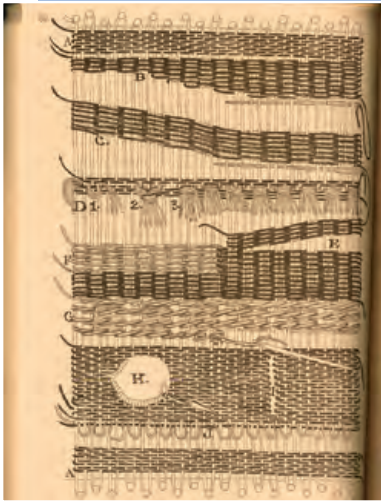
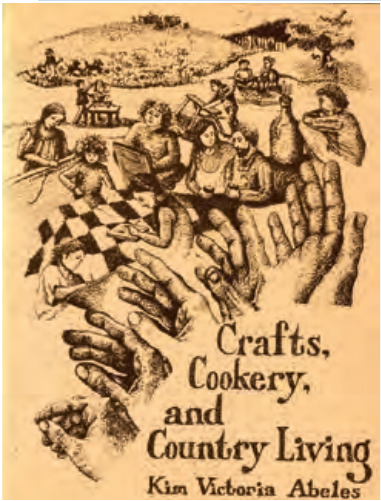
My leap to Los Angeles in 1978 placed me in the middle of the smog. The buildings stained with soot felt familiar because I grew up in Pittsburgh at a time when the steel mills still operated. A book in our living room mesmerized me as a kid because of a particular photo of 1940s Pittsburgh; the caption explained that it was taken in the morning, but the street was lit by lamps because of the heavy, dark atmosphere. Nevertheless, in Los Angeles I frequently complained about the way the air ached in my lungs, and left a metal taste in my mouth, and attacked my skin with its microscopic particulates. I would argue with people in coffee shops about the smog and they were insistent it was fog. We surrender to our surroundings and the mind is a powerful healer with its wish to see a blue sky.

The first *Smog Collector* (1987) (See page 51) was an experiment: an image of a slice of the San Gabriel Mountains wedged visually between the buildings of South Broadway’s horizon. That view to the “Mountain Wedge” was my North Star and from the fire escape at the Victor Clothing Building, I photographed it for 14 months trying to get a clear view unobscured by the particulate matter loitering in the air. Later, on a *first-stage smog alert* day, I walked to the mountain, as the crow flies. “If I had to cut through yards and houses, I sometimes knocked on the door to ask permission. I climbed barb wire fences, fell down dusty cliffs, under freeways, and past dogs barking and grabbing my pants. Kids followed after me as if I was the Piper, and in other neighborhoods they told me I wasn’t safe walking alone. I saw a couple having sex reflected in a mirror and a friend’s painting hanging on a wall. By the time I was finished, I had walked for about ten hours... the Mountain Wedge was not clearly visible until I stood at its base.”¹

1 *Encyclopedia Persona A-Z*, Fellows of Contemporary Art and Santa Monica Museum of Art.



Victor Clothing Building where Abeles photographed the Mountain Wedge.



Crafts, Cookery, and Country Living
Van Nostrand Reinhold Co, 1976



Pittsburgh at 9:20 AM in 1945 when the street lights were needed because of the densely polluted air.
Photo: Newman-Schmidt Studios/Courtesy Allegheny Conference on Community Development,
Detre Library and Archives Division, Senator John Heinz History Center, Pittsburgh, PA



One of the *On-Site Smog Collector Sculptures* collected smog at CSU Fullerton



UCR research scientist Patrick McCool standing among greenhouse chambers as recreated at the California Museum of Photography to show effects of air pollution on plantlife. Photo: Jay Racz for The Press-Enterprise

The *Smog Collectors* emerged full force in 1990 with my frustration over a factory spewing formaldehyde next to our studio at the Santa Fe Art Colony in downtown Los Angeles. Pleas to local officials led nowhere and eventually urgency found its voice. The first exhibition of this new work was at Laguna Art Museum Satellite Gallery in Costa Mesa, CA — an access-friendly venue in the public space of a mall. This is where James Schoning, Chief of the Bureau of Automotive Repair, Department of Consumer Affairs was introduced to the *Smog Collectors*. The Bureau asked if I would use my art for a public relations campaign to encourage emissions testing and rideshare. The result, a collective project entitled *On-Site Smog Collector Sculptures*, involved seven works made from recycled mufflers and catalytic converters with stenciled *Smog Collectors* mounted for viewing the accumulation of particulate matter. These were placed throughout the Los Angeles region, from California Science Center in

Exposition Park, the campaign's westernmost installation, to the farthest east at the California Museum of Photography in Riverside.² Though previous projects had included community engagement, the collaboration with the Bureau was impactful: I saw the unique possibility for art to engage society and environmental activism on multiple levels. Paul Van Dyke of PS Enterprises, an environmental public relations firm that promoted the project wrote, "Midway through the project, February 1992, the media's support for the campaign was said to be unprecedented, reaching 30 million people and a total dollar equivalent media value of close to \$3 million."³ From this goal post, I could never again imagine the *Smog Collectors* without the engagement of public and collaborations with others.⁴

The 1992 exhibition "Smog: A Matter of Life and Breath," which I co-curated with Edward Earle at California Museum



60 Days of Los Angeles Sky Patch (View to the East), 1993
Acrylic on paper matching sky colors each day (distorted by smog); assemblage contraption for viewing the sky section 12" x 12" each of 60 painted squares Photo: Robert Wedemeyer

of Photography in Riverside, brought together nine artists with scientists from the Statewide Air Pollution Research Laboratory.⁵ (See Image Page 44) The exhibition included an experiment conducted by UCR research scientists Patrick McCool and George Riechers, demonstrating the effects of air pollution on plant-life through two elegant, large-scale chambers, one with air from outdoors and another with filtered air. Nearly thirty years later, this could easily be viewed as an art installation. After all, curiosity, experimentation, and problem solving are characteristics fundamental to the work of both artists and scientists.

Curator and writer Lucinda Barnes presented another opportunity, at Oberlin College, that expanded the scope of the work. The 1994 exhibit, "Kim Abeles: American Air" at the Allen Memorial Art Museum conceptually connected my installation, *Sixty Days of Los Angeles Sky Patch: View*



to the East (1993) with historical landscape paintings that prominently feature the sky with its multiple atmospheric conditions. *Sky Patch* was created by a daily process of observing a small spot of sky through a viewing contraption and painting the colors as distorted by smog. Pushing the historical resonance further, the first in a series of *Smog Translations* were created using artworks in the Oberlin collection.⁶ (See page 47) The "smogged" versions of the art, in exact dimensions were displayed with the originals. The exhibition, which involved the engagement with the Ecological Architecture & Community Planning Department at Oberlin, was critical in my developing awareness of the need for collaboration with practitioners in the other fields of study.

My fourteen-year connection to Boulder, Colorado, began with "Weather Report: Art and Climate Change," an exhibit curated by Lucy R. Lippard at the

2 *On-Site Smog Collector Sculptures* were commissioned by the California Bureau of Automotive Repair, Department of Consumer Affairs. The original venues included California Museum of Science and Industry, Olvera Street, California Museum of Photography, Cabrillo Marine Museum, Arboretum, California State University Fullerton, and Feldheim Library San Bernardino. The sculptures then toured to more than 200 businesses to encourage Rideshare.
3 Kim Abeles: *Encyclopedia Persona A-Z: A Fifteen Year Survey*. (Los Angeles: Fellows of Contemporary Art and Santa Monica Museum of Art, 1993), 91.
4 Another project, *Citywide Smog Collectors*, was commissioned by the California Science Center, Los Angeles in 2010.

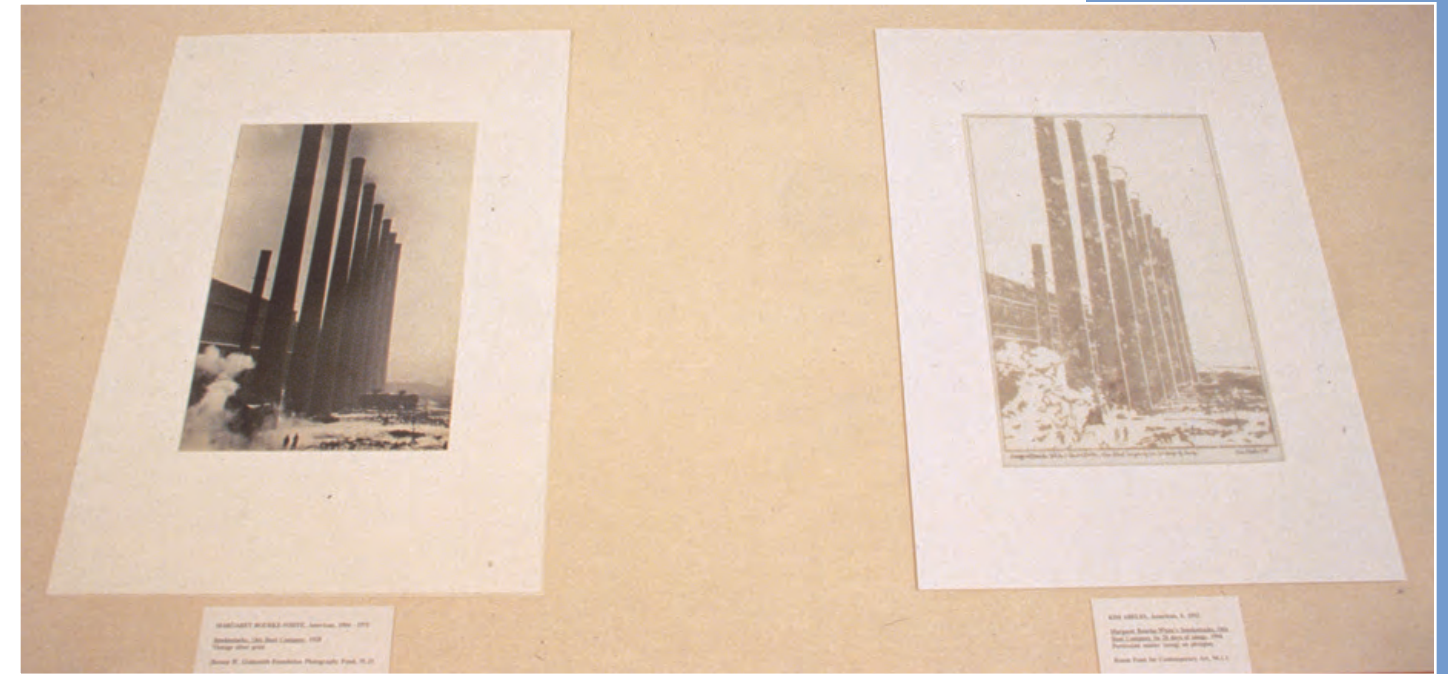
5 Abeles was co-curator and also exhibited in the show with artists Jerry Burchfield, Cheri Gaulke, Susan Joseph, Sant Khalsa, Victor Landwebber, Michael Barton Miller, Sheila Pinkel, Susan Silton, and exhibition design by Kevin Jon Boyle.
6 Margaret Bourke-White' *Smokestacks*, *Otis Steel Company* and Thomas Moran's *The Passaic Meadows* are two examples from the Oberlin collection that were translated into smog. Later *Smog Translations* were created in collaboration with Arizona State University Art Museum, Tempe, AZ, and the Center for Exploratory and Perceptual Arts (CEPA) in Buffalo, NY.



Ralph Blakelock's *Rising Moon in Thirty Days of Smog, 2000*
 Smog (particulate matter) on repurposed plexiglass; assemblage frame
 22" x 32"
 Pomona College Collection. Walter and Elise Mosher Memorial Fund.



Installation view of Asher Brown Durand's ***The Hunter*** and Abeles' Smog Translation of his painting.
 Collection of Arizona State University Art Museum; Gift of Oliver B. James.



Installation view of Margaret Bourke-White's ***Smokestacks***, ***Otis Steel Company*** and Abeles' Smog Translation of it.
 Collection of Allen Memorial Art Museum, Oberlin College.

request of Marda Kirn and produced in collaboration with the Boulder Museum of Contemporary Art. As a result of the show, I met Marda, Founding Director of EcoArts Connections, who continues to engage with my environmental work through projects, conferences, and exhibitions, both in and outside of Boulder. This has been realized in collaborations with atmospheric scientists, emissions specialists, lichenologists, urban planners, transportation professionals, middle and high school students. As the title of one of my projects implies, "the interconnectedness of things" offers a valuable framework for understanding the vital details of people, place, and climate change. The goal with the ***Smog Collector*** workshops at Manhattan Middle School, for instance, was specific: to encourage parents to stop idling cars while waiting for their kids in the parking lot. (See page 48) A focus on a tangible outcome can bring behavioral transformations within reach and consequently leads to the next possibility.

Each collaboration brings forth multiple aspects of interconnectedness. International curatorial collective, ***Artport_making waves***, and the collective's Executive Director Anne-Marie Melster, design their exhibitions with specific goals in mind. The touring exhibition "(Re-)Cycles of Paradise," which opened at DGI byen in Copenhagen during COP15, explored the "intersection of Art, Gender, and Climate Change."⁷ My contribution, ***Digits in Smog***, represents the 1.5 million individuals predicted to be diagnosed with breast cancer the following year - each digit denotes 1000 persons. The work points to the relationship between women's health and air pollution.

Collaborations with students of all age levels have been ongoing since the start. The ***Environmental Activity Book***, published in 1995 through a grant from the City of Los Angeles Cultural Affairs Department, provides instructions for a range of environmental issues and projects.⁸ (See page 49) The ***Smog Collector*** process has been presented in numerous classrooms. A larger scale experience, ***Smog Catcher Project*** in Los Angeles was created in collaboration with the Municipal Art Gallery, the South Coast Air Quality

⁷ COP15 was the 15th session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nation's Convention on Climate Change.

⁸ An updated booklet, ***Talking Air*** was part of a 5-piece workshop of Abeles' air pollution projects presented in 2017 for the Skirball Museum Teaching Program in partnership with the Los Angeles Unified School District.



Management District, and LAUSD; this was led by Sara Cannon and I acted as adviser (2001–2). Collaboration with other teachers was instrumental in furthering purposeful intentions for the *Smog Collectors*. Jill Powers at the Naropa Institute experimented with a mixture made with methylcellulose (used in handmade book making) to replace the aerosol that I had originally used in the 1980s to secure the particulate in place. This prompted me to reconsider the substrates for the stencils, and I shifted from acetate to cellulose, recycled materials, and thrift store dinnerplates.

All the workshops encourage discussion about causes and preventative measures that involve individual, community, and institutional choices. Transformative measures to make a cleaner environment require educating the public and creating dialogue. Participants use artistic skills to make space for confronting pollution issues that otherwise intellectually overwhelm us. The room that art builds is a combination of emotion and thought. What is my role as a person? How does my vote change the future? What is the responsibility of corporations? How is a healthy environment linked to social systems?

International collaborations with institutions like the Garage Museum of Contemporary Art in Moscow continue to engage my internal dilemma about where

Waiting/Watching, 2012

Traffic and the eyes of youth shown on video monitors embedded flush to the mural with detailed images of lichens that Abeles photographed in Boulder, CO. 8' x 16'

Lichens are actually used in the lab as bio-monitors to measure air pollution, and the multi-faceted project, *the invisible connectedness of things*, involved smog plates by students of Manhattan Middle School, an emissions testing facility, and bus transportation. Commissioned by EcoArts Connections and co-presented with Museum of Natural History, University of Colorado, Boulder.

Photo: Casey Cass



Particulates is part of a multi-faceted project, *the invisible connectedness of things*, created by visual artist Kim Abeles, commissioned by EcoArts Connections (EAC) and co-presented by the University of Colorado Museum of Natural History and EAC.

and when change takes place. Change does not happen at a singular point in time but rather across a continuum: actions by multiple people, great and small, visible and hidden. Waiting for leaders inevitably disappoints our expectations.

The 2019 exhibit in Moscow curated by Snejana Krasteva and Ekaterina Lazareva, "The Coming World: Ecology as the New Politics 2030-2100" occurred during a time marked by extreme fracture, suspicion, and the disintegration of truth. The curators' support of my work, *World Leaders in Smog*, emphasized to me that it is through individual interactions that we locate promise and possibilities. Later that year, when I met the curators at the Chicago Expo where the Natural Resources Defense Council featured the artwork, all our efforts steered toward a healthy outcome with art as a prompt.

Through the course of my career, the interrelationship between art and community has become seamless. "Community" in all its personal, local, and global manifestations has heightened my belief in public venues, workshops as a genre, and art's relevance for society. I live by a motto: Art that provides a viewer with riveting portrayals of nature or society serves to re-engage a person with the physical world; this is where positive change has a possibility to take place. If one does not love the world, that person will not imagine a need to protect it.



The Environmental Activity Book was published in 1996 with funds from the Los Angeles Department of Cultural Affairs.



Installation of *World Leaders in Smog*

Photo: Alexey Narodizkiy

© Garage Museum of Contemporary Art, Moscow



Abeles working on the painting of the Mountain Wedge as seen in the document photograph that she's viewing with a magnifying glass. The suspended painting appears with the installation of the walk-thru camera bellows (See page 13).

"FOOTPRINTS OF THE SKY" — EARLY INVESTIGATIONS

Topic sections by Jennifer Frias (JF) and Rachel Kaufman (RK)

In the late 1980s, Abeles created the first "Smog Collector" after noticing how the San Gabriel Mountains were regularly obscured by the particulate matter that constitutes air pollution. *Smog Collector (One Month of Smog)*, 1987, was the first series that launched an ongoing investigation on air quality. Using hand-drawn stencils, Abeles developed an innovative method to collect smog particulate on various surfaces. These early works were described by an anonymous observer as "footprints of the sky." (JF)

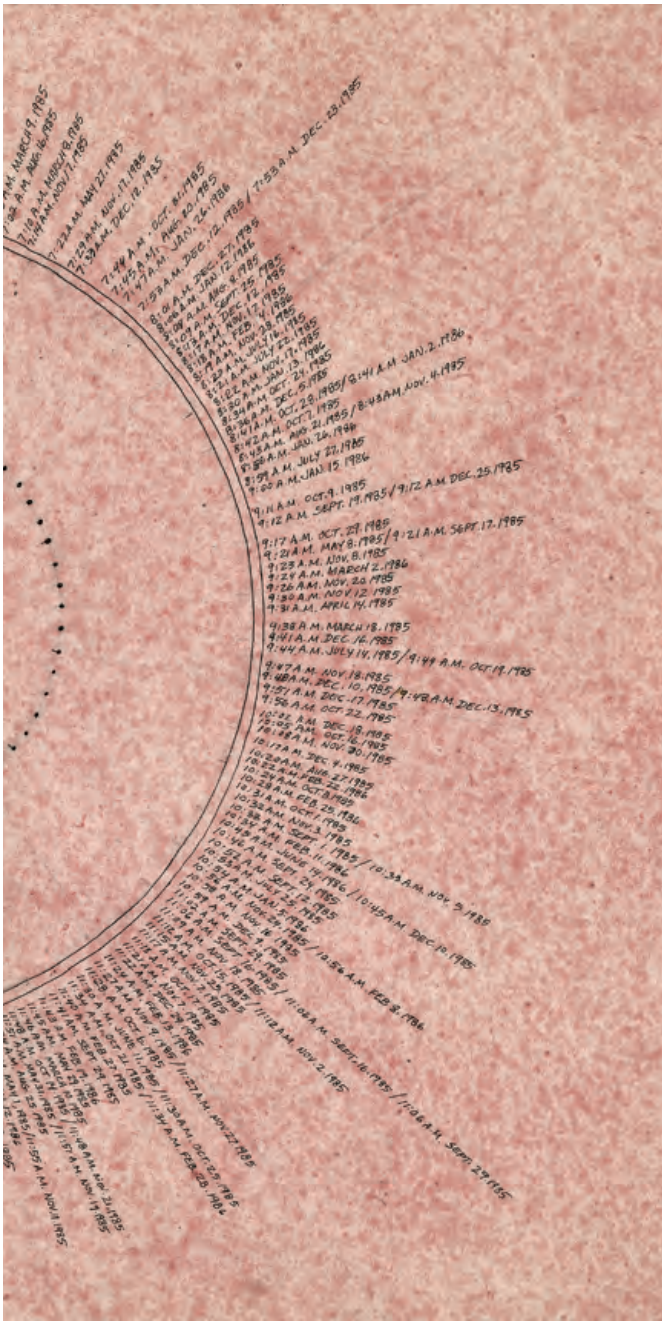
***Smog Collector (One Month of Smog)*, 1987**

Smog (particulate matter) on acrylic;
Acrylics on paper
15.5" x 11"

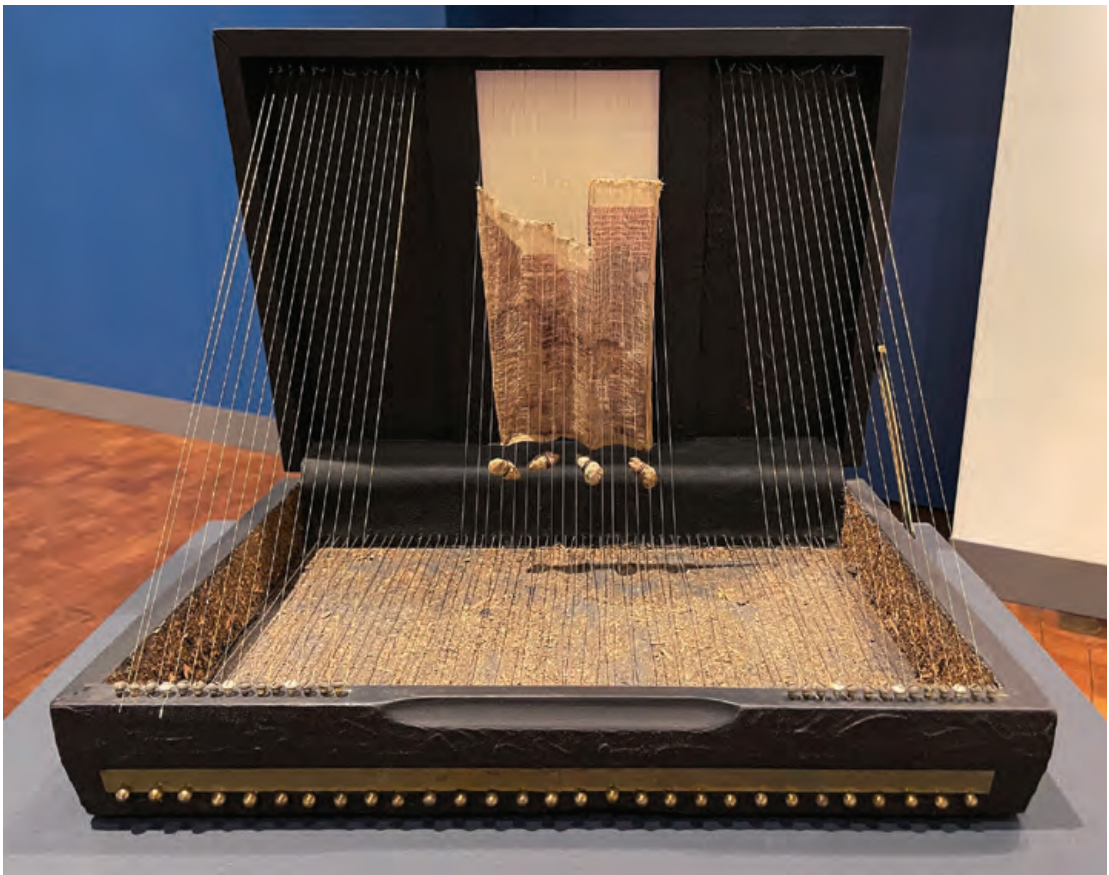
Collection of Madeleine Grynstejn & Tom Shapiro.

The first **Smog Collector** (1987) was an experiment: an image of a slice of the San Gabriel Mountains wedged visually between the buildings of South Broadway's horizon. The wedge could be seen from Abeles' fire escape at the Victor Clothing Building, and she also photographed it for 14 months trying to get a clear view unobscured by smog.





New Kind of Clock (Time Based on the Frequency of Taking Photographs), 1986
 Acrylic and ink on paper recording the times and dates of the 274 photos taken in an attempt to capture a clear shot of the San Gabriels unobscured by smog; clock; marbledized wood to match the fireplace 17" x 17" x 3"
Collection of the Department of Art History and the Visual Arts, Occidental College, Los Angeles.
Opposite page:
Memory Box, 1987
 Asphalt covered box and the mountain shape created with spiritual incense; Thread; Cibachrome of the Mountain Wedge; Naturally dyed cheesecloth; Soil 13" x 16.25" x 12.5"
Collection of Steve and Doni Silver Simons.





Obstructions to the Wedge, 1987
Silver prints showing view toward the Mountain Wedge from Abeles' fire escape; Zora Neale Hurston quote from Their Eyes Were Watching God; Wire; Acrylics on wood and paper 45.5" x 7" x 1.75"

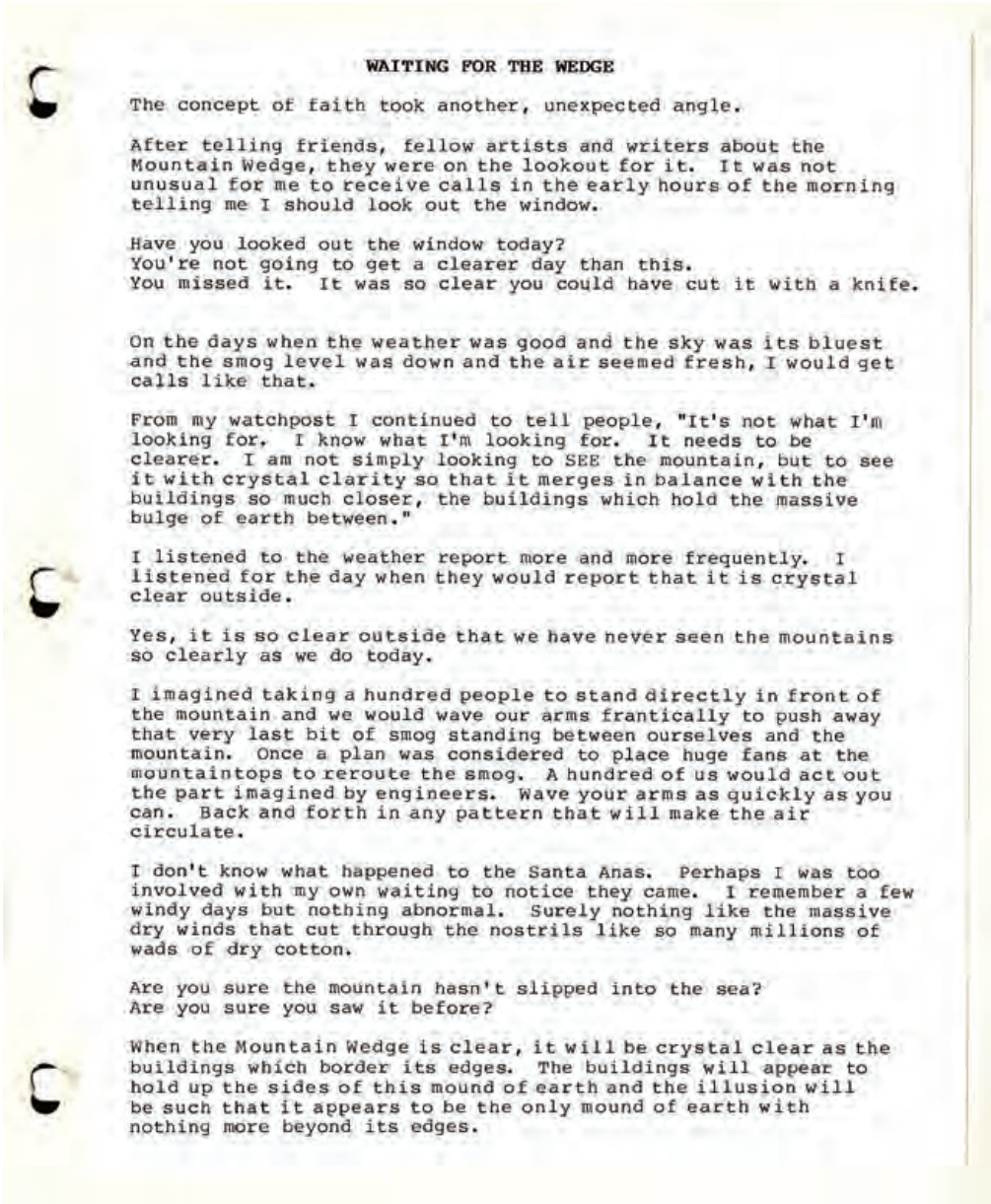


Camera Desiros, 1987
Enamel on brass framework; Mosquito netting; Bird feathers from Abeles' grandfather's racing pigeons 3.75" x 5.5" x 4.25"

