

What is it about architecture that we identify with or that identifies us? Artist Susan Giles has been thinking about the connections between art, architecture, tourism, and identity for the past two decades.

Travel to a foreign city begs visiting the iconic architecture that defines its skyline.

Ranging from the Roman Coliseum to the Sydney Opera House, buildings are monuments marking a society's historic feats of technology, wealth, and intellectual progress, and by experiencing these structures, perhaps we feel we understand the culture better. On the flip side, Chicagoans traveling abroad commonly hear their foreign hosts exclaim, "ah, the Sears Tower" as often as Londoners hear "Big Ben" and Parisians hear "Eiffel Tower" in response to hearing where they're from. What is it about architecture that we identify with or that identifies us? Is it simply being in the same geographic location? Artist Susan Giles has been thinking about the connections between art, architecture, tourism, and identity for the past two decades. The exhibition *Scenic Overlook* features three of her previous and related small sculptures (on 2nd floor) and a new sculptural installation in Gallery 1 that consider the act of (sight)seeing as a way to think about our relationship to place — both native and foreign — in an increasingly accessible global world.

In Gallery 1, Susan Giles debuts a series of four large sculptures that alter our perception of some of the tallest observation towers in the world as a way of understanding buildings as key signifiers of place and identity. Observation towers are a classification of skyscraper designated non-residential that primarily feature viewing decks and transmit telecommunications. Here, Giles interprets the forms of the following towers (in order of tallest): Tokyo Skytree (Japan, architect: Nikken Sekkei), Canton Tower (China, architect: Mark Hemel and Barbara Kuit), CN Tower (Canada, architect: John Andrews), and Ostankino Tower (Russia, architect: Nikolai Nikitin). Their panoptic view draws urban tourists and locals alike. For example, Tokyo Skytree received 6.19 million visitors in 2013 alone. Giles focuses on these skyscrapers to emphasize the multiple perspectives involved in looking that are also present in the gallery. When viewed from the main floor, the towers dynamically intersect the space and pivot on an angle making us feel off-kilter. Each tower is mounted on fabricated steel stands that dissolve the rooted nature of such monumental structures and heighten the uncanny experience. Depending on the viewer's mindset, the position of the buildings causes them to resemble telescopes, megaphones, large syringes, robotic machinery, or rocket launchers, among other inventions. Simultaneously they appear aggressive like weapons and potentially beneficial as tools to obtain certain knowledge. The sculptures all gesture toward a place on the balcony overlooking the gallery, directing the viewer to experience the work through a particular vantage point. Giles' efficient tweaks to the object's angle, scale, or stance powerfully changes how we feel in the presence of the building, while provoking us to redefine the technology and progress it symbolizes.

Observation often relies on aerial perspective (or a bird's-eye view) and creates a shift in scale of the object, which are two optical techniques Giles incorporates in the making and the presentation of her artwork that alter our perception of the world around us. To start, she uses the virtual mapping program Google Earth to produce source images of the building she references such as the Arc de Triomphe or London's Tower Bridge. These images are taken from

above, providing a 360° view of the structure. Often a barrage of tourists' images pop up in her search, underscoring the connection between architecture and travel. Instead of drawing, she renders her ideas in 3D by building paper models before she makes the finished work in a more durable cardstock paper, wood, or cast concrete. Her process of oscillating between 2D and 3D information to create the work also manifests itself in viewing the work. For example, the twenty-two-foot-long sculpture, *Canton Tower*, collapses into a twenty-four inch square flat collage of a pentagon centered in a nonagon only when viewed from the vantage point on the balcony. Upstairs upon entering the balcony, Giles exhibits several small sculptures on low pedestals to direct our view from above. These smaller artworks skillfully conflate architecture from alternative geographies, histories, and diverse styles into one harmonious structure, and echo the homogenizing ability of the internet.

The accessibility of these architectural monuments is also translated through the simple materials Giles chooses to hand-make the artworks. She builds with common supplies that exist within the language of construction: drawing paper connotes the possibility of the blueprint phase, while concrete and steel suggest the concealed substructure holding up the built environment and the sleek wood veneer makes visible the geometric planes that define these iconic structures. The only component in the work that has been manufactured is the steel tripod, which enters into Giles practice here for the first time. The tripods concisely represent both the upward motion of modernist architecture and the function of a camera used to take tourist photography and exemplify the streamlined thought process behind Giles' work from conception to execution to display.

