

KAREN
LEBERGOTT



Through my paintings, I seek to re-contextualize and question the notions of fact-based historical events and immutable cultural identity. Histories provide the backbone for my work, but recreating history is often problematic as well as futile. Memory and fact are slippery concepts that continually evolve; my paintings exemplify the transitive nature of memory and factual information. The surface may be reworked and is often covered over many times, visually mimicking the effort to capture memory, efforts marked through indecision, elision and fragmentation.

My work is also concerned with the layering of cultures, populations and the languages they use. Through mapping conventions in the layers of my paintings

and work on paper, I explore the impact of political and national boundaries on the social structures of cultures throughout the world using land(scape) to define a fixed idea of national identity. Ideas of nations can no more be bound by borders than language can fix meaning. The idea of nationhood is in constant flux. Languages die and are replaced by others just as borders are destroyed and redrawn. These concepts are articulated in part in all the work that is built layer upon layer. Previously, I have used obscure or obsolete languages such as Braille and Morse code in order to draw attention to the failure of language as a method of fixing meaning. I reference the constantly changing landscape – in effect continual destruction and regeneration – to describe the eradication and redefinition of cultures that are created through the surface construction of my paintings. The artifice creating these ideas is central to my paintings, which ask us to consider who and what forms the basis for historical memory and declare that movement through space and time defines both imagined and recreated historical place.

Through working in a wide variety of different locales, I try to understand historical perspective not only through research but also through interaction with those who currently live there, as well as with the echoes of past generations. The locations, the interaction with both those who are native to an area and those who have come later, inform my sense of place and reevaluation of memory.

My current work continues to use the map as a departure point, and explores my interest in the means of measuring and presenting -what we call - information.

The character of the paper constructions summons ideas of fragility, intangibility and instability. Both paintings and paper work evoke, through un-mapping, re-mapping and re-presenting, the ideas of either resistance or destruction and the displacement of groups of people as historical themes thus giving a tangible presence to uncertainty.

Karen Lebergott
2011



Loss, 2012. 54"x 47", oil on canvas



Alchemy, 2012. 63" x 48", oil on canvas



Geography, 2012. 39"x 33", oil on canvas



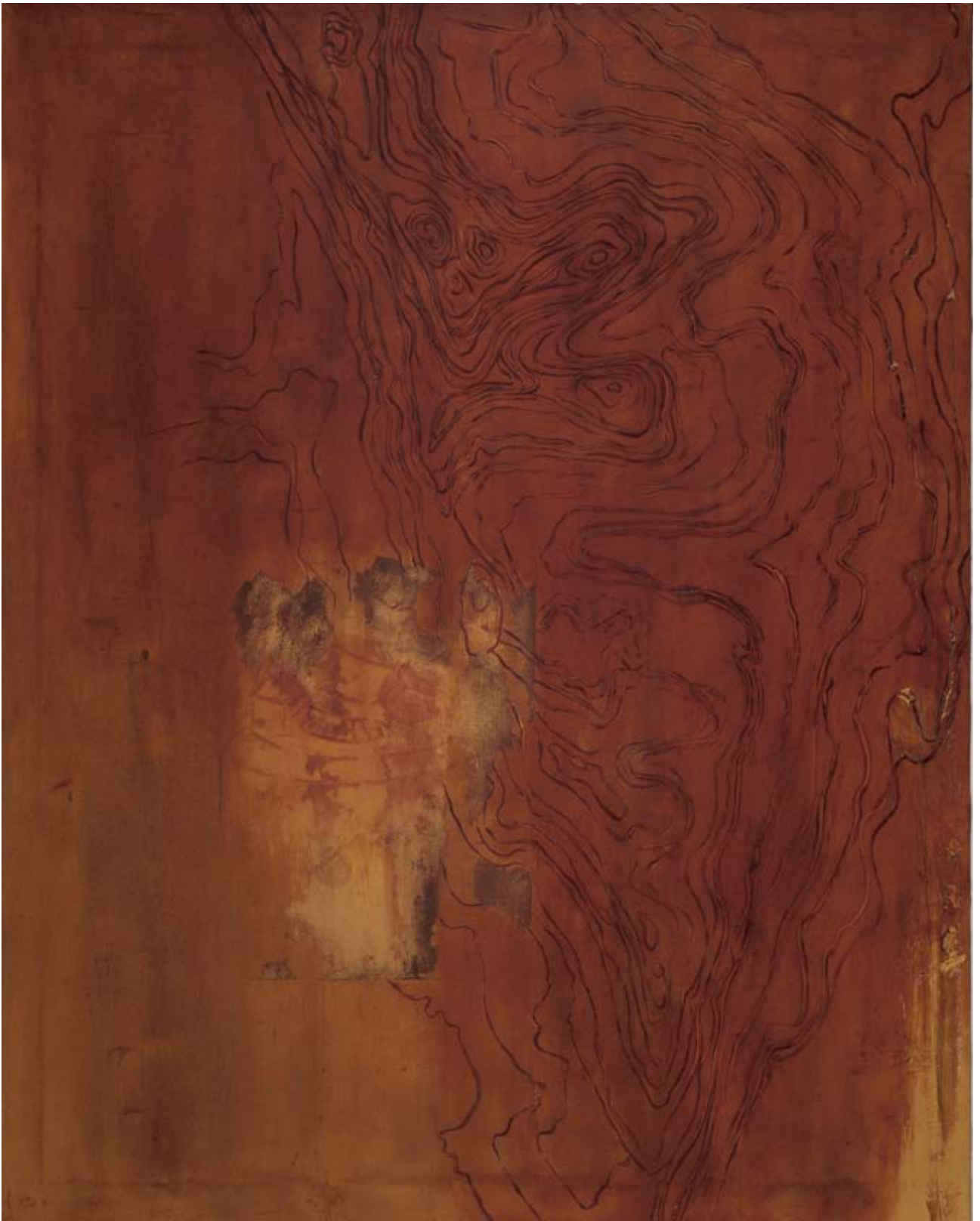
Pick-up Sticks, 2011. 62,5" x 47" oil on canvas



