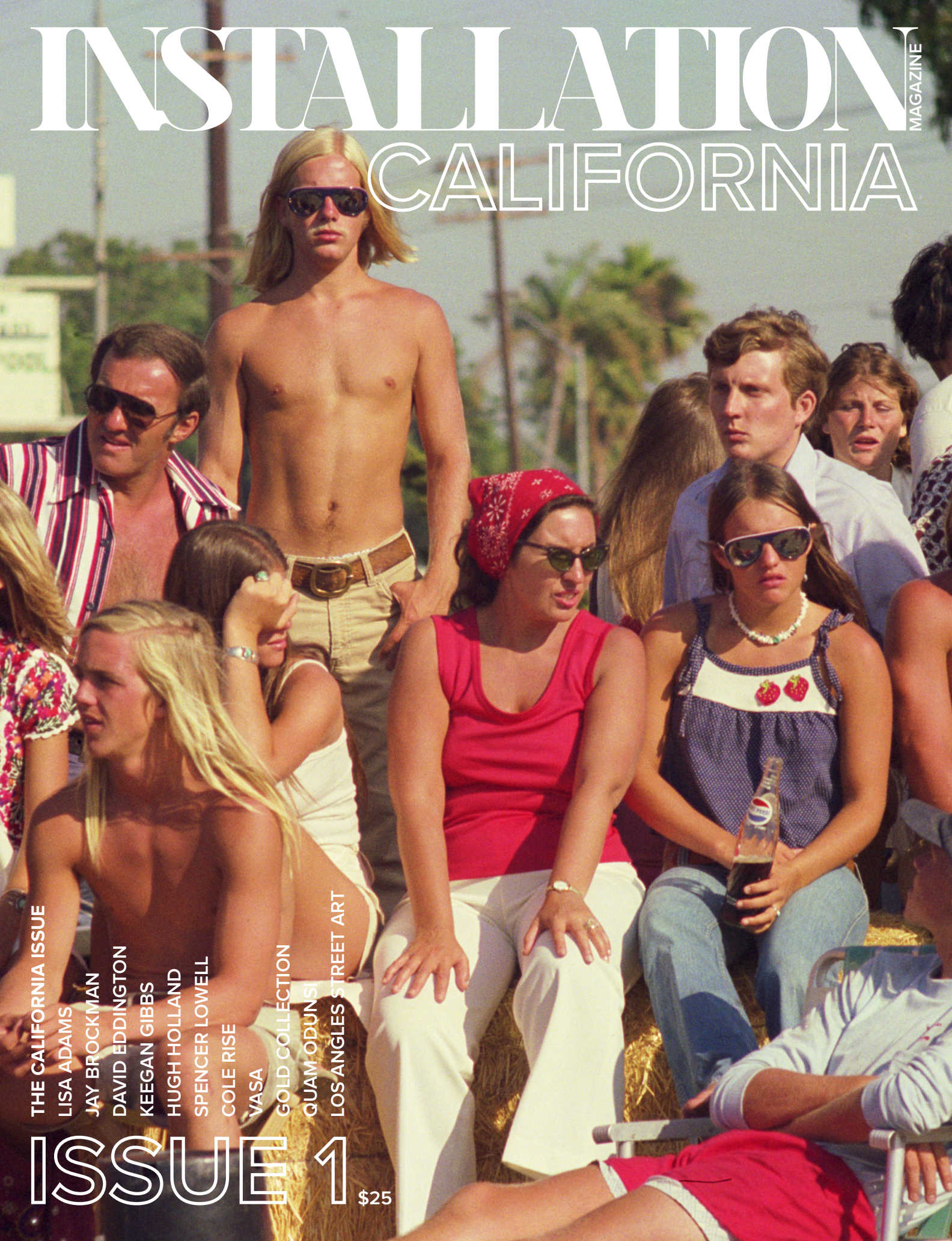


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DAVID EDDING TON

TAKE ME TO THE RIVER



David Eddington has always been fascinated by the intersection of the natural and industrial world. The moment where the concrete from the urban space ends and the river begins. The amalgamated contents of the river are evidence of this juxtaposition, as the river carries debris from the industrial world while collecting artifacts of nature that has managed to survive. Whether it is the Thames of his youth, the Amstel, the Mississippi or LA river, Eddington has found solace and inspiration in these spaces.

