

Photography and sculpture maintain a curiously codependent existence in contemporary art and recent artists have increasingly focused their efforts on the interrelationship between these two expressive formats. While the former provides an illusion of space and objecthood within a two-dimensional plane, sculpture asserts itself materialistically in the real, lived space of the viewer. Indeed, the photograph's documentary function is often utilized to record the existence of more ephemeral sculptural presentations. Alex Slade's work since the early 1990s has engaged both photography and sculpture to identify and examine the subtle systems that inform both our man-made and natural surroundings. In doing so, he creates a heightened awareness of our relationship to various environments and how those environments have been and continue to be transformed by human intervention. Slade's work also attentively creates a quiet yet intensive dialogue between the different media that comprise his projects, emphasizing the sculptural nature of the forms and structures that he photographs, as well as the imagistic qualities of the materials he assembles within a space.

His "Fischerinsel" project (1999-2000), for example, featured various interior and exterior views of the eponymous socialist housing project in Berlin. Moving between the seven towers that comprise the building development, Slade created images that are simultaneously evocative and dispassionate, personally expressive in their use of shadows and light, yet also detached in their subjugation to an overall documentary project. The accompanying sculptures underscore this tension between the subjective and the objective, establishing themselves first as formal and physical extensions of an abstracted idea in space, while ultimately revealing their forms to have been determined by the routes that Slade took in documenting the Fischerinsel buildings. One's appreciation of the sculpture's elegant metal lines interrupted by panels of colour (inspired by Ellsworth Kelly's *Sculpture for a Large Wall* [1957]) is qualified by their articulation of the history of the project's very creation. Similarly, an emotional response to the various moods conveyed by the play of light or cloud formations in the photographs is frustrated by their coldly straightforward formality.

A more recent body of work, titled *Wandering Through the Inland Empire* (2005), chronicles the increasing development of various properties in Southern California. Slade's project comprises numerous views of homes in the process of being constructed in relationship to a landscape that still boasts scenic and even picturesque natural formations despite the steady intrusion of power lines, telephone poles, cables and highways. Though the images are informed by an extensive history of landscape painting and photography, their presentation as a whole subsumes their more expressive properties to a categorical sense of purpose. This dichotomy is represented materially in the sculpture that accompanies the photographs—an object that reproduces the "map" of Slade's wanderings through the terrain of the new developments, including his detours and sidetracks that evoke an errant "humanity" within the structure of the grid.—Dominic Molon



- [1] **Shady Trails Planned Community, Lytle Creek Rd, Fontana, CA**, from the series "Inland Empire", 2005, C-print, 91.4 x 114.3 cm, 36 x 45 inches
- [2] **The Lake at the Colonies, Campus Dr, Upland, CA**, from the series "Inland Empire", 2005, C-print, 121.9 x 152.4 cm, 48 x 60 inches, collection Chapman University, Orange
- [3] **Summit High School, Lytle Creek Rd, Fontana, CA**, from the series "Inland Empire", 2005, C-print, 101.6 x 127 cm, 40 x 50 inches