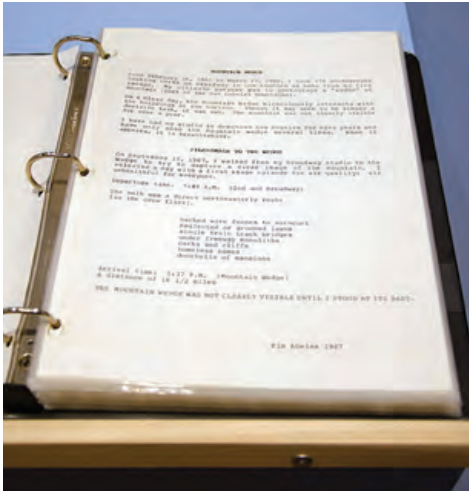
Photo: Calista Lyon



Instructions for Stride Forward, 2014 recreation of the 1987 artwork
Photograph of Abeles walking along her sculpture, *Pentipede*, to measure her stride in order to adjust the pedometer she used during her 16½ mile pilgrimage to the San Gabriel Mountains; pedometer with instructions; air quality report for the day of the walk; text 15" x 14"



Mountain Wedge and Pilgrimage to the Wedge
A facsimile of the binder for the project.
The 1989 original is archived at the Center for Art + Environment, Nevada Museum of Art.



Next Page:
Smog Map, 2018
Smog (particulate matter) on cellulose; handmade paper created with junk mail 22" x 17"
Private Collection.
The original *Smog Maps* created in 2010 were made with cellulose sewn onto painted canvas. The edition of 125 *Smog Collectors* was commissioned by Deutsche Bank.



L.A. SKYLINE IN SMOG



Sixty Blocks Square of Los Angeles Horizon (Seven Days of Smog), Winter 1990/91
Smog (particulate matter) on acrylic
5 panels: 16" x 89", 16" x 89", 16" x 67", 16" x 89", 16" x 89"
Installation view at Laguna Art Museum Satellite Gallery, Costa Mesa, CA

MAPPING AND MARKING

"The horizon breathes like an autonomous organism with handwriting of a volatile hieroglyphic system. I am its stenographer and the arm of its turntable."

— Kim Abeles

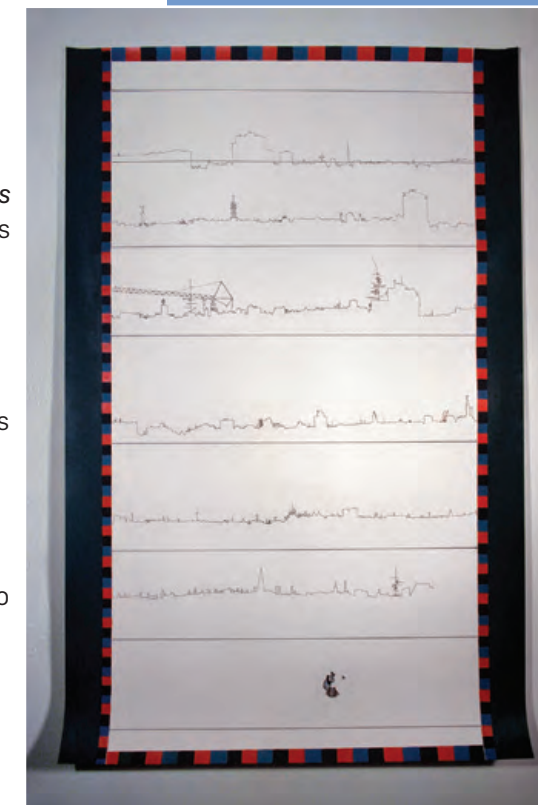
In this series, smog functions as a transcriber by outlining the temporal dimensions of a landscape or drawing specific moments in time.

In the late 1980s, Abeles produced drawings of city horizon lines in the U.S. and abroad. She would find access to building rooftops and sketch a 360° image of the skyline. *Sixty Blocks Square of Los Angeles Horizon (Seven Days of Smog)* represents Los Angeles, not only as a continuous horizon line but as a smog-ridden space, with the sky as the indicator of the structures below.

"Air pollution" that has accumulated onto the assortment of surfaces in Abeles' *Smog Collectors* operates as a form of data. In the 1990s, she collaborated with the Bureau of Automotive Repair to produce a suite of citywide *Smog Collectors* throughout Southern California. Among the various intents, the project addressed the density of pollution in disadvantaged communities, specifically those close to freeways and factories. Subsequently, the project launched further iterations that illustrated the severity of airborne toxins caused by refineries and automobiles. Included in the exhibition at the Begovich Gallery are images of car parts and factories to which Abeles applies harmful air pollutants to demonstrate their degrading effects on air quality.

In 1992, Abeles produced a series of *Smog Collectors* that indirectly recorded the Los Angeles uprisings. Twelve days after she placed a set of *Smog Collectors* on the rooftop of her studio in Vernon, California, verdicts were announced in the trials of LAPD officers filmed in the savage beating of Rodney King. *The Sorcerer, French Pyrenees*, and *Arial Gallery (Twelve Days of Smog/Two Days of Smoke from the Los Angeles Uprising)* are composed of debris from the aftermath of arson fires, property damage, and civil unrest.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Abeles introduced two sets of work. The first, *Smog Catcher 2020 (6 days of smog, 1 day of rain, and 8 weeks exposed indoors during quarantine)*, was produced when Southern California had the cleanest air



West Berlin as Seen from One Pivot Point, 1986
Ink and acrylic on paper
46" x 30"
Private collection.



The Sorcerer, French Pyrenees (12 days of smog / 2 days of smoke from the Los Angeles Uprising)
Kim Abeles 1992



Arial Gallery, Lascoux (12 days of smog / 2 days of smoke from the Los Angeles Uprising)

Kim Abeles 1992

recorded since the 1980s. The second was made in the fall of 2020 when the numbers of COVID-19 cases and deaths were at their all-time high and the Bobcat Fire began to blaze in the central San Gabriel Mountains and the Angeles National Forest. With *Deck Chairs on the Titanic (30 days of smog and ash from the Bobcat Fire)*, Abeles considers the dichotomy between industrial contamination and environmental tragedies of the wildfires. Comprised of smoke and ashes on European beechwood, *Deck Chairs on the Titanic* uses smog collectors made of the same wood species as the original loungers aboard the RMS Titanic. (JF)

Opposite Page:
The Sorcerer, French Pyrenees (Twelve Days of Smog/Two Days of Smoke from the Los Angeles Uprising), 1992

Smog (particulate matter) and smoke/ash on repurposed acrylic
16" x 11.5"

Collection of Susan Zeidler & Leo Frishberg.

Arial Gallery (Twelve Days of Smog/Two Days of Smoke from the Los Angeles Uprising), 1992

Smog (particulate matter) and smoke/ash on repurposed acrylic
11.5" x 16"

Collection of Alice Fung & Michael Blatt.



Deck Chairs on the Titanic (30 days of smog and ash from the Bobcat Fire)
September 27 – October 26, 2020
 Smog (particulate matter) and smoke/ash on European Beech, the type of wood used to make the original deck chairs for the Titanic
 10 1/2" x 28"



Deck Chair on the Titanic II (30 days of smog and ash from the Bobcat Fire)
September 12 – October 11, 2020
 Smog (particulate matter) and smoke/ash on wood
 13.75" x 5"
 Collection of John M Simon.



Deck Chair on the Titanic (30 days of smog and ash from the Bobcat Fire) **September 18 – October 15, 2020**
 Smog (particulate matter) and smoke/ash on porcelain plate; ; gold Mica powder; Hand-drawn digital print incorporating three motifs used for the First-, Second-, and Third-Class dinnerware on the Titanic
 10.25" diameter



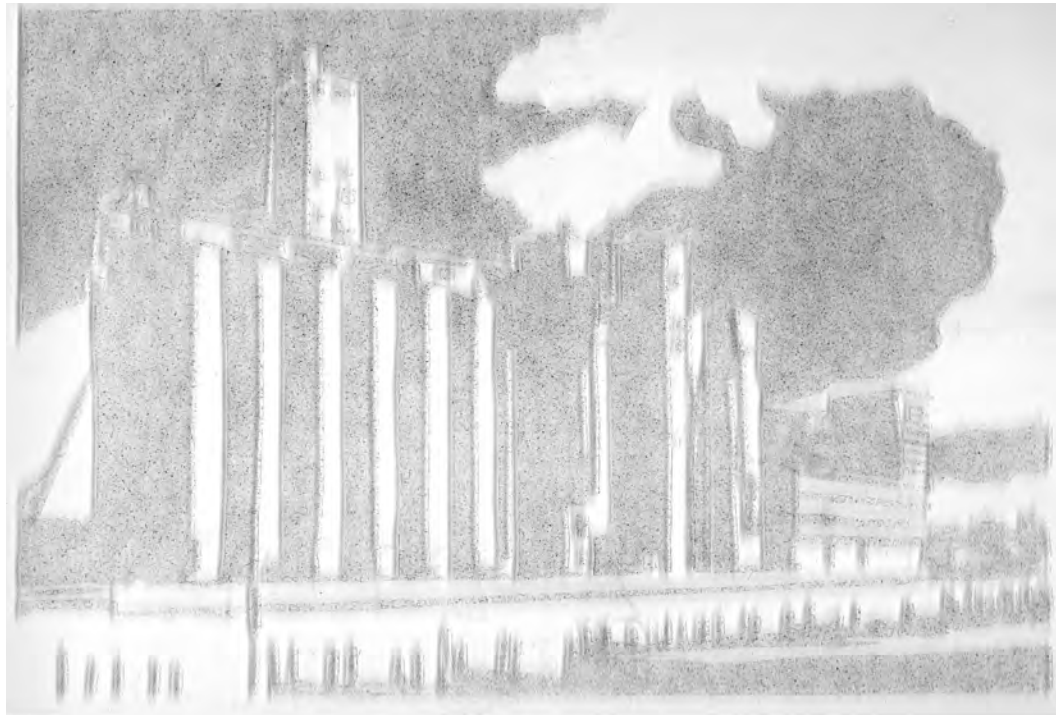
Engine in One Month of Smog, Smoke and Ash from the Fourmile Canyon Fire, 2010
 Smog (particulate matter) and smoke/ash on porcelain plate
 10.5" diameter
 The Fourmile Canyon Fire was a wildfire in Boulder County, Colorado.



Car Parts (Thirty Days of Smog), 1991
 Smog (particulate matter) on acrylic;
 Photograph of 1910 electric car plant
 10.5" x 11"
 Collection of Susan Zeidler & Leo Frishberg.



PATRICIA LAYMAN BAZELON
General Mills Elevator
 Ultrachrome print of the original gelatin silver print (1991)
 10" x 11.5"
 Courtesy of the Patricia Layman Bazelon Estate.



Smog Translation of Patricia Layman Bazelon's General Mills Elevator (Twenty Days of Smog), 1998
 Smog (particulate matter) on repurposed acrylic
 10" x 11.5"
 Collection of Lauren Trent.



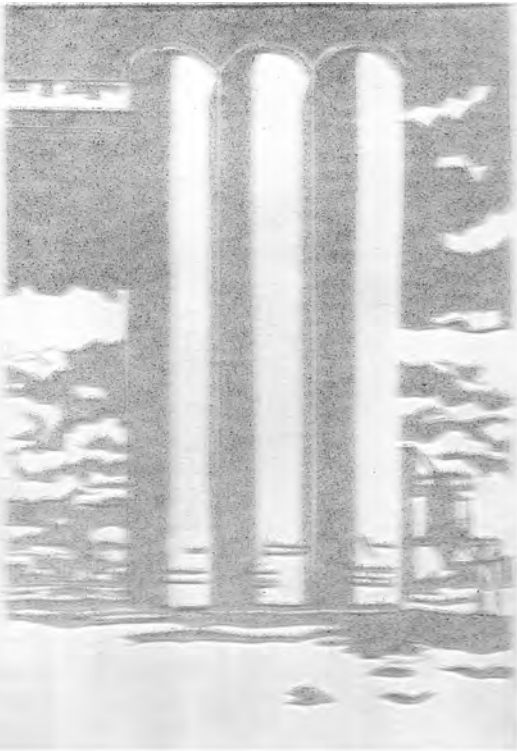
PATRICIA LAYMAN BAZELON
Cargill Electric Elevator
 Ultrachrome print of the original gelatin silver print (1991)
 10" x 11.5"
 Courtesy of the Patricia Layman Bazelon Estate.