Jinang 2, 2011. 35"x 43", oil on canvas



Deposit, 2012. 58.5" x 47", oil on canvas



Hakka House 2, 2011. 31"x 34", oil on canvas



Hakka House, 2011. 38" x 31", oil on canvas



Mountain, 2007. 63" x 47", oil on canvas



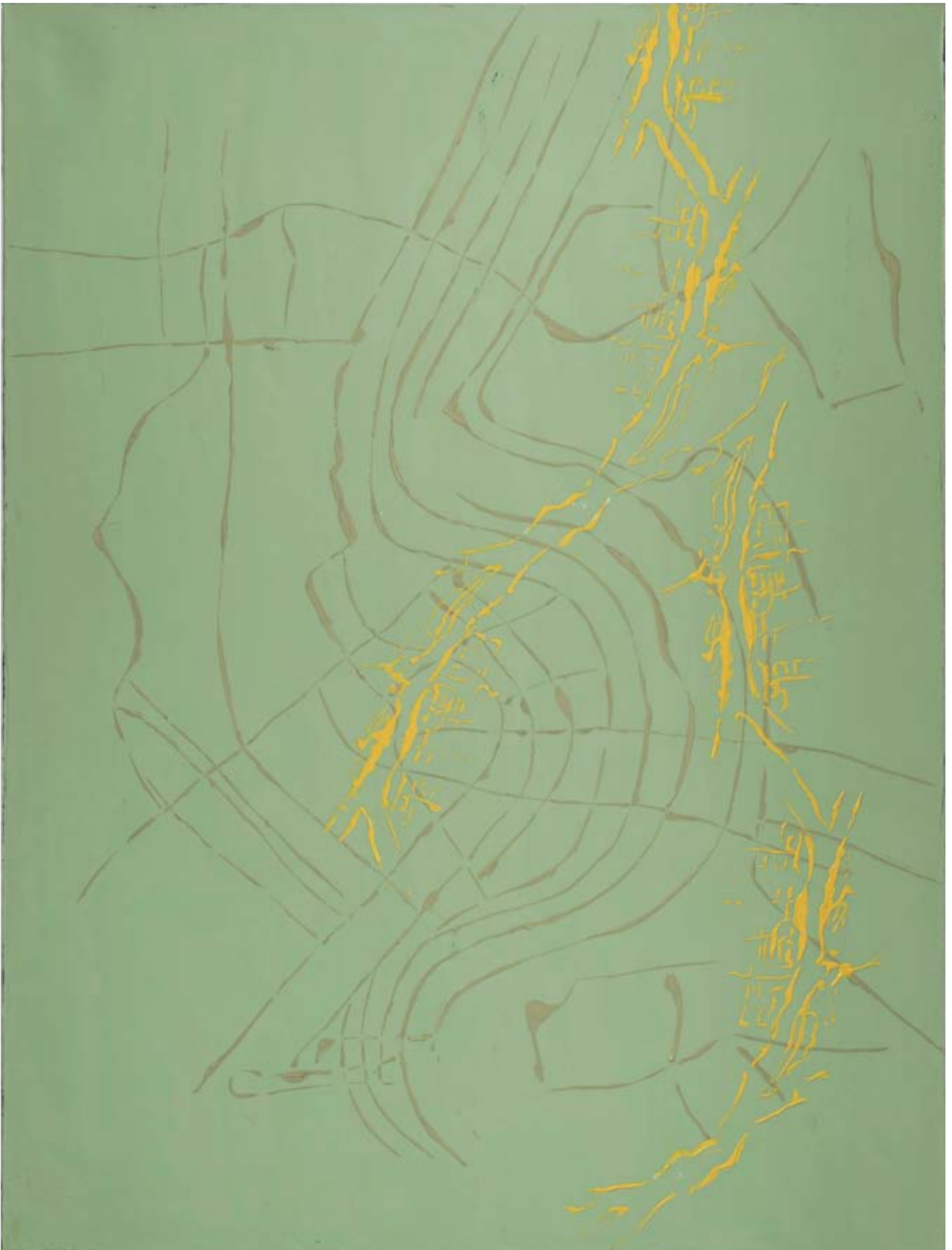
Incident, 2008. 41"x 33", oil on canvas



Change of Sea, 2010. 39" x 50", oil on canvas



N'Orleans, 2010. 62"x 47", oil on canvas



Footprint, 2010. 62" x 47", oil on canvas



Where Have all the Bees Gone, 2009. 27,5 " x 23,5", oil on linen



Royal Blue, 2009. 39 1/4" x 31 1/4", oil on linen



Towering, 2009. 11" x 13", photograph



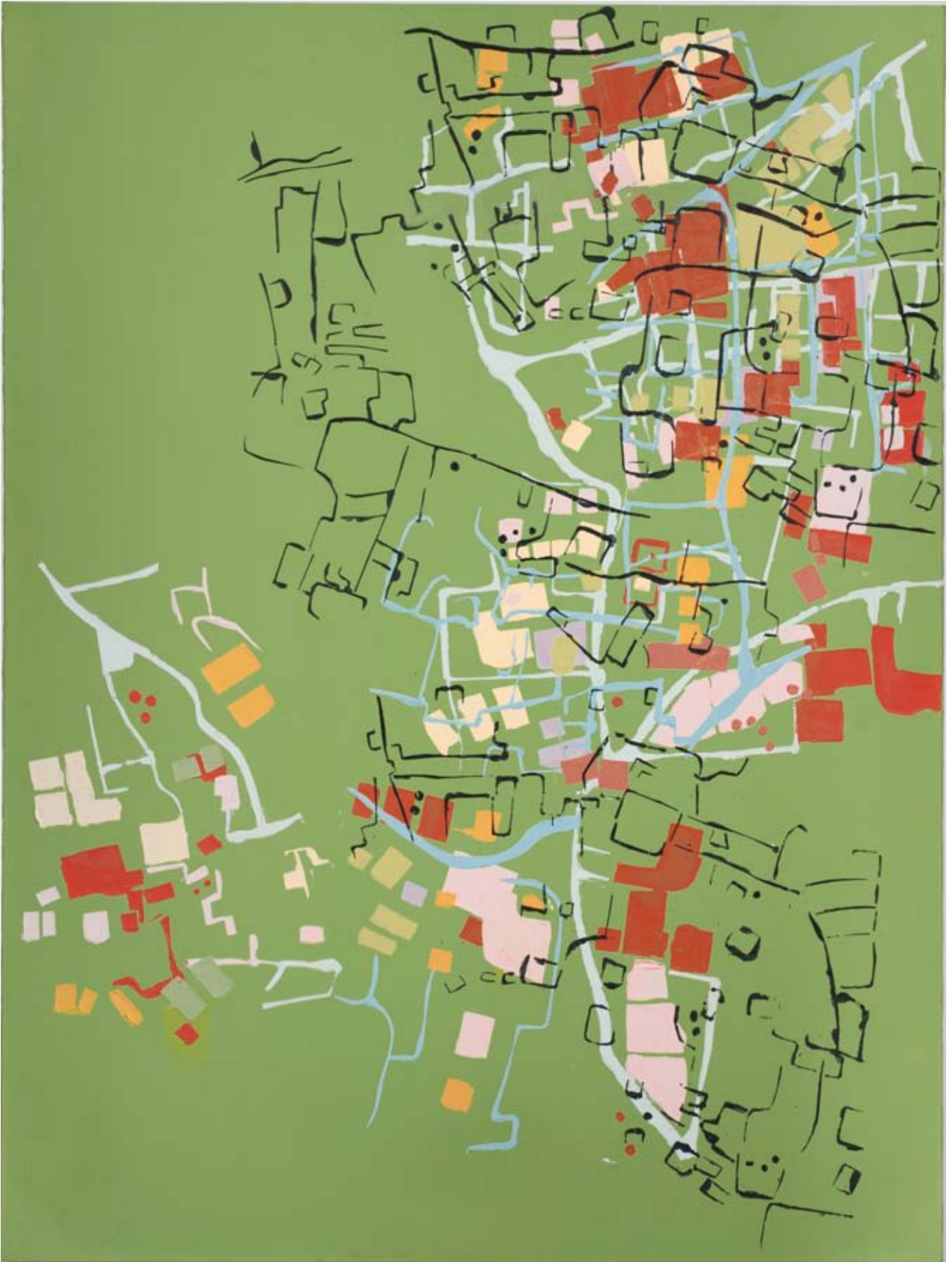
Water Rights, 2012. 96" x 72", mixed media on paper



Chinese funnel, 2008. 39" x 31", oil on canvas



East meets West, 2008. 50" x 30,5", mixed media on paper



Shanghai, 2008. 63" x 47", oil on canvas

“Difficult Pleasures: The Art Of Karen Lebergott”

Karen Lebergott’s art takes on difficulty as a theme: conditions that defy easy resolution, that demand we accept their complexity, their intractability, the limitations on our capacities to understand or affect them.

She is drawn also to difficult subjects.

It was with this sensibility that Lebergott encountered Berlin. In 2003, she spent four months as Artist in Residence at the Karl Hofer Gesellschaft, living and working in a former industrial sector of East Berlin. Since then she has returned to Berlin many times. For an artist attuned to difficulty, finding Berlin was a kind of spiritual homecoming. Her paintings from that year worry over the patterns created by the built environment of Berlin, layer superimposed upon layer, past, present, and speculated. The massive programs of replanning and rebuilding that are a constant part of the experience of Berlin in the early twenty-first century recall earlier spates of building, both actual and fantasized. projects for large-scale urban renewal like the ghostly shapes that emerge through Lebergott’s painterly techniques of scraping, layering, and seeping.

In this famously gray city, however, Lebergott’s paintings burst into color – not, to be sure, either quickly or easily. But the paintings that resulted from later trips to Berlin pulse with uneasy combinations of institutional greens and yellows [Bind or Yellow Go] that suggest the tired walls of bureaucratic offices where pointless, even sinister, maps may or may not continue to carry any significant meaning for the present day. Paintings based on the map of Berlin’s subway system combine a spidery grace with the references to the city’s natural site amid the rivulets and islands where the Havel and Spree rivers converge.