The urban structure of Los Angeles illicit curiosity, particularly the series of twenty-seven bridges that run throughout Los Angeles connecting the San Fernando Valley to Long Beach. Since their construction in 1909 the bridges and the LA River that runs beneath it like a labyrinth offers solace to artists like David Eddington, who frequently traverses along the water's edge and finds inspiration in the architecture and vantage point that it provides. While the bridges consume miles of the cityscape they require a distinct sense of navigation in order to travel over and wander beneath. Curiosity sent the artist to the river and now he has obtained a means to navigate through it. His work becomes a portal into a world that is right under our nose, but we never knew existed. The infrastructure runs like a concrete artery in the urban landscape, fostering a curious wildlife and providing shelter to those who seek refuge and dwell beneath. The concrete not seen from the streets is tagged with an intricate graffiti, worn down by the erosion of time, and in many instances reads like a palimpsest.

One of Eddington's paintings titled *Tecun Uman* presents a fortress of support beams unseen from the street. By using a metal squeegee, the paint is applied and then scraped off, resulting in a texture that we more frequently encounter on decaying buildings than in paintings. Eddington manages to create a sense of decay on the canvas, inviting the viewer to peel back layers of paint and uncover symbols and suggestions of faces. The figures appear from the shadows that cast a web of possibilities- the outline of a visage that looks eerily like George Washington or may be an Indian chief and the presence of a skull on a studded beam harkens to religious infused symbols. If the bridge is the meeting place of a new generation, then the suggestion of a skull on deconsecrated ground signals that the river is the former site of an antiquated religion and ideals. Or perhaps the motif of the skull was a trap door, a means to invite the viewer into the plane without imbuing the image with its original meaning.

"Talking about recycling and bringing out redundant material from aviation bone yards. I suppose the skull is the archetypal redundant object. I do see it

"Unreal City, under the brown fog of a winter dawn, a crowd flowed over London Bridge, so many, I had not thought death had undone so many. Sighs, short and infrequent, were exhaled, and each man fixed his eyes before his feet."

T.S. Eliot / "The Waste Land"



“The idea that machinery can be for good or evil, I think I’m very much aware of that. I suppose I’m not very good at choosing my fights and I tend to get very upset generally about injustice and aggression and how we’ve abused technology to actually use as a destructive tool.”



as a skull, but it wasn’t designed as a skull. I try not to tell stories with my paintings.”

While there is a distinction between “us” and “them” or more adequately, that which is deemed “other,” Eddington, a London native who has resided in Los Angeles for the past ten years, identifies with the people below the bridge, as he expresses to feeling like an outsider. “Maybe it’s my origins but I tend to root for the underdog and I identify with these people,” he admits. “I feel sorry for them and wonder how I can help and try to understand what’s going on because I’m not enamored by the way society has gone, so I sympathize.” The subject of the LA river has captured Eddington’s imagination and his large-scale “LA River” painting series present vantage points that capture the terrain beneath the bridges, peering up at a sliver of blue sky breaking through the concrete maze overhead, as well as studies of the bridges from afar as if assuming the perspective of a motorist or passerby.

“I don’t necessarily feel that I belong anywhere in particular. Wherever I am, I try to make the most of it, finding my ideas close to my back door. I think I went down to the LA River because it was local and seemed like a haven, something different



from the rest of Los Angeles. While down there, walking where the water should be, in the concrete banks there are overflow pipes about a meter across and this rough looking guy pokes his head out of one and says ‘What do you want?’ and there was this blonde woman underneath his arm. He was just pushing her back with the flat of his hand further down the pipe. That was just bizarre. It often is there.”

The surfaces of the paintings are paradoxical in that many of the objects seem real enough to reach out and touch, while they are unmistakably rendered in a flat painting style. Using a camera lucida, Eddington observes the natural world through a prism, which provides a veil of separation between Eddington and the subject.