Smog Translation of Patricia Layman Bazelon's Cargill Electric Elevator (Twenty Days of Smog), 1998
 Smog (particulate matter) on repurposed acrylic
 10" x 11.5"
 Collection of Robert Hirsch and Adele Henderson.



PATRICIA LAYMAN BAZELON
Kellogg Elevator
 Ultrachrome print of the original gelatin silver print (1987)
 10" x 11.5"
 Courtesy of the Patricia Layman Bazelon Estate.



Smog Translation of Patricia Layman Bazelon's Kellogg Elevator (Twenty Days of Smog), 1998
 Smog (particulate matter) on repurposed acrylic
 11.5" x 10"
 Collection of Paige and Jeffrey Anthony.



Digits Smog Count, 2009
Smog (particulate matter) on cellulose
40 squares: 9" x 9" each

Above:
Detail of one square

Top left:
Installation view in the 2009 exhibition
at dgi byen, *(Re-) Cycles of Paradise*
curated by ARTPORT_making waves for
COP15 in Copenhagen

Photo: Insa Winkler



Bottom left:
Installation view in the 2010 exhibition
of *(Re-) Cycles of Paradise* curated
by Anne-Marie Melster for ARTPORT
_making waves at the Spanish Cultural
Center in Mexico City

Photo: Gustavo Ballesté

THE HUMAN BODY

Combining activism with art, Kim Abeles addresses women's health issues in a multi-panel installation that examines the connection between air pollution and breast cancer. Using her smog collection process to capture particulate matter on cellulose, she marks a circle for each 1,000 individuals, predominately women, estimated to be diagnosed with "breast cancer in the prior year.

Digits Smog Count was created for, *(Re-)Cycles of Paradise*, a traveling exhibition produced by the international group "ARTPORT_making waves." The exhibition explored the complex and multifaceted relationship between gender and climate change. In 2009, ARTPORT curators were invited by the Global Gender and Climate Alliance and the International Union for the Conservation of Nature to organize an exhibition that called attention to this topic during the United Nations Conference on Climate Change, COP 15, in Copenhagen.

Exposure to air pollutants has been associated with a range of adverse health outcomes. In addition to addressing the effects of air pollution on the lungs, Abeles has created work that examines the health implications of pollution as it affects the spine, heart, hands, and the circulatory system of the body. (RK)



Winter Clear Days (One Month of Smog), 1990
Smog (particulate matter); wood; and Plexiglas;
13" x 10.25" (each) (3 in the set)

Triptych part one above; parts two and three on next page.
Gift of the Mark and Hilarie Moore Collection, Orange, California.
Collection of Orange County Museum of Art.



Winter Clear Days (One Month of Smog), 1990
 Smog; wood; and Plexiglas
 13" x 10.25" (each) (3 in the set)
 Triptych parts two and three; part one on previous page.
 Gift of the Mark and Hilarie Moore Collection, Orange, California.
 Collection of Orange County Museum of Art.



Human Figure in Thirty Days of Smog (II), 1991
 Smog (particulate matter) on acrylic
 23" x 17"
 Collection of Catherine MacLean & David Yale.

Silhouettes in Smog, 2009
 Smog (particulate matter) on handmade paper made with junk mail
 12.5" x 12.5"
 This is the prototype for a series of 100+ silhouettes of women. The work speaks to the correlation between air pollution, high levels of particulate matter, and health effects ranging from asthma to breast cancer. Globally, 1 in 4 cases of cancers among females is a result of breast cancer. The artwork was made in collaboration with the international curatorial collective, ARTPORT_making waves, exhibiting in Copenhagen during COP15, the 15th session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nation's Convention on Climate Change.





DOMESTIC SPACES

Utilizing everyday household objects, Abeles complicates our expectations that the dangers of air pollution solely exist outside or beyond, rather than inside our own homes and workplaces. Her dining room tableau, created with domestic articles, reveals the emissions that enter our homes and those we create in our everyday spaces with simple activities such as cooking and cleaning. Among the artworks assembled, she includes her daughter's childhood high chair with its food and place-setting entirely made of particulate matter. Abeles establishes a personal narrative by reexamining the air quality behind closed doors, while deconstructing the illusion of safety. (RK)



Earth Clock II (20 days of smog and 10 days of acid rain), 1991
Edition of 22
Smog (particulate matter) on glass face of clock; silver dollar and cut paper dollar
10.25" in diameter
Collection of Laguna Art Museum and Private Collections.



Above and opposite page:
Details of *Give Us This Day (Twenty Days of Smog and Acid Rain)*, 1992
Smog (particulate matter) and acid air effect on silk
Variable sizes
The complete installation was created for the exhibition *Paradise Lost* curated by Mimi Debruyn for the 1993 Cultural Centre of Berchem, Antwerp, Belgium.



Dinner for Two in One Month of Smog, 2011

Smog (particulate matter) on porcelain dinnerware and linen
27.5" x 48.5" x 38"

The installation was created for the 2012 exhibition, *Swept Away: Dust, Ashes and Dirt in Contemporary Art and Design*, organized by William and Mildred Lasdon Chief Curator David McFadden at the Museum of Arts and Design, New York.

Photo: Ken Marchionno



Zoë's Highchair (Forty Days of Smog), Winter 1990/91

Altered, painted highchair with food and setting made of smog (particulate matter)
45" x 15" x 19"



Air Share (Twenty Days of Smog/ Ten Days of Acid Rain), Spring 1991
Window scene and factory made of smog (particulate matter) on repurposed acrylic
46.5" x 31"



Walden, 2018
Smog translation of Thomas W. Nason's engraving in a modified edition of *Walden; or, Life in the Woods* by Henry David Thoreau; Smog (particulate matter) on re-purposed acrylic; Acrylics on paper and wood shelf; Baby's Breath flowers
8" x 6" x 1" (book)

Smog Clock, 2019
 Smog (particulate matter) on glass;
 Acrylics on paper; Cut paper dollar
 10" diameter x 2"



Smog Clock and Roads from a Gated Community in Orange County, 2009
 Smog (particulate matter) on glass face of clock; archival ultrachrome print of dissected streets
 12" diameter

Smog Mask (Thirty Days of Smog), Spring 1991
 Smog (particulate matter) on acrylic; brass hardware
 11" x 7" each
 Edition numbers 9/20 and 10/20
 Collection of Catherine MacLean and David Yale.





Menu in Twenty Days of Smog and Acid Rain, Spring 1992
 Smog (particulate matter) on repurposed acrylic
 13" x 9" x 2"



Steak Dinner in Twelve Days of Smog, 2012
 Smog (particulate matter) on porcelain;
 Ultrachrome print of currency
 11.5" diameter
 Edition of 20
 Private Collections.

Photo: Ken Marchionno

Jellyfish in 20 Days of Smog, 2014
 Smog (particulate matter) kiln-fired
 onto ceramic plate
 12" diameter

POLITICS

“How do you balance the idea of being inspired while confronting their portraits made of smog? I felt that it made them accountable for their words.”

— Kim Abeles

In the early 1990s, Abeles introduced her renowned series, the *Presidential Commemorative Smog Plates*. Each features the portrait of a U.S. President ranging from William McKinley to George H.W. Bush rendered with particulate matter, as well as their statements about the environment and industry. When the plates sat on the rooftop of her L.A. studio the length of exposure to smog varied accordingly to each president’s environmental record – those with more pro-active policies resulted in lighter imprints; and those more apathetic to the issue displayed denser sediments.

Nearly thirty years after the debut of the *Presidential Commemorative Smog Plates*, Abeles revisited her Smog Collectors to address the latest state of our global environmental crisis. *World Leaders in Smog* depicts ten international figures who presented speeches at world climate summits from 2011 to 2018. (See pages 94-99) Etched alongside the portraits of these political figures are excerpts from their speeches concerning the environment.

Abeles produced a second set of *World Leaders in Smog* plates featuring national emblems and geolocations of the countries. Individual plates gathered smog in some of the world leaders’ respective capitals: Berlin, London, Moscow, Paris, Ottawa, and Washington D.C. (JF, RK)



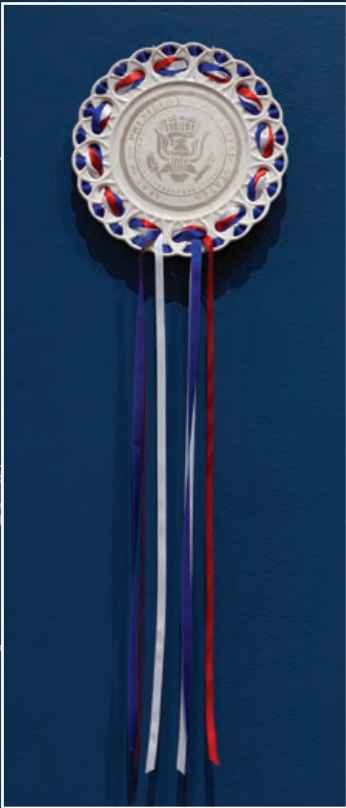
George Bush's New World Order T.V.
(20 days of smog/10 days of acid rain), 1991
Smog (particulate matter) on television;
car muffler
40" x 23" x 12"