Others of Lebergott’s recent paintings return to archeology, tracing the outlines of vanished structures, both in Berlin and Pompeii, where she traveled from Germany. Often the outlines of foundations seem strewn across an consistent ground like the discarded cut-outs left from some inscrutable model-building project. As a record of coherent human activity, they are simply too difficult to piece together. In the paintings of 2005 on this theme the shapes cohere more obviously into architectural plans, although the purposes of these vanished neighborhoods and structures remains mysterious. This suggestion of Berlin’s difficult history is sustained in recent works [Untitled painting and Failure to Present the Absolute] that integrate strips of stenciled pattern taken from the wall-paper of an abandoned basement dwelling Lebergott discovered in a building where she rented a studio. Fading in and out against colored backgrounds through which other systems of visual information seem to be seeping, these profoundly unheimlich (“un-homey,” but also Freud’s term translated as “uncanny” in English) domestic elements recall strings of obsolete language. “If these walls could talk...” is almost a cliché when visitors confront the history of death and displacement enacted in twentieth-century Berlin. The unanswerability of such questions, perhaps the incommensurability of any sign system with the desire for communication on that level, co-exists in these paintings with the placid decorative banality of the



Chinese Mountain, 2008. 37" x 29,5", oil on canvas

motifs, the stubborn optimism implied by the act of wall-papering and stenciling in a dark basement apartment, the daily routines of house-keeping now rendered futile by the march of time. These are not easy subjects, but there is a rich balance here of the human and the inhuman, the daily and timeless.

Gradually, Lebergott's paintings came to reflect the characteristics of contemporary Berlin. It is a city full of difficulties – confronting both its difficult past and the difficulties of competing for pre-eminence in the present and future. But this confrontation with difficulty has given Berlin the most significant recent works of public art of this century and made the city, arguably, the world's capital for innovative new art. Lebergott's work is very much engaged in the challenges and pleasures of its context.

In more recent work, Lebergott – without leaving painting behind – has delved into the material history of Berlin. One series of work focuses on a diary that she found in a Berlin flea market. Written in 1932 by a mother to her newborn son, the diary is striking for us now because it makes no reference to the war. Instead the author, inspired by a trip to the Dolomites during her pregnancy, records her aspirations for – and to – her son. She hopes that he will become a “fine and liberal man.” Lebergott responded to this artifact with a complex installation that juxtaposes a series of forty drawings of the Dolomites executed in gouache on the kind of carbon paper – now obsolete – that once enabled typists to produce multiple copies. The delicacy of the drawings and their actual movement on the wall evokes the shifting qualities of memory standing in contrast to the idea of the enduring mountains. A second component of this piece juxtaposes two DVDs: in one an older woman, seated before a ticking grandfather clock reads part of the diary in German; in the second a boy sits before the same clock reading a translation of a portion of the diary into English. Again contrast and ambiguity are the themes. Is the reading boy the grandson of the reading woman? Would the writing mother see this bilingual modern German youth as becoming the kind of “fine man” she envisioned?

Karen Lebergott's paintings and drawings explore ideas of maps that record both the layout of the land and the variety of human interventions that have marked and scored it, Lebergott's works layer form and color as a record of painterly and aesthetic decision-making that are correlatives to the building and rebuilding of cities such as Berlin. Painterly processes are like history and politics, accenting, obscuring and reinventing the past and present. For Lebergott the production of a painting and its resultant surface effect is not only sufficient to address complex intellectual issues, but also more evocative as an investigation into urban space, memory, myth and time.

The situations Lebergott composes on her canvases involve the viewer in a difficult struggle for meaning -which is rather beautiful.





LETTERS

MADAME DE SÉVIGNÉ.

LETTRE DCLXXIII.

MADAME DE SÉVIGNÉ. 33

LETTERS

LETTRE DCLXXVII.

MADAME DE SÉVIGNÉ.

DE MADAME DE SÉVIGNÉ.

