

JESSICA SILVERMAN

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Jessica Silverman Presents *Catherine Wagner: Clues to Civilization*,
Wagner's First Exhibition with the Gallery Surveying Over 30 Years of
the Artist's Work Across Four Photographic Series



Catherine Wagner, *Gendered House*, 1995. Courtesy of the artist and Jessica Silverman, San Francisco

San Francisco, CA (June 17, 2021) – Jessica Silverman is pleased to announce *Catherine Wagner: Clues to Civilization*, an expansive survey of photographs by the artist created from 1982-2014 that runs from July 9 to August 14, 2021. The exhibition comprises four series of works from Wagner's career: *American Classroom*, *Realism and Illusion*, *Reparations* and *Rome Works*. Spanning over three decades, each of the series are fortified by a rigorous examination of knowledge creation and transference, reckoning with collective historical foundations and the concept of the body politic. Working as a conceptual artist through the medium of photography, Wagner places the enduring crisis of the human knowledge order front and center, using the inanimate to reconfigure

dominant narratives and systems of thought. This is her first solo exhibition with Jessica Silverman.

Beginning in the early 1980s and first exhibited at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, the *American Classroom* series includes black-and-white photographs of American schools and learning environments. The works are evacuated of human subjects and depict empty classrooms, written text left on chalkboards, or a poignant creative writing story displayed on an early computer; objects are personified and haunt the image-plane, showing residues of human activity. *Realism and Illusion* from 1995 is a subversive analysis of Disney theme parks in Tokyo, Orlando, Paris and Anaheim. Works in this series such as *Gendered House* and *Southern California Landscape* closely examine the illusory nature of built environments and the coercive, constricting nature of archetypes, particularly when they originate from a singular gaze driven by American culture.

Two works included in the exhibition from Wagner's *Reparations* series traverse the history of the prosthetic splint, responding directly to the circulation of images of war and violence that condition the contemporary present. Moving away from essentializing images of human pain, the artist instead photographs splints and prosthetics from throughout history to show the body as both a resilient and political instrument. The most recent series in the exhibition from 2014, *Rome Works*, are photographs of galleries and sculptures being conserved and restored at historical institutions such as the Musei Capitolini and Palazzo Altemps. Works such as *Artemis/Diana* re-contextualize Classical sculpture to puncture conventional narratives of icons. In the photo, a sculpture of the Greek goddess Artemis' torso is suspended in an electric blue strap, complicating the God of the hunt's mythological legacy as a woman who could not be tied down.

As a conceptual photographer, Wagner operates in the shared legacy of Lewis Baltz, Bernd and Hilla Becher, Gordon Matta Clark, Liz Deschene, Sharon Lockhart and Doris Salcedo, whose works amalgamate varying disciplines and take shape in the photographic form. The artist's work is in the permanent collections of the Canadian Centre for Architecture, Montreal; de Young Museum, San Francisco; The Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.; Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; Museum of Modern Art, New York; Tate Modern, London. Additionally, Wagner is currently exhibiting in the inaugural group exhibition *We Are Here* at Jessica Silverman's new location at 621 Grant Avenue, running through July 2.

ABOUT CATHERINE WAGNER

Catherine Wagner (b. 1953, San Francisco, CA) is the recipient of the Artadia Award, Dorothea Lange Award and Rome Prize from the American Academy in Rome, among

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many other accolades. Her visual arts fellowships include grants from the National Endowment for the Arts, John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation, Aaron Siskind Foundation, and Weizmann Institute, Israel. Wagner's work is in the permanent collections of Museum of Modern Art, NY; the Metropolitan Museum of Art, NY; Whitney Museum of American Art, NY; Library of Congress, Washington DC; Smithsonian Institution, Washington DC; Tate Modern, London; Victoria & Albert Museum, London; Bibliothèque National de Paris; Museum Folkwang, Essen; Museum of Modern Art, Bologna; Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; LACMA, Los Angeles; SFMOMA and De Young Museum, San Francisco. Wagner's work is commemorated in monographs, including *American Classroom*, *Home and Other Stories*, *Art & Science: Investigating Matter*, *Cross Sections*, *In Situ: Traces of Morandi*, and *Place, History and the Archive*.

ABOUT JESSICA SILVERMAN

Jessica Silverman is an ambitious, innovative, and internationally renowned contemporary art gallery with a reputation for curating compelling exhibitions, building artists' careers, and collaborating with collectors who are keen on positive provenance.

Silverman founded her eponymous gallery in 2008 after obtaining an MA in Curatorial Practice from San Francisco's California College of the Arts on the heels of a BFA from Otis College in Los Angeles. Silverman sat on the San Francisco Arts Commission for nine years. She is a founding member of 8-bridges, a member of the Art Dealers Association of America (ADAA) and a member of the Selection Committee of Expo Chicago. The gallery represents prominent Californian and international artists at all stages of their careers. Works by the gallery's artists have been acquired by museums all over the world including Tate (London), Centre Pompidou (Paris), Reina Sofia (Madrid), MoMA (New York), MCA Chicago, Art Institute of Chicago, the Dallas Museum of Art, the Nasher Sculpture Center (Dallas), Los Angeles County Museum of Art, National Gallery of Canada, the Art Gallery of Ontario, not to mention SFMOMA, San José Museum of Art and the De Young Museum (San Francisco).

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