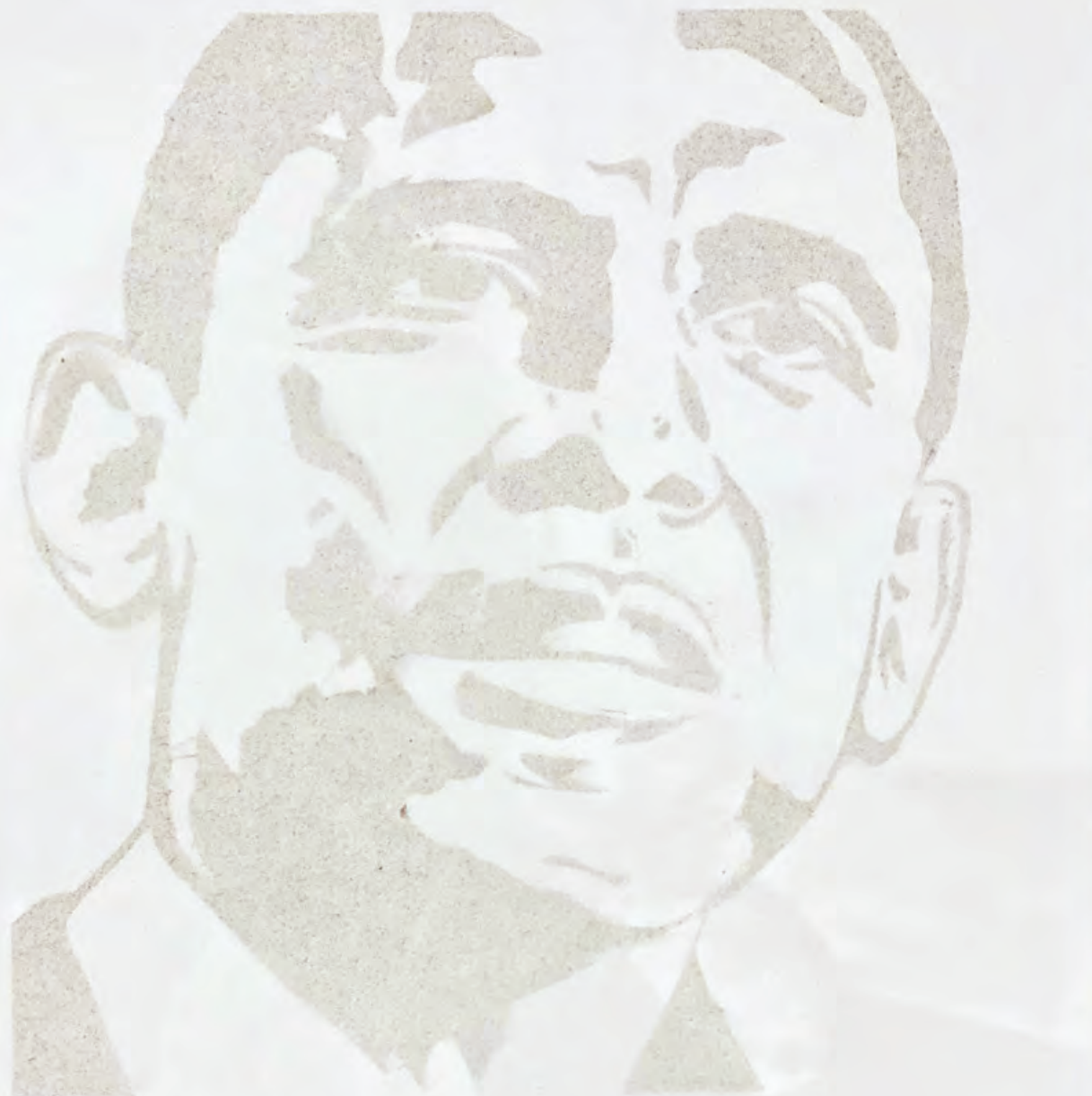
Photo: David Familian



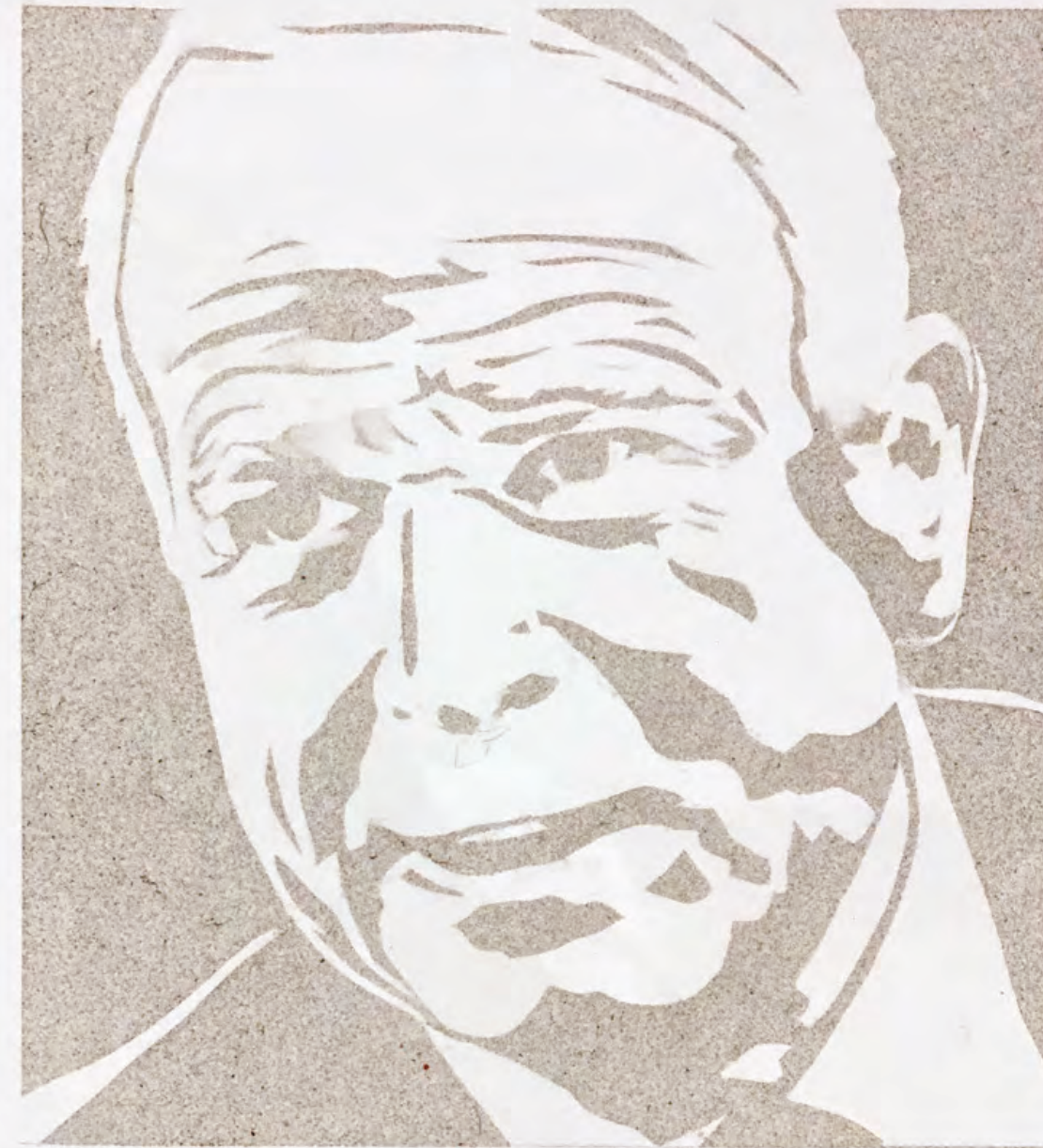
Presidential Seal in Twenty Days of Smog, 1992
Smog (particulate matter) on porcelain plate with ribbon
24" x 9.5"

Photo: Ken Marchionno





Obama in 9 Days of Smog and McCain in 18 Days of Smog, 2008
Smog (particulate matter) on repurposed acrylic
10" x 8.5" each



The smog portraits are based on the presidential candidates' emission/pollution goals for cap and trade: Obama at an 80% reduction goal and McCain at a 60 (or 65%) reduction goal. Therefore, McCain was left out in the smoggy air for twice as long. Abeles in collaboration with Melissa Lafsky for *Discover Magazine*.



William McKinley in 20 Days of Smog

Presidential Commemorative Smog Plates, 1992

Smog (particulate matter) on porcelain plates;
10.5" diameter each

Private Collection.

Photo: Ken Marchionno

The plates were placed on a rooftop for increments 4, 8, 14, 20, 25, 30, or 40 days depending on the environmental record of each president. The idea developed when Abeles heard George HW Bush on the radio proclaiming himself as the "Environmental President". The artist's immediate reaction was to feel the contradiction between the words and the reality of the air surrounding her. Though the idea was born in despair and sarcasm, Bush did push for amendments to the 1965 Clean Air Act. However, to this day, air pollution continues to be a dangerous threat with a heavy weight of burden on low-income communities and remains a social justice issue. Historian Dr. William E Weeks explains, "The progress that had been made in the US regarding air pollution controls was largely negated by globalization—the smog was merely offshored, only to come back with the wind."



Theodore Roosevelt in 4 Days of Smog



William Taft in 40 Days of Smog



Woodrow Wilson in 8 Days of Smog



Warren Harding in 25 Days of Smog



Calvin Coolidge in 25 Days of Smog



Herbert Hoover in 25 Days of Smog



Franklin Roosevelt in 4 Days of Smog



Harry Truman in 30 Days of Smog



Kennedy in 14 Days of Smog



Dwight Eisenhower in 20 Days of Smog



Lyndon Johnson in 30 Days of Smog



Richard Nixon in 20 Days of Smog



Gerald Ford in 14 Days of Smog



James Carter in 8 Days of Smog



Ronald Reagan in 40 Days of Smog



George HW Bush in 40 Days of Smog



**Prime Minister of the United Kingdom
Theresa May (2016–19)**
Placed on a London rooftop to collect smog

World Leaders in Smog, 2019

Smog (particulate matter) on porcelain plates
10.5" diameter each

The series includes ten world leaders who presented speeches at world climate summits from 2011 to 2018. The quotes are written on the plates in the language originally presented. The project was created in collaboration with the exhibition, *The Coming World: Ecology as the New Politics 2030–2100*, curated by Snejana Krasteva and Ekaterina Lazareva for the Garage Museum of Contemporary Art, Moscow, Russia.

Sets of the stenciled plates were placed on rooftops for an average of one month in Los Angeles and Moscow. Individual plates collected smog in the capital cities of London, Washington DC, Berlin, Paris, and Ottawa.

British Prime Minister **Theresa May** launches the 25 Year Environment Plan with a speech at the London Wetland Centre, Barnes on January 11, 2018:

[Original language English]

"In our election manifesto last year we made an important pledge: to make ours the first generation to leave the natural environment in a better state than we found it."



President of France Emmanuel Macron (2017-)

Left:
Placed on a Paris rooftop to collect smog

Below:
Placed on a Paris suburb rooftop to collect smog

Quote from the French President **Emmanuel Macron's** speech in U.S. Congress on April 25, 2018:

[Original language English]

"What is the meaning of our life if our decision, our conscious decision, is to reduce the opportunities for our children and grandchildren? By polluting the oceans, not mitigating CO2 emissions and destroying our biodiversity, we are killing our planet. Let us face it: there is no Planet B."





Federal Chancellor of Germany Angela Merkel (2005-)
Placed on a Berlin rooftop to collect smog

Speech by Federal Chancellor **Angela Merkel** at the Sixth Petersburg Climate Dialogue in Berlin on May 19, 2015:

[Original language German]

“Denn wir, die Industrieländer, haben über viele Jahre zur Klimaerwärmung stark beigetragen und haben jetzt die Pflicht, mit Innovationen denen, die noch Entwicklung vor sich haben, deutlich zu machen, was effizientere Technologien sind. Das ist ein Akt der Gerechtigkeit und entspricht den unterschiedlichen Verantwortlichkeiten, die wir in der einen Welt haben.”

[English]

“After all, we, the industrialized countries, caused much of global warming for many years, and it is now our duty to show those still awaiting development more efficient technologies by creating innovations. This is an act of justice and reflects the differentiated responsibilities we have in this shared world of ours.”



Prime Minister of India Narendra Modi (2014-)
Placed on a Los Angeles rooftop to collect smog

Statement by Indian Prime Minister **Narendra Modi** at the 2015 United Nations Climate Change Conference in Paris, France on November 30, 2015:

[Original language English]

“Ultimately, for success, moderating our lifestyle is necessary, and possible, for a low carbon future... We will succeed if we have the wisdom and courage to craft a genuinely collective partnership that balances responsibilities and capabilities with aspirations and needs.”



President of Russia Vladimir Putin (2012-)
Placed on a Moscow rooftop to collect smog

Statement by Russian President **Vladimir Putin** at the 2015 United Nations Climate Change Conference in Paris, France on November 30, 2015:

[Original language Russian]

«От решения климатической проблемы зависят качество жизни всех людей на планете, экономический рост и устойчивое социальное развитие целых регионов Земли».

[English]

“The quality of life of everyone on this planet, economic growth and sustainable social development of entire regions depend on our ability to resolve the climate problem.”



President of Brazil Dilma Rousseff (2011-2016)
Placed on a Los Angeles rooftop to collect smog

Speech by Brazilian President **Dilma Rousseff** at the Plenary Session of United Nations Sustainable Development Summit 2015 in New York on September 27, 2015:

[Original language Portuguese]

“O Brasil é um dos poucos países em desenvolvimento a assumir uma meta absoluta de redução de emissões. Temos uma das maiores populações e PIB do mundo e nossas metas são tão ou mais ambiciosas que aquelas dos países desenvolvidos.”

[English]

“Brazil is one of the few developing countries to commit to an absolute goal for emissions reduction. In spite of having one the world’s largest populations and GDPs our goals are just as ambitious, if not more so, than those set by developed countries.”



Prime Minister of Canada Justin Trudeau (2015-)
Placed on a Los Angeles rooftop to collect smog

Statement by Canadian Prime Minister **Justin Trudeau** at the 2015 United Nations Climate Change Conference in Paris, France on November 30, 2015:

[Original language English]

"We view climate change not just as the challenge it is but also as a historic opportunity. An opportunity to build a sustainable economy based on clean technology, on green infrastructure and on green jobs. We will not sacrifice growth, we will create growth."



President of the United States Donald Trump (2017- 2021)
Placed on a Los Angeles rooftop to collect smog

Statement by American President **Donald Trump** on the Paris Climate Accord made on June 1, 2017:

[Original language English]

"The United States, under the Trump administration, will continue to be the cleanest and most environmentally friendly country on Earth. We'll be the cleanest. We're going to have the cleanest air. We're going to have the cleanest water."



President of the People's Republic of China Xi Jinping (2013-)
Placed on a Los Angeles rooftop to collect smog

Statement by Chinese **President Xi Jinping** at the 2015 United Nations Climate Change Conference in Paris, France on November 30, 2015:

[Original language Chinese]

我们应该创造一个各尽所能、合作共赢的未来。对气候变化等全球性问题，如果抱着功利主义的思维，希望多占点便宜、少承担点责任，最终将是损人不利己。巴黎大会应该摒弃“零和博弈”狭隘思维，推动各国尤其是发达国家多一点共享、多一点担当，实现互惠共赢。

[English]

"We should create a future of win-win cooperation, with each country making contribution to the best of its ability. For global issues like climate change, a take-more-give-less approach based on expediency is in nobody's interest. The Paris Conference should reject the narrow-minded mentality of "zero sum game" and call on all countries, the developed countries in particular, to assume more shared responsibilities for win-win outcomes."



President of South Africa Jacob Zuma (2009-2018)
Placed on a Los Angeles rooftop to collect smog

Statement by South African President **Jacob Zuma** at the 2009 United Nations Climate Change Conference in Durban, South Africa on December 7, 2011:

[Original language English]

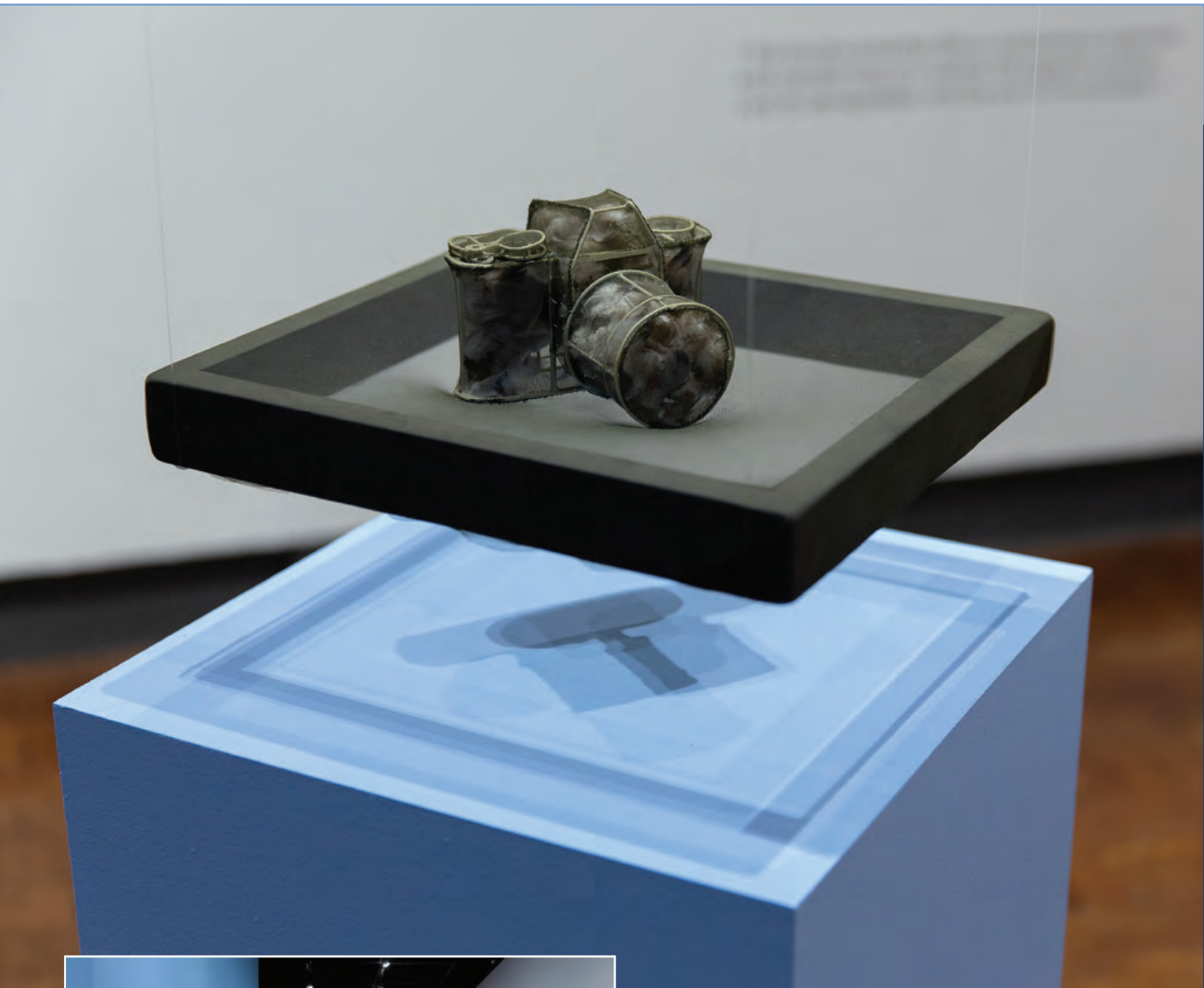
"Various regions of the world have different views on the issue, simply because they are affected differently by climate change. However, for most people in the developing world and Africa, climate change is a matter of life and death. We are always reminded by the leaders of small island states that climate change threatens their very existence."

INSTALLATION VIEWS

Nicholas and Lee Begovich Gallery, CSU Fullerton



Installation photographs: Nikolay Maslov





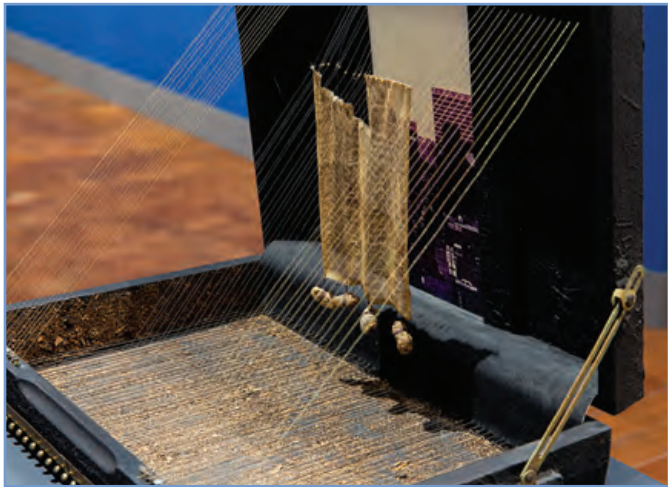
"FOOTPRINTS OF THE SKY" EARLY INVESTIGATIONS

In the late 1980s, Abeles created the first "Smog Collector" after noticing how the San Gabriel Mountains were regularly obscured by the particulate matter that constitutes air pollution. *Smog Collector (One Month of Smog)*, 1987 was the first series that launched an ongoing investigation on air quality. Using hand-drawn stencils, Abeles developed an innovative method to collect smog particulate on various surfaces. These early works were described by an anonymous observer as "footprints of the sky."

















DOMESTIC SPACES

Utilizing everyday household objects, Abeles complicates our expectations that the dangers of air pollution solely exist outside or beyond, rather than inside our own homes and workplaces. Her dining room tableau, created with domestic articles, reveals the emissions that enter our homes and those we create in our everyday spaces with simple activities such as cooking and cleaning. Among the artworks assembled, she includes her daughter's childhood high chair with its food and place-setting entirely made of particulate matter. Abeles establishes a personal narrative by reexamining the air quality behind closed doors, while deconstructing the illusion of safety.



THE HUMAN BODY

Combining activism with art, Kim Abeles addresses women's health issues in a multi-panel installation that examines the connection between air pollution and breast cancer. Using her smog collection process to capture particulate matter on cellulose, she marks a circle for each 1,000 individuals, predominately women, estimated to be diagnosed with breast cancer in the prior year.

Digits Smog Count was created for (Re-)Cycles of Paradise, a traveling exhibition produced by the international group "ARTPORT_making waves." The exhibition explored the complex and multifaceted relationship between gender and climate change. In 2009, ARTPORT curators were invited by the Global Gender and Climate Alliance and the International Union for the Conservation of Nature to organize an exhibition that called attention to this topic during the United Nations Conference on Climate Change, COP 15, in Copenhagen.

Exposure to air pollutants has been associated with a range of adverse health outcomes. In addition to addressing the effects of air pollution on the lungs, Abeles has created work that examines the health implications of pollution as it affects the spine, heart, hands, and the circulatory system of the body.





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Abeles' illustrations created for [Encyclopedia Persona A-Z](#), Fellows of Contemporary Art and Santa Monica Museum, 1993.



Imagery for Smog Collector stencils (1991-2020)



ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES AND TIPS

Lifestyle and Stewardship

Eat healthy and locally grown food.

"Lifestock - meat and dairy - is responsible for 14.5 percent of manmade global greenhouse gas emissions, mainly from feed production and processing and the methane (25 times more potent than CO₂ at trapping heat in the atmosphere over 100 years) that beef and sheep belch out. Every day that you forgo meat and dairy, you can reduce your carbon footprint by 8 pounds— that's 2,920 pounds a year." – Source "The 35 Easiest Ways to Reduce Your Carbon Footprint" by Renee Cho for Columbia Climate School. The article includes the environmental problems of fast fashion, air travel, and more: news.climate.columbia.edu/2018/12/27/35-ways-reduce-carbon-footprint/

Register to vote and show up for each election. Write to Senators and governmental leadership to express your concerns.

Use your purchasing power and shift algorithms of your web searches to include "green" and "environmentally friendly" products.

Vehicles

Travel by bus, train, bike, skateboard, and on foot.

Carpool and rideshare. Apps like Waze Carpool make it easy. At schools, you can find help through their parking and transportation offices. For information on carpool, buses, trains, and share rides at CSU Fullerton: parking.fullerton.edu/titanstraveltogether/

Combine errands into one trip. Starting a car after it has been sitting for more than an hour causes up to five times more pollution than starting up when the engine is warm.

Don't idle your car for more than 2 minutes (it takes less gas to restart your car.) One minute of idling produces more carbon monoxide than the smoke from 3 packs of cigarettes.

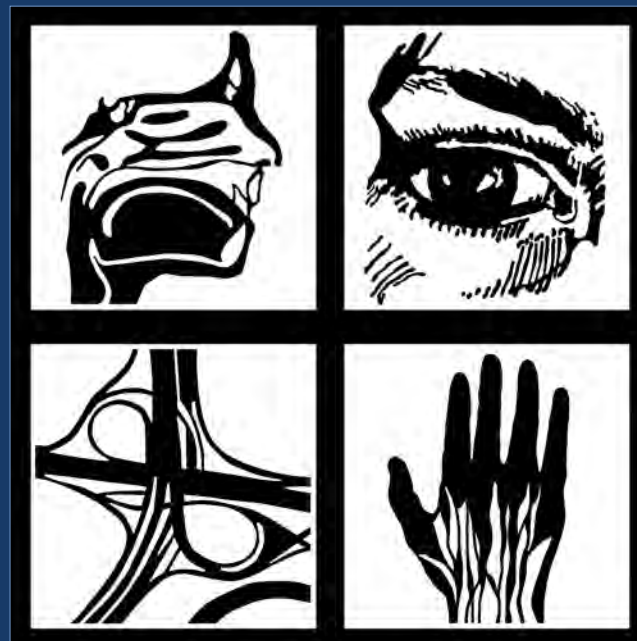
If you have a car, boat, or other vehicles, keep them tuned up. Follow through with emissions testing with your state's smog check program when timely.

Topping off the tank releases gas fumes into the air. Avoid spilling the gas. Refueling in cooler periods of the day can prevent gas fumes from heating up and creating ozone.

Watch your mileage. If there's a sudden drop in mileage, it's a red flag to get your car checked.

Avoid full throttle driving and abrupt acceleration.

Keep your tires inflated to the top pressure range stamped on the tire for maximum fuel efficiency.



Imagery for Smog Collector stencils (1991-2020)

In your home and community spaces

Composting creates nutrient rich soil while reducing waste in landfills. Mulch or compost leaves and yard waste.

Recycle and properly dispose of toxic substances but move in the direction of reducing consumption.

Plant trees, save parks, and create community gardens.

Reduce or eliminate fireplace and wood stove use.

Avoid burning leaves, trash, and other materials.

Conserve electricity and if you need new appliances, look for the ENERGY STAR label.

If you use an air conditioner set it no lower than 78 degrees.

Additional Resources

Bill McKibben is an environmentalist who began writing about climate change in the late 1980s with articles published in numerous magazines and his well-known book, The End of Nature (1989). He is a co-founder of 350.org, an excellent resource for information and action. "Their vision has transformed into an increasingly diverse global climate movement lifting up the voices of communities all over the world."

Tree People is dedicated to planting trees and educating about their environmental benefits: treepeople.org/

Local and national environmental agencies:

California Environmental Protection Agency
calepa.ca.gov

South Coast Air Quality Management District
aqmd.gov

United States Environmental Protection Agency
epa.gov

To report a smoking vehicle, contact California Air Resources Board's Vehicle Complaint Hotline
1-800-END-SMOG (1-800-363-7664)

To report a general air quality complaint, email envirotip@arb.ca.gov or call **1-800-CUT SMOG (1-800-952-5588)**

To start a recycling program, check your city or county websites under the headings of trash, recycling or waste management. Recycling information for Fullerton: cityoffullerton.com/residents/utilities/trash-recycling Recycling information for Los Angeles: <https://dpw.lacounty.gov/epd/swims/>

Vegetation maintenance and abatement to help prevent wild fires:
fire.lacounty.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Defensible-Space-booklet-2021WEB.pdf

KIM ABELES

BIOGRAPHICAL NARRATIVE

Kim Abeles is an artist whose artworks explore biography, geography, feminism, and the environment. Her work speaks to society, science literacy, and civic engagement, creating projects with science and natural history museums, health departments, air pollution control agencies, National Park Service, and non-profits.

She has been honored as a Guggenheim Fellow and with fellowships from the J. Paul Getty Trust Fund for the Visual Arts, California Community Foundation, and Pollock-Krasner Foundation. Recent projects funded by the National Endowment for the Arts involved a residency at the Institute of Forest Genetics; and *Valises for Camp Ground* in collaboration with Camp 13, a group of female prison inmates who fight wildfires. National Park Service rangers and educators use the creative valises to teach community about wildfire prevention. The project was administered by Los Angeles County Arts and Culture Commission and Armory Center for the Arts, and Abeles was art-in-resident at Camp 13 for six months.

Since receiving her MFA at University of California Irvine in 1980, her work has been exhibited in 26 countries including large-scale installations in South Korea, Czech Republic, England, Russia, Vietnam, Thailand, China, and Denmark. A major solo exhibition curated by Karen Moss and produced by the Fellows of Contemporary Art, *Kim Abeles: Encyclopedia Persona A-Z: A Fifteen Year Survey*, originated at the Santa Monica Museum of Art in 1993. Following several U.S. venues, the United States Information Agency exhibited the survey at the National Museum of Fine Arts, Santiago, Chile; Museum of Modern Art, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil; Complejo Cultural Recoleta, Buenos Aires, Argentina; and Centro Cultural Consolidado, Caracas, Venezuela.

Solo exhibits of Abeles' art have been presented at numerous college venues including the Kennedy Museum of Art at Ohio University; Laband Gallery at Loyola Marymount University; Frank M. Doyle Arts Pavilion at

Orange Coast College; and Allen Memorial Museum at Oberlin College to name a few. Solo shows at alternative spaces have included Art Resources Transfer (A.R.T., Inc), New York; Intersection, San Francisco; and multiple exhibits in the science venues of the National Center for Atmospheric Research in Boulder, and California Science Center in Los Angeles. Her installation work has been shown widely including the Harn Museum of Art in Gainesville; Arizona State University Art Museum in Tempe; Garage Museum of Contemporary Art in Moscow, Russia; and Kunsthal KAdE in Amersfoort, The Netherlands. She is particularly interested in venues that are accessible to youth and families, and her work has been shown in New York at the Children's Museum of the Arts and the Museum of Arts and Design; and locally at the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles and Los Angeles International Airport. Her artworks have been presented by environment groups including the Natural Resources Defense Council and the international curators group, ARTPORT_making waves. In 2005, Abeles was the first artist-in-residence at the ArtMill – Center for Creative Sustainability located in Bohemia, Czech Republic.