LETTERS

LETTERS



Disruption, 2008. Width 60" - length variable, mixed media on paper



EXHIBITIONS

- 2012 "Ozmosis" at the "Rundgang", Spinnerei, Leipzig, Germany
"Identity Crisis", Gallery 55, Leipzig, Germany
- 2011 "Absolute Location" Gallerie Lichtpunkt, Munich, Germany
"Ten Year Survey" travelled to Earlham College, Richmond, Indiana
- 2010 "The Last Ten Years" – Solo Exhibition - paintings and works on paper,
Lawrence University, Appleton, Wi., travelled to the Sonnenschein Gallery,
Lake Forest, IL. (2011 – Earlham College- "Ten Year Survey")
"Cities in Flux", whiteconcepts, Berlin, Germany
"Cartes du Paysages", Journal – Universite de Paris, Paris, France.
- 2008 Solo Exhibition "In-Visible Cities", painting and works on paper,
Rowland Contemporary, Chicago, IL.
"Group V and guests", Kunstsalon, Berlin, Germany
"re-Construction of Time", paintings, drawings and video installation -
Karen Lebergott
J. Seinfled, V. Witte -Art Mbassy Galerie, Berlin, Germany
Solo Exhibition "Magic Mountain", drawing/video installation Audible Gallery,
Experimental Sound Studio, Chicago, IL.
"Here, There and Everywhere" Cultural Center, Chicago, IL.
- 2006 "Location Uncertain – Berlin/Chicago" NIU Museum, DeKalb, IL
"Travel Documents," A+D Gallery, Columbia College, Chicago, IL
"Refugien", Kulturamt, Berlin, Germany
group exhibition Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Berlin, Germany
- 2005 "Chicago/Berlin Exchange," Galerie Art Mbassy, Berlin, Germany
"Correlations," Kunstverein Ingan, Berlin, Germany
group exhibition – German Embassy, Rome, Italy
Recent drawings, two-person exhibit, Gallery Stella A, Berlin, Germany
- 2004 "Recent Work From Berlin" Solo Exhibition Sonnenschein Gallery, Lake Forest IL
- 2003 "The Temporaries," two-person exhibit, Galerie der Karl Hofer Gesellschaft,
Berlin, Germany
- 2001 "Property 1990-2001," eleven year survey, Solo Exhibition, Eleventh Street
Gallery, Columbia College, Chicago, IL
Solo Exhibition, St. James Cavalier Art Centre, Valletta, Malta
"CAA Gallery Artists," Jan Cicero Gallery, Chicago, IL
- 2000 Solo Exhibition, New York Law School Gallery, New York, NY
Solo Exhibition, The Chicago Cultural Center, Chicago, IL
"Blink," Northern Illinois University Gallery, Chicago, IL
"Out of Line," The Chicago Cultural Center, Chicago, IL
"New Work by Gallery Artists," Jan Cicero Gallery, Chicago, IL
- 1999 "Sixth Annual Bookmarks Exhibition for Whitewalls," Northern Illinois
University Art Gallery, Chicago, IL
"Suite," Inn of Chicago, Chicago, IL
"Faculty Exhibition," Lake Forest College, Lake Forest, IL
Summer Exhibition, Jan Cicero Gallery, Chicago, IL
"Just Good Art," Hyde Park Art Center, Chicago, IL
Fall Group Exhibition, Jan Cicero Gallery, Chicago, IL
- 1998 Solo Exhibition, "Maps Plans Names," Reicher Gallery, Barat College,
Lake Forest, IL
"Painting in Chicago Now," Eleventh St. Gallery, Columbia College, Chicago, IL
"Just Good Art," Hyde Park Art Center, Chicago, IL
"Fifth Annual Bookmarks Exhibition and Auction" for Whitewalls, Northern
Illinois University Art Gallery, Chicago, IL
"Link," Jan Cicero Gallery, Chicago, IL
- 1997 Solo Exhibition, Jan Cicero Gallery, Chicago, IL