Hyde Park Art Center is thrilled to share with the public the most significant exhibition of Susan Giles work to date. This ambitious project fulfills our mission to support Chicago-based artists who are making new work and are on the verge of a breakthrough in their practice. A portion of the work on view in *Scenic Overlook* was made during a nine-month residency at the Hyde Park Art Center. More of the small works and a related video piece can be seen in a concurrent exhibition, *Points in Space*, at THE MISSION throughout May and June.

Allison Peters Quinn,
Director of Exhibition & Residency Programs

Scenic Overlook, 2015, installation view, Hyde Park Art Center



Susan Giles (b. 1967, New York) creates sculpture, video, and installation work. Her work has been featured in group and solo exhibitions across the US and abroad including, Charlotte Street Foundation (MO), The Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, The Renaissance Society, The Santa Monica Museum of Art, and Kunsthalle Goeppingen (Germany), among others. Giles has received grants and awards from the Louis Comfort Tiffany Foundation, Department of

Cultural Affairs & Special Events (DCASE), City of Chicago, the Illinois Arts Council, and a Fulbright Grant to Indonesia to study art and tourism. She earned a Master of Fine Art from Northwestern University, and a Master of Art (Art Education) from The School of the Art Institute of Chicago. She currently lives and works in Chicago, where she teaches in the Department of Art, Media and Design at DePaul University and will join the School of the Art Institute of Chicago as

Assistant Professor, Department of Contemporary Practices in Fall 2015. She is represented by THE MISSION Projects. Giles is the 2014-2015 Chicago participant in the Jackman Goldwasser Residency at Hyde Park Art Center.



Skytree/tower, 2014, cast concrete and paper, 19 x 8 x 13 inches
Arc de Triomphe/viaduct, 2014, cast concrete and paper, 20^{1/2} x 9 x 3 inches
Tower Bridge/bridge, 2014, cast concrete and paper, 10^{3/4} x 44 x 2 inches

Exhibition Reception and Performance
 Sunday, April 19, 3–5 pm

In conjunction with *Scenic Overlook*, **Lou Mallozzi** performs the sound work *Outpost* (2011.) Using a telescope and a megaphone, this observation-based performance turns surveillance inside-out, presenting spectators as spectacle, and audience as both subject and object. Lou Mallozzi is a sound artist based in Chicago who makes performances, installations, and recorded works.

Artist's Studio and Gallery Tour: Susan Giles
 Sunday, May 3, 1–2 pm

Susan Giles will discuss and answer questions about the process, ideas, and research involved in making *Scenic Overlook*. The public will tour the exhibition with Giles and be given access to her art studio on the second floor, where the artist will present other drawings and small sculptures being made.

Susan Giles, Points in Space
 May 8 – June 27, 2015
 Reception: Friday, May 8, 6–8 pm
 THE MISSION, 1431 W. Chicago Ave.

Points in Space is a concurrent exhibition of related smaller sculptures by Susan Giles.

Susan Giles in conversation with Allison Peters Quinn
 Thursday, June 25, 6 pm
 THE MISSION, 1431 W. Chicago Ave.

Catalog Release Party & Closing Reception
 Sunday, July 26, 2–4 pm

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The Jackman Goldwasser Residency positions Chicago as a worldwide destination for visual art by bringing local and global artists together to work side by side in our studios, deepening engagement between local, national, and international contemporary art practices. This program is partially supported by a grant from the Illinois Arts Council Agency.

Hyde Park Art Center is a unique resource that advances contemporary visual art in Chicago by connecting artists and communities in unexpected ways. As an open forum for exploring the artistic process, the Art Center fosters creativity through making, learning about, seeing, and discussing art—all under one roof. The Art Center is funded in part by: Alphawood Foundation; Andy Warhol Foundation for Visual Arts; a City Arts III grant from the City of Chicago's Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events; Field Foundation of Illinois; Graham Foundation for Advanced Studies in the Fine Arts; Harper Court Arts Council; Harpo Foundation; Illinois Arts Council, a state agency; Illinois Humanities Council; Irving Harris Foundation; Joyce Foundation; Lloyd A. Fry Foundation; MacArthur Fund for Arts and Culture at Prince; National Endowment for the Arts; National Endowment for the Humanities, and the Illinois General Assembly; Polk Bros. Foundation; David C and Sarjean Ruttenberg Arts Foundation; Searle Funds at The Chicago Community Trust; and the generosity of its members and people like you.

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