Kim Abeles has created community-based projects for three decades. The engagement includes creating long-term projects including The Public in West Midlands, England funded through Arts Council England, where she documented the activity of their high street over a four-year period to create 120-foot photograph, *The Golden Mile*. For two years, she collaborated with A Window Between Worlds, a non-profit that uses art as a source of healing for families emerging from domestic violence. The resulting workshop and exhibition, *Pearls of Wisdom – End the Violence*, engaged 800 individuals and through the metaphor of valuable pearls formed inside oysters in response to a harmful irritant, participants transformed memories of domestic pain into objects and shared texts. The exhibit premiered at the Korean Cultural Center, Los Angeles and the Pearls continue to be exhibited. Abeles

is a contributor in the forthcoming book *Social Practice: Technologies for Change* (Routledge Press) edited by xtine burrough and Judith Walgren.

Her projects develop through conversation and observation with groups, schools, and institutions. Topics have ranged from housing to environmental conservation to food justice. During 2015, *gallery-of-solutions* was a collaboration with art students through the Luckman Program, California State University Los Angeles to develop an exhibit and events about climate change. Public Service videos on mental health by collaborators Kim Abeles and Ken Marchionno were created with students from Dorsey High School. These were commissioned in 2015 by the LA Freeways program, *Out the Window*, funded by the Robert Rauschenberg Foundation.

Her public artworks can be found throughout Los Angeles. *Walk a Mile in My Shoes* – two repurposed traffic medians at Martin Luther King Jr Blvd./Obama Blvd. and Jefferson Blvd./Obama Blvd. – is a mixed media installation based on the shoes of Civil Rights marchers from the collection of Xernona Clayton. The second site highlights Los Angeles' activists and leaders. The work was commissioned by City of Los Angeles Department of Cultural Affairs and Department of Public Works in 2014. *Citizen Seeds* are six large-scale sculptures with detailed imagery that speaks to the metaphors of growth, journeys, and mapping of the Park to Playa Trail. This permanent artwork along this trail was funded by the Los Angeles County Arts and Culture and will be completed in October 2021.

Abeles was catapulted into the art scene shortly after graduate school as a result of the 1981 *Art News* article by Melinda Wortz, "Kimonos Floating in Space - Artists the Critics are Watching". Her artwork has been discussed and reviewed in numerous periodicals including *Artillery*, *Scientific American*, *X-TRA*, *Visual Art Source*, *The New Yorker*, *Art in America*, *ARTFORUM*, and *Sculpture*. *On-Site Smog Collector Sculptures*, a project with the California Bureau of Automotive Repair generated a total media value of close to three million dollars. Her work is included in *Art of Engagement: Political Art in California 1945-Present* by Peter Selz (University of California Press); *Problematics of Site-Surface Tension* edited by Brandon LaBelle, Ken Erlich and Stephen Vitiello (Errant Bodies Press); *Contemporary American Artists Interview Twelve Contemporary American Artists* edited by Lucinda Barnes, Miyoshi Barosh, William S. Bartman and Rodney Sappington (A.R.T. Press); and *Light and Lens: Photography in the Digital Age* by Robert Hirsch (Focal Press).

She lives in Los Angeles with four generations of family ages 14-101.



Smoke Box, 1983

Smoke drawings on plexiglass; ashes;
photo transfers of Los Angeles Library
on fabric; photographic transparencies
of newspaper articles showing buildings
to be torn down; Milan Kundera
quote from The Book of Laughter and
Forgetting; repurposed wood and metal
74" x 30" x 15"

Collection of Kristin S. Escalante.

Photo: Daniel J Martinez

Abeles' journals, artist books and process documents are archived at the Center for Art + Environment, Nevada Museum of Art, Reno, Nevada. Her work is included in the following public collections:

Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles
Los Angeles County Museum of Art
Berkeley Art Museum, Berkeley, CA
National Geospatial Intelligence Agency, Richmond, VA
California African American Museum, Los Angeles
United States Information Agency
Arizona State University Art Museum, Phoenix, AZ
Brooklyn Museum, NY
Garage Museum of Contemporary Art, Moscow, Russia
Art, Design & Architecture Museum, University of California Santa Barbara
The Banff Centre for the Arts Library Collection, Alberta, Canada
Museum of Modern Art Library Collection, NYC
Allen Memorial Art Museum, Oberlin College, OH
Clarence Ward Art Library, Special Collections, Oberlin College, OH
Sandwell Community History and Archives, UK
Center for Art + Environment, Nevada Museum of Art, Reno, NV
Fashion Institute of Design and Merchandising, Los Angeles
City of Santa Monica, CA
Yucun Art Museum, Suzhou, China
Natural History Museum, Los Angeles
Carolyn Campagna Kleefeld Contemporary Art Museum,
California State University, Long Beach, CA
Orange County Museum of Art, Newport Beach, CA
Sheldon Memorial Art Gallery, University of Nebraska, Lincoln, NE
Washington-Jefferson College, Washington, PA
Otis College of Art and Design, Los Angeles
California Bureau of Automotive Repair, Sacramento, CA
Palm Springs Desert Museum, CA
City of Los Angeles
California Science Center, Los Angeles
Laguna Art Museum, CA
Pomona College Collection, Pomona, CA
Occidental College, Los Angeles
San Jose Museum, CA
Lux Art Institute, Encinitas, CA
NYC Cooper-Hewitt Publication Design Collection, Smithsonian Institution Library, NYC
Los Angeles County Arts and Culture/Los Angeles County Mental Health Department/
National Park Service/LA County Fire

For a complete CV, please visit the artist's website at kimabeles.com

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

It has been my extraordinary fortune to bring the work of Kim Abeles to the CSU Fullerton community. The realization of this project, which is significant in scale, has been possible only through the generous support and efforts of numerous individuals and institutions. First and foremost, on behalf of the Begovich Gallery team, I extend my sincere gratitude to Kim Abeles, who continues to inspire and produce work that helps us understand that we deserve better in this world. A remarkable collaborator, she graciously immersed herself in this project and its manifestation down to the minutest detail.

The magnitude of Abeles' work is evinced in this publication through essays by Karen Moss and William L. Fox, who provided scholarly perspective to the *Smog Collectors*. Rachel Kaufman, who expertly worked on numerous curatorial and educational undertakings, contributed research assistance. Debra Winters Merrill anchored the logistics of the publication, furnishing thoughtful consideration for the end-product.

For keen design sensibility, skill, and coordination in realizing the exhibition's gallery presentation, I am indebted to the gallery's exhibition designer, Martin Lorigan, along with the remarkable student team—Kaina Bernal, Leonardo Contreras, Kyla McIntosh, Anna Ponomareva, Clark Silva, and Shirley Villalobos; Jiani Zhu, who designed both gallery access and digital collateral materials; and Chen Wang and Sergio Lizarraga, whose advice and expertise shaped the exhibition's graphic aesthetics.

I am profoundly grateful for the partnership of patrons whose generosity ensured that the exhibition was able to reach its full potential. I extend my appreciation for their flexibility and willingness to extend the loan of their cherished objects throughout the pandemic lockdown: Paige and Jeffrey Anthony, the Estate of Patricia Layman Bazelon, Alice Fung and Michael Blatt, Madeleine Grynsztejn and Tom Shapiro, Robert Hirsch and Adele Henderson, Michael Levine, Catherine MacLean and David Yale, the Orange County Museum of Art, Steve and Doni Silver Simons, Lauren Trent, and Susan Zeidler and Leo Frishberg.

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I convey my deepest gratitude to my following CSU Fullerton colleagues who integrated the exhibition and its related programming into their classroom curricula and helped widen its reach to their students: Joe Biel, Rebecca Campbell, Kyung Son Cho, Patricia Drew, Andy Fedak, Linda Kroff, Elizabeth Lohrer Hall, Elisa Mandell, Camila Maroja, Janice Nguyen, Julie Orser, David Plouffe, Maryanna Pomonis, Joanna Roche, Shane Shukis, Christopher Slogar, Deborah Solon, Hiromi Takizawa, and Mateo Tannatt.

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Jennifer Frias
Director/Curator
Nicholas & Lee Begovich Gallery

KIM ABELES: SMOG COLLECTORS, 1987-2020 EXHIBITION CHECKLIST

INTRODUCTION — "FOOTPRINTS OF THE SKY" - EARLY INVESTIGATIONS

- The Smog Catcher (Thirty Days of Smog) II*
1992
Smog (particulate matter) on repurposed acrylic
15" x 13"
Collection of Michael A. Levine

Smog Collector (One Month of Smog)
1987
Smog (particulate matter) on acrylic; Acrylics on paper
15 ½" x 11"
Collection of Madeleine Grynsztejn & Tom Shapiro

Memory Box
1987
Asphalt covered box and title created with spiritual incense;
Thread; Cibachrome of the Mountain Wedge; Naturally dyed
cheesecloth; Soil
13" x 16 ¼ " x 12 ½"
Collection of Steve and Doni Silver Simons

Obstructions to the Wedge
1987
Silver prints showing view toward the Mountain Wedge from
Abeles' fire escape; Zora Neale Hurston quote from Their Eyes
Were Watching God; Wire; Acrylics on wood and paper
45 ½" x 7" x 1 ¾ "

Camera Desiros
1987
Enamel on brass framework; Mosquito netting; Bird feathers
from Abeles' grandfather's racing pigeons
3 ¾ " x 5 ½" x 4 ¼ "

- Instructions for Stride Forward*
2014 recreation of the 1987 artwork
Photograph of Abeles walking along her sculpture, *Pentipede*, to
measure her stride in order to adjust the pedometer she used
during her 16-½ mile pilgrimage to the San Gabriel Mountains;
pedometer with instructions air quality report for the day of the
walk; text.

Mountain Wedge and Pilgrimage to the Wedge
A facsimile of the binder for the project. The 1989 original
is archived at the Center for Art + Environment, Nevada
Museum of Art.

MAPPING AND MARKING

- Smog Map*
2010
Smog (particulate matter) on cellulose
10" x 15"
Edition 3/15; Original edition of 125 *Smog Maps* on cellulose
with acrylics on canvas was commissioned by Deutsche Bank

*Sixty Blocks Square of Los Angeles Horizon (Seven Days
of Smog)*
Winter 1990/91
Smog (particulate matter) on acrylic
5 panels: 16" x 89", 16" x 89", 16" x 67",
16" x 89", 16" x 89"
*Smog Catcher (6 days of smog, 1 day of rain, and 8 weeks
exposed indoors during quarantine)*
2020
Smog (particulate matter) on wood panels that were kept
indoors to collect the particulate coming through the
studio window
15' x 5'

*The Sorcerer, French Pyrenees (Twelve Days of Smog/Two
Days of Smoke from the Los Angeles Uprising)*
1992
Smog (particulate matter) and smoke/ash on repurposed
acrylic
16" x 11 ½"
Collection of Susan Zeidler & Leo Frishberg

- Arial Gallery (Twelve Days of Smog/Two Days
of Smoke from the Los Angeles Uprising)*
1992
Smog (particulate matter) and smoke/ash on
repurposed acrylic
11 ½" x 16"
Collection of Alice Fung & Michael Blatt

Car Parts (Thirty Days of Smog)
1991
Smog (particulate matter) on acrylic;
Photograph of 1910 electric car plant
10 ½" x 11"
Collection of Susan Zeidler & Leo Frishberg

*Deck Chairs on the Titanic (30 days of
smog and ash from the Bobcat Fire)*
September 27 — October 26, 2020
Smog (particulate matter) and smoke/ash on
European Beech, the type of wood used to make
the original deck chairs for the Titanic.
10 ½" x 28"

*Deck Chair on the Titanic (30 days of
smog and ash from the Bobcat Fire)*
September 18 — October 15, 2020
Smog (particulate matter) and smoke/ash
on porcelain plate; Hand-drawn digital print
incorporating three motifs used for the First-,
Second-, and Third-Class dinnerware on
the Titanic.
10 ¼ " diameter

*Engine in One Month of Smog, Smoke and
Ash from the Fourmile Canyon Fire*
2010
Smog (particulate matter) and smoke/ash on porcelain plate
The Fourmile Canyon Fire was a wildfire in Boulder
County, Colorado
11 ½" diameter

- Patricia Layman Bazelon
General Mills Elevator*
Ultrachrome print of the original gelatin silver print (1991)
10" x 11 ½"
Courtesy of the Patricia Layman Bazelon Estate

*Smog Translation of Patricia Layman Bazelon's
General Mills Elevator (Twenty Days of Smog)*
1998
Smog (particulate matter) on repurposed acrylic
10" x 11 ½"
Collection of Lauren Trent

*Patricia Layman Bazelon
Cargill Electric Elevator*
Ultrachrome print of the original gelatin silver print (1991)
10" x 11 ½"
Courtesy of the Patricia Layman Bazelon Estate

*Smog Translation of Patricia Layman Bazelon's
Cargill Electric Elevator (Twenty Days of Smog)*
1998
Smog (particulate matter) on repurposed acrylic
10" x 11 ½"
Collection of Robert Hirsch and Adele Henderson

*Patricia Layman Bazelon
Kellogg Elevator*
Ultrachrome print of the original gelatin silver print (1987)
10" x 11 ½"
Courtesy of the Patricia Layman Bazelon Estate

*Smog Translation of Patricia Layman Bazelon's
Kellogg Elevator (Twenty Days of Smog)*
1998
Smog (particulate matter) on repurposed acrylic
11 ½" x 10"
Collection of Paige and Jeffrey Anthony

DOMESTIC SPACES

Dinner for Two in One Month of Smog

2011
Smog (particulate matter) on porcelain dinnerware and linen
The installation was created for the 2012 exhibition, Swept Away: Dust, Ashes and Dirt in Contemporary Art and Design, organized by William and Mildred Lasdon Chief Curator David McFadden for the Museum of Arts and Design, New York
27 1/2" x 48 1/2" x 38"

Zoë’s Highchair (Forty Days of Smog)

Winter 1990/91
Altered, painted highchair with food and setting made of smog (particulate matter)
45" x 15" x 19"

Air Share (Twenty Days of Smog/ Ten Days of Acid Rain)