- Winter Exhibition, Jan Cicero Gallery, Chicago, IL
 "Addendum," Northern Illinois University, Chicago, IL
 "Fourth Annual Bookmarks Exhibition and Auction" for Whitewalls, Northern Illinois University Art Gallery, Chicago, IL
 "Fifteenth Annual Exhibition and Auction," N.A.M.E. Gallery, Chicago, IL
 Summer Exhibition, Jan Cicero Gallery, Chicago, IL
 "Just Good Art," Hyde Park Art Center, Chicago, IL
 1996 "Chicago School 1945-1996," Jan Cicero Gallery, Chicago, IL
 "Drawing In Chicago Now," Eleventh St. Gallery, Columbia College, Chicago, IL, traveling to Oakton College and Carleton College
 "Gestural Abstraction," Hyde Park Art Center, Chicago, IL
 "Just Good Art," Hyde Park Art Center, Chicago, IL
 "Evanston Art Center Exhibition and Auction," Evanston Art Center, Evanston, IL
 "Small Works," Faculty Exhibition, Columbia College, Chicago, IL
 1995 "Group Exhibition," Knox College Gallery, Knox College, Galesburg, IL
 "Chicago Abstract Painters," Evanston Art Center, Evanston, IL
 "Four Painters," Jan Cicero Gallery, Chicago, IL
 "Artists Choose Artists," Hyde Park Art Center, Chicago, IL
 "Works on Paper," Jan Cicero Gallery, Chicago, IL
 "Evanston Art Center Exhibition and Auction," Evanston Art Center, Evanston, IL
 "Gallery Artists," Jan Cicero Gallery, Chicago, IL
 "Third Annual Bookmarks Exhibition and Auction" for Whitewalls, Northern Illinois University Art Gallery, Chicago, IL
 "Fourteenth Annual Exhibition and Auction," N.A.M.E. Gallery, Chicago, IL
 "Just Good Art," Hyde Park Art Center, Chicago, IL
 "Faculty Exhibition," Columbia College, Chicago, IL
 1994 "Artists Choose Artists," Hyde Park Art Center, Chicago, IL
 "Camera Obscura/Obscura Camera," Betty Rymer Gallery, Chicago, IL
 "Third Annual Bookmarks Exhibition and Auction" for Whitewalls, Northern Illinois University Art Gallery, Chicago, IL
 "Thirteenth Annual Exhibition and Auction," N.A.M.E. Gallery, Chicago, IL
 1993 "The Categories of Robert Smithson," N.A.M.E. Gallery, Chicago, IL
 "Deluge," Invitational Exhibition, Lyons Wier Gallery, Chicago, IL
 "Faculty Self-Portraits," Columbia College, Chicago, IL
 "Second Annual Bookmarks Exhibition and Auction" for Whitewalls, Northern Illinois University Art Gallery, Chicago, IL
 "plastertapeduststudpaintneedlesglassbrickcork," N.A.M.E. Gallery, Chicago, IL
 "Gallery Artists," Lannon-Cole Gallery, Chicago, IL
 1992 "Three Painters," Lannon-Cole Gallery, Chicago, IL
 "Ars Nova Judges Exhibition," Northern Illinois University Art Museum, DeKalb, IL
 "Guess Who? Artists Confront Their Sources," Lannon-Cole Gallery, Chicago, IL
 1988 Solo Exhibition, The Spertus Museum, Chicago, IL. Catalogue.
 "Endangered Species," Klein Gallery, Chicago, IL
 1986 "Three Painters," Robbin Lockett Gallery, Chicago, IL

STAGE SETS

- 1991 "The Black Paintings" (Lighting & Set), a work for the stage by Stephen Lapthisophon.
1983 "The Sound of Music/The Theory of Praxis," a work for the stage by Stephen Lapthisophon.

GRANTS/COMMISSIONS/AWARDS

- 2012 Illinois Arts Council project grant
2011 Illinois Arts Council, Individual Artist's Grant
2009 Artist in Residence Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales, Paris
Artist in Residence, Cite des Arts, Paris
2008 Illinois Arts Council, Governor International Arts Exchange Grant
2007 Illinois Arts Council, Projects Grant
2006 Chicago Council on Fine Arts, CAAP Grant
2005 Mellon Grant awarded through the Global Partners/ACM
2003 Karl Hofer Gesellschaft, Berlin, Artist-In-Residence
2003 Illinois Arts Council, Governor International Arts Exchange Grant
2001 St. James Cavalier, Malta, Fellowship
2000 Virginia Center for the Creative Arts, Fellowship
2000 Illinois Arts Council, Project Grant
1993 Illinois Arts Council, Projects Grant
1991 Chicago Council on Fine Arts, CAAP Grant
1990 Painting Commission, Wesleyan University, Middletown, CT
1989 Chicago Council on Fine Arts, CAAP Grant
1985 First Prize, "Jewish Women in The Arts Paper Press Gallery, Chicago, IL