“The image is so faint and so boring and kind of clumsy and it makes me hack it out drawing more mechanically and directly. Straight away it makes me get in touch with the fact that I’m taking this object for a walk across the page, it makes me very conscious of the actual act of doing it, the struggle stops me from drawing so freely. In a way it looks more photographic and recognizable because I had used this mechanical device to transcribe into the paper. I think that’s why I use this little



Eddington manages to create a sense of decay on the canvas, inviting the viewer to peel back layers of paint and uncover symbols and suggestions of different interpretations.

Titles of work in order of appearance:

Tecun Uman, metallic acrylic on cotton duck, 45x50”, 2009 (detail)

Eddington working in his studio by Field Sells

Urban River, metallic acrylic on linen, 66x72”, 2006

In studio, *Theatre*, metallic acrylic on canvas, 66x72”, 2006

Carbonprop, metallic acrylic on perforated stainless steel, 23x23”, 2010



Holistic City, acrylic and spray paint on cotton duck. 108x38", 2011

machine. It keeps me in touch with the process and since my work is very process [driven] anyway, that's the way I want it to be."

In *Wasteland*, Eddington introduces a motif, which he refers to as the "concrete basilica," a Roman architectural facade with strong lines, recessed pillars, spiraling columns and an ambiguous seal at the top. The structure nearly levitates off the arched supports of the bridge below as if it is an illusion, fragile enough to disappear and become consumed in the gray foreboding atmosphere. The basilica may be a fleeting notion, an illusive tool that the artist uses to affirm his paintings as existing on a two-dimensional surface. Perhaps the injection of the basilica is a means by which he opens a small window for his viewers to contemplate the two-dimensional surface. The modern day basilica for Eddington is the River, a destination for congregating bodies and ideas. While Eddington is suspicious of assigning narratives to his work, as he claims that he does "not trust answers very much, I prefer questions to answers."

Wasteland does draw a beautiful parallel to T.S. Eliot's poem of the same name where "the brown fog of a winter dawn," feels an adequate description of the environ presented in the painting as it consumes the river, the bridge, and the concrete basilica in a transient state. The cargo, which has amassed and strewn about the foreground, suggests that basilica is in a state of transition and is moving to a new and undetermined location and harkens to the next line in Eliot's poem, "I had not thought death had undone so many." The sharp lines reminiscent of a tail of an aircraft block the remaining view of the bridge and its presence signals Eddington's next interest, machinery.

"The idea that machinery can be for good or evil, I think I'm very much aware of that. I suppose I'm not very good at choosing my fights and I tend to get very upset generally about injustice and aggression and how we've abused technology to actually use as a destructive tool."

Several propellers appear in Eddington's studio space and it feels more appropriate to refer to them as artifacts rather than motors, as they are removed from their function of propelling objects in a literal sense, but do not propel the action on the canvas. Their appearance changes in each canvas of the "Silver Century" series, as the machinery seems less menacing at times with its rounded head and docile propellers, while it appears demonstrative and aggressive in other renderings with sharper lines as if pummeling through space. In either instance however there is great attention to surface detail as each propeller conveys the weight of steel with a delicate lightness of being. The paintings are charged with the similar kinetic fury of the futurists and in the instance of his "Water & Power" series, which are rendered on found stainless steel panels, machinery is the vehicle, which literally activates the work.

"I'm a bit hesitant to explain my work too much, because people bring their own baggage, or their own ideas to it, which is probably a more polite way of saying it, and I do like the thought that we all see differently.



Wasteland, metallic acrylic on cotton duck, 45x50", 2008

It would be very presumptuous of me to attempt to make them see it the way I wanted when the work was made. I try to think of ways of getting the viewer to comprehend what I was about, without trying to instill any kind of preconception in them."

Whether the works are perforated stainless steel panels with computer chip inspired grids inserted onto their surface, or large-scale paintings on Belgian linen, the narrative in David Eddington's practice remains constant and unwavering- the debacle of nature being overtaken by technology, reconciling the power and mistrust of machinery, and the bridges, which create lifelines throughout Los Angeles. With the new dialogue that he inspires, the artist refrains from resolving the curiosities that his work arouses, as he is more suited for an art practice driven by questions rather than answers.