Spring 1991
Window scene and factory made of smog (particulate matter) on repurposed acrylic
46 1/2" x 31"

Walden

2018
Smog translation of Thomas W. Nason’s engraving in a modified edition of *Walden* or *Life in the Woods* by Henry David Thoreau; Smog on repurposed acrylic; Acrylics on paper and wood shelf; Baby’s Breath flowers
8" x 6" x 1" (book)

Smog Clock

2019
Smog (particulate matter) on glass; Acrylics on paper; Clock
10" diameter (2)

Smog Mask (Thirty Days of Smog)

Spring 1991
Smog (particulate matter) on acrylic; brass hardware
11" x 7" each
Edition numbers 9/20 and 10/20
Collection of Catherine MacLean and David Yale

Menu in Twenty Days of Smog and Acid Rain

Spring 1992
Smog (particulate matter) on repurposed acrylic
13" x 9" x 2"

Smog Count (Thirty Days of Smog)

Winter 1990/1991
Smog (particulate matter) revealed by removing strips of stencil each day; Artist statement handwritten on cellulose
20" x 23"

Steak Dinner in Twelve Days of Smog

2012
Edition number 6/20
Smog (particulate matter) on porcelain and Ultrachrome print of currency
11 1/2" diameter

Jellyfish in 20 Days of Smog

2014
Smog (particulate matter) kiln-fired onto ceramic plate
11" diameter

THE HUMAN BODY

Digits Smog Count

2009
Smog (particulate matter) on cellulose
9" x 9" each (40 squares)

Winter Clear Days (One Month of Smog)

1990
Smog, wood, and Plexiglas
131/8" x 10 1/4" each (3 in the set)
Gift of the Mark and Hilarie Moore Collection, Orange, California
Collection of Orange County Museum of Art

Human Figure in Thirty Days of Smog (II)

1991
Smog (particulate matter) on acrylic
23" x 17"
Collection of Catherine MacLean & David Yale

Silhouettes in Smog

2009
Smog (particulate matter) on handmade paper made with junk mail is the prototype for a series of 100+ silhouettes of women. The work speaks to the correlation between air pollution, high levels of particulate matter, and health effects ranging from asthma to breast cancer. Globally, 1 in 4 cases of cancers among females is a result of breast cancer. The artwork was made in collaboration with the international curatorial collective, ARTPORT_making waves, exhibiting in Copenhagen during COP15, the 15th session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nation’s Convention on Climate Change.
12 1/2" x 12 1/2" each

POLITICS

Presidential Commemorative Smog Plates

1992
Smog (particulate matter) on porcelain plates
10 1/2" diameter each
William McKinley in 20 Days of Smog
Theodore Roosevelt in 4 Days of Smog
William Taft in 40 Days of Smog
Woodrow Wilson in 8 Days of Smog
Warren Harding in 25 Days of Smog
Calvin Coolidge in 25 Days of Smog
Herbert Hoover in 25 Days of Smog
Franklin Roosevelt in 4 Days of Smog
Harry Truman in 30 Days of Smog
Dwight Eisenhower in 20 Days of Smog
John Kennedy in 14 Days of Smog
Lyndon Johnson in 30 Days of Smog
Richard Nixon in 20 Days of Smog
Gerald Ford in 14 Days of Smog
James Carter in 8 Days of Smog
Ronald Reagan in 40 Days of Smog
George HW Bush in 40 Days of Smog

World Leaders in Smog

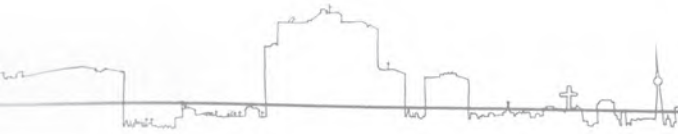
2019
Smog (particulate matter) on porcelain plates
10 1/2" diameter each
Prime Minister of the United Kingdom Theresa May (2016-19)
Placed on a London rooftop to collect smog
President of France Emmanuel Macron (2017-)
Placed on a Paris rooftop to collect smog
Placed on a Paris suburb rooftop to collect smog
Federal Chancellor of Germany Angela Merkel (2005-)
Placed on a Berlin rooftop to collect smog
Prime Minister of India Narendra Modi (2014-)
Placed on a Los Angeles rooftop to collect smog
President of Russia Vladimir Putin (2012-)
Placed on a Moscow rooftop to collect smog
President of Brazil Dilma Rousseff (2011-2016)
Placed on a Los Angeles rooftop to collect smog
Prime Minister of Canada Justin Trudeau (2015-)
Placed on a Los Angeles rooftop to collect smog
President of the United States Donald Trump (2017- 2021)
Placed on a Los Angeles rooftop to collect smog
President of the People’s Republic of China Xi Jinping (2013-)
Placed on a Los Angeles rooftop to collect smog
President of South Africa Jacob Zuma (2009-2018)
Placed on a Los Angeles rooftop to collect smog

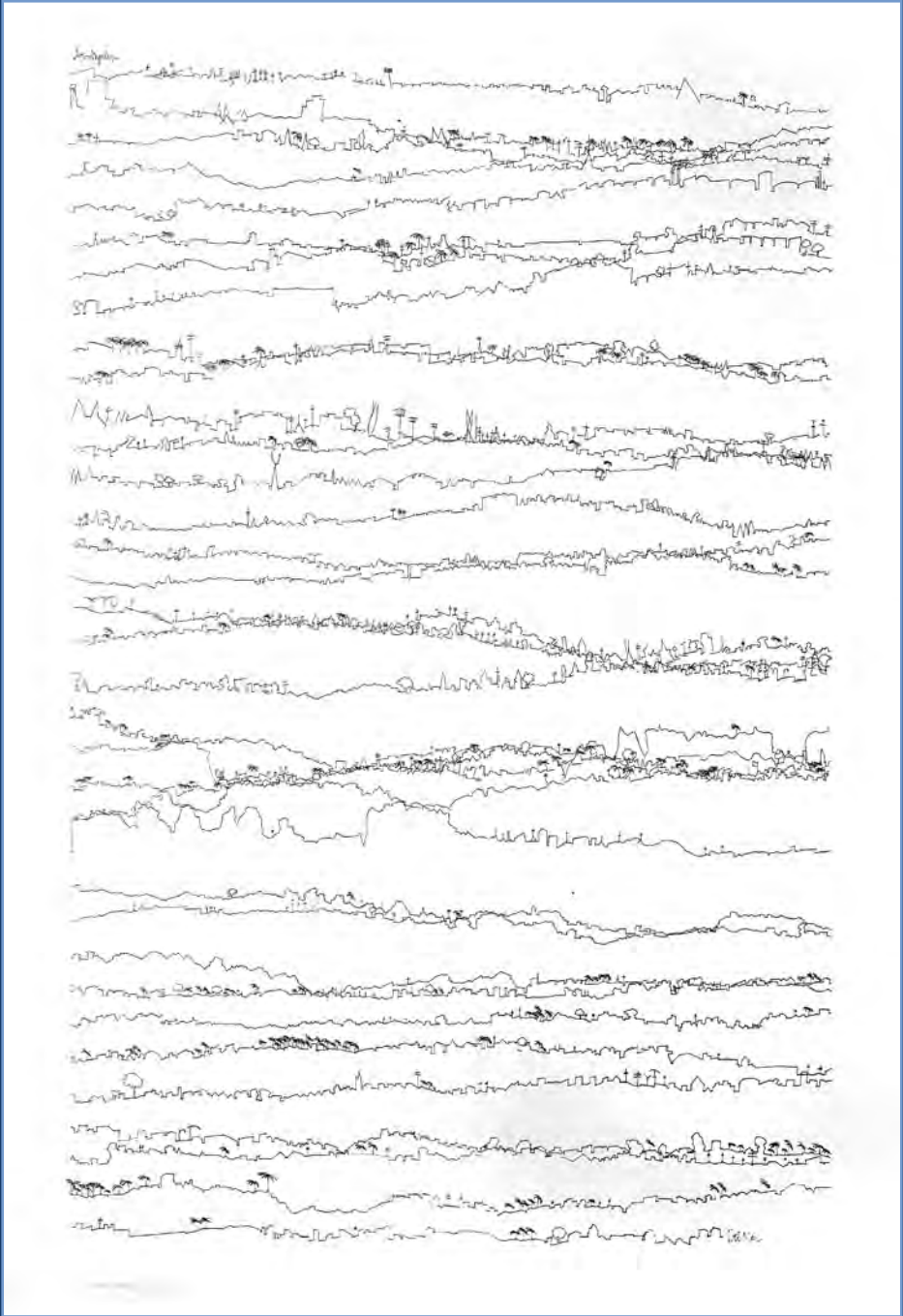
Obama in 9 Days of Smog and McCain in 18 Days of Smog

2008
Smog (particulate matter) on repurposed acrylic
10" x 8 1/2 " each
Created in collaboration with Melissa Lafsky for *Discover Magazine*

Presidential Seal in Twenty Days of Smog

1992
Smog (particulate matter) on porcelain plate with ribbon
24" x 9 1/2 "





A Mile a Minute (LA to Del Mar as Seen from a Moving Train), 1986
Ink on paper
67" x 47"
Private collection
The original diptych ink drawing is in the Collection of
Carolyn Campagna Kleefeld Contemporary Art Museum of
California State University, Long Beach.
Gift of the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters/
Hassam and Speicher Purchase Fund

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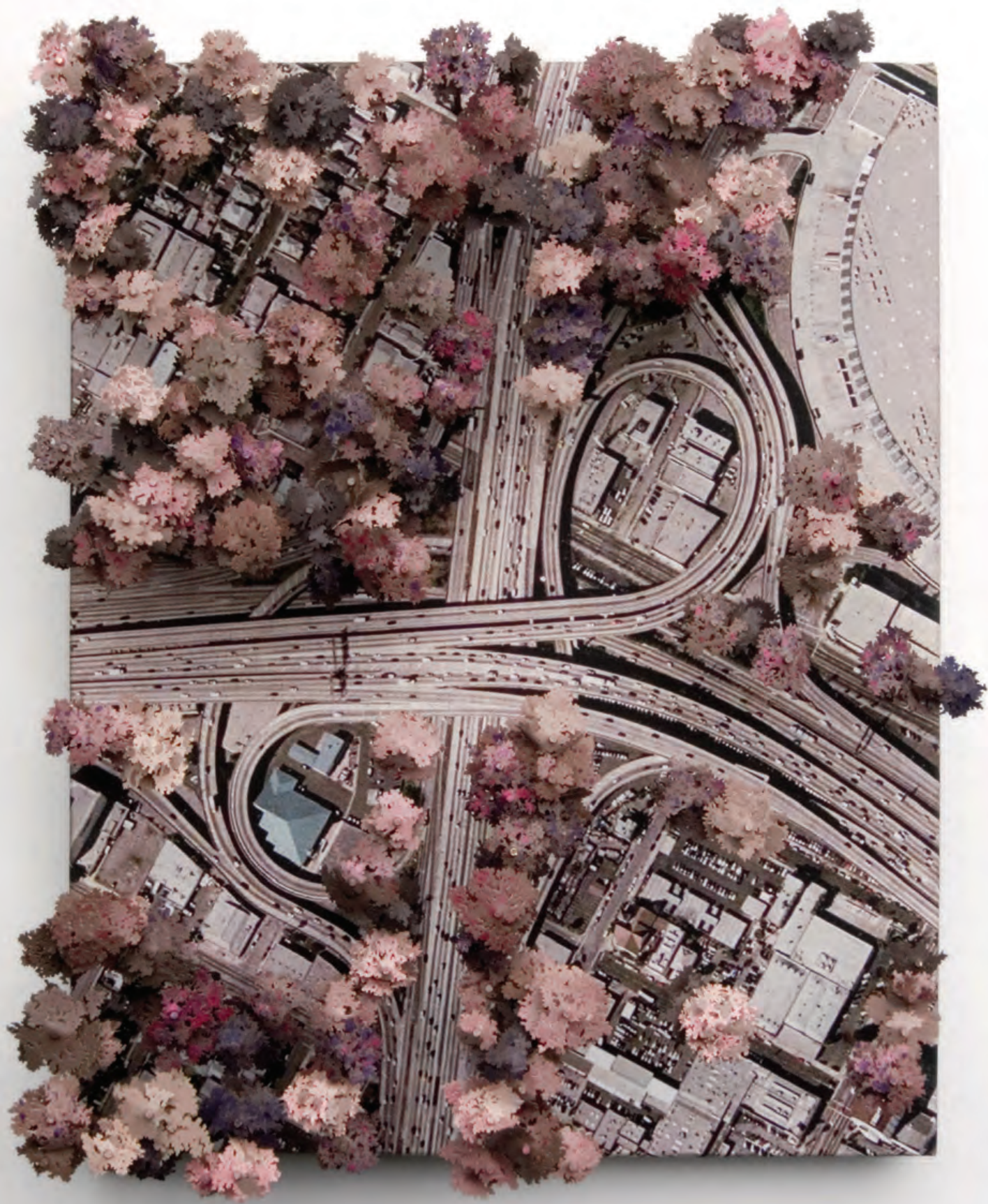
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Next Page:
Concrete Blanket, 2008
Edition of 8
Archival ultrachrome print and model trees
10" x 8" x 3"
Private Collections.







Artist Kim Abeles is known for her innovative method of producing images on various surfaces made solely by particulate matter from air pollution. *Kim Abeles: Smog Collectors, 1987-2020*, presented at CSU Fullerton's Nicholas and Lee Begovich Gallery, is a survey of her most renowned body of work related to the environmental impact caused by airborne detritus. It examines a range of scientific data collected by the artist and its unexpected visual presentation that prompts viewers to reconsider the air we breathe.



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