REVIEWS

- 2008 Matthias Reichelt, Zitty "Uber den Augenblick hinaus" Ap/May '08
Alan Artner, The Chicago Tribune
"Older Ways of Painting get their Due" November 14, '08
2005 Victory Cassidy, Art in America, "Karen Lebergott," March '05
2001 Matthew Girson, New Art Examiner, "Karen Lebergott," March/April '01
2000 Catalogue Estremadura, essay by Franz Schulze, Jan '00
Corey Postiglione, Dialogue, "Karen Lebergott," Dec/Jan '00
Joell Baxter, New Art Examiner, "Blink, Interventions in the Salon," April '00
Jill E. Hughes, Dialogue, "Blink, Interventions in the Salon," March/April '00
1997 Jim Yood, C International, "Karen Lebergott," Sept-Nov '97
Fred Camper, The Chicago Reader, "Embracing Doubt," June 27, '97
1996 Corey Postiglione, Dialogue, "Gestural Abstraction," Nov '96
1993 David McCracken, The Chicago Tribune, "Alternative Spaces Look Back and Sally Forth," Sept '93
1989 Catalogue Rockford College, Rockford, IL
1988 Catalogue "Ann C. Field Gallery Portfolio," The Spertus Museum, Chicago, IL
McCracken, The Chicago Tribune, "Endangered Show Has Animal Magnetism,"
Alan Artner, The Chicago Tribune, "Lebergott's Paintings," July '88
Lillian Fishbein, The Sentinel, "A Jewish Painter," June '88
1984 Mark Michael Leonhart, The New Art Examiner, "1840," Nov '84

PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATION

- 1995- Editorial Committee, Whitewall Journal of Language and Art
1995- Member, College Art Association

JUROR/VISITING ARTIST/CURATOR/LECTURER

- 2012 Curated "In Dialogue with Thomas Nozkowski" 2007
Curated, "Clarence Morgan" paintings, Sonnenschein Gallery, Lake Forest, IL.
- 2006 Curated, "Matthew Girson" paintings, Sonnenschein Gallery, Lake Forest, IL.
- 2006 Visiting artist NIU University, DeKalb, IL.
- 2003 Curated "Industrial," Sonnenschein Gallery, Lake Forest, IL
Curated "Video I Like," Sonnenschein Gallery, Lake Forest, IL
- 2001 Lecturer, "The Limits of Abstraction," College Art Association annual conference, Chicago, IL
- 2000 Participant in panel discussion of installation exhibition "Blink," Northern Illinois University Art Gallery, Chicago, IL
Curated "Citizenship Imagined" in conjunction with philosophy symposium "The Possibilities of Citizenship," Sonnenschein Gallery, Lake Forest, IL
- 1999 Curated "Synthesis – Collage and Mixed Media," Sonnenschein Gallery, Lake Forest, IL
- 1998 Visiting Artist/Visiting Critic, Graduate Dept., Department of Art Theory and Practice, Northwestern University, Evanston, IL
Lecturer on my work, Reicher Gallery, Barat College, Lake Forest, IL
Curated "Abstract Variations," Sonnenschein Gallery, Lake Forest, IL
- 1997 Curated "Not Renoir," Sonnenschein Gallery, Lake Forest, IL
Participant in panel discussion on "The Current State of the Arts in Chicago," Northern Illinois University Art Gallery, Chicago, IL
- 1994 Garret Gallery, 10th Annual Juried Fine Arts Competition, St. Louis, MO, Juror
- 1993 Chicago Salon Group, Chicago, IL, Visiting Artist, slide lecture
- 1992 Visiting Artist/Juror, Northern Illinois University, Ars Nova student competition, DeKalb, IL

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

- 1996- Current Chair (2009) and Associate Professor of Art, Lake Forest College, Lake Forest, IL
Courses: Multi-level Painting, Multi-level Drawing, 2 and 3 Dimensional Design, Studio Arts Senior Seminar and student advising
- 1988-1996 Instructor, Columbia College, Chicago, IL
Courses: Painting, Drawing, 2D Design, Figure Drawing, Advanced Painting
- 1989-1996 Instructor, School of the Art Institute, Early College Program, Chicago, IL
Courses: Mixed Media, Painting, Figure Drawing, Developing Ideas, Portfolio review

EDUCATION

MFA painting and sculpture, School of the Art Institute, Chicago, IL
BS in Art, University of Wisconsin-Madison
French language and literature. University of Aix-Marseilles, France



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