



Nick Angelo | *LE PENSÉE UNIQUE*
May 4th - June 1st, 2024

Sebastian Gladstone
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“Toy garden cities,” Joan Didion once called them, back in 1975. “All those Plazas and Malls and Esplanades...all those Villages, all those Forests and Parks and Lands.” The shopping centers that had been cropping up everywhere in postwar America, she remarked, “float on the landscape like pyramids to the boom years.”¹ That year, our current era’s mall magnate and one-time mayoral candidate Rick Caruso was just sixteen, a teenager from the Hollywood Hills, himself afloat on daddy’s Dollar Rent-A-Car fortune. But it would be only another ten years before he became the youngest-ever commissioner of Los Angeles Department of Water and Power, and another six before he was appointed president of the city’s Board of Police Commissioners. One year after that, in 2002, Caruso Affiliated Holdings unveiled the Grove, the Imagineered, “pedestrian-oriented,” faux-Deco “lifestyle center” that routinely boasts more annual visitors than Disneyland. “I wanted to create a Main Street for a city that does not have one,” Caruso told *Vanity Fair* in 2013. “It was very important for me to try to transport people to a better place and time.”²

Boom years and better places: herein lies a uniquely American doctrine made up of unfettered “development,” derivative architecture, and David Yurman stores, almost always pitching its tent under the marquee of the good old days. The French have a phrase for this. *La pensée unique*, coined by a French journalist in the ’90s, refers to any political dogma that smuggles itself into public favor under the guise of common sense. The chief example: Margaret Thatcher’s oft-repeated maxim “There is no alternative”—or “TINA”—made to portray the neoliberal free market as the world’s only sensible solution.

The expression is a fitting title for Nick Angelo’s sophomore exhibition with Sebastian Gladstone, expanding the artist’s practice of peeling these exact kinds of precepts apart. Across new paintings, wall graphics, and a two-story miniature diorama sculpture, *La Pensée Unique* collates many of Angelo’s familiar motifs with renewed vigor. Assembling matrices of crooked rhetoric, sugar-pilled state violence, corporate greenwashing, prisons, precincts, public schools, public sculpture, startups, suburbs, malls, methadone clinics, private gyms, and a scene from Andrei Tarkovsky’s *Solaris* (1972)—to name a mere few—the exhibition forges connections but avoids easy conclusions, refusing any temptation to tack on a dogma of its own.

Angelo’s style of thinking and making is rhizomatic by nature; try to forge a continuous path and you’ll surely get lost. This is, of course, by design. But in *La Pensée Unique*, the Grove is a subtle throughline, winding through the various media like the outdoor mall’s single-track trolley. In *TINA Caruso* (2024), a painting of a luxe, velvet-curtained movie theater, Angelo supplants the screen

at center with a rendering of the Grove’s main thoroughfare at Christmastime. The bedecked trolley car faces the empty seats head-on, as if about to barrel into the fourth wall. It smacks of the Lumière brothers’ 1896 film *The Arrival of a Train at La Ciotat Station*, whose footage of a fast-approaching steam locomotive had audience members fleeing for the exits. The same scene becomes even more real in his sculpture *A Celebration of the Union of Dr. Kris Kelvin and TINA Caruso, One for the Ages* (2024), restaged as a miniature diorama. Angelo sourced the tiny trolley, patio furnishings, fake foliage, and holiday decor from model-train and dollhouse stores, fashioning a toy garden city of a toy garden city.

What, then, to make of *My God, Does He Eat Alone!* (After Floris Claesz van Dijck) (2024), a master copy of the Dutch painter’s 1613 composition *Still Life with Fruit, Nuts and Cheese*? Most of Angelo’s references and reproductions skew more contemporary, urban, architectural, structural. But here is a recreation of a classic breakfast tableau painting, a rather popular convention in the early seventeenth century, a time that spurred the “emancipation of painting as a ‘liberal art.’” Floris Claesz van Dijck painted during the rapid urbanization of Dutch society; trade was booming and introduced the bourgeoisie to new, rare delicacies and products. Social-climbing patrons strayed from overtly Christian scenes, instead craving bountiful “expression[s] of a certain ostentation.”³ Angelo’s studious attention to the luscious colors and textures of the painting’s cheeses, grapes, apples, breads, nuts, glassware, and tablecloths seem to double the fetish impulse of the original. Through his gaze we can glimpse the Dutch Golden Age, the dawn of global capitalism, and the specter of colonialism, before we knew their horrors. In the context of *La Pensée Unique*, the work points to that era’s prelapsarian optimism, and the people’s belief that they were on the path to a better place and time.

—Juliana Halpert

1. Joan Didion, “On the Mall,” in *The White Album* (New York, NY: Simon and Schuster, 1979), 180.

2. Matt Tyrnauer, “Main Street of Dreams,” *Vanity Fair*, March 2013, <https://archive.vanityfair.com/issue/20130301>.

3. Hans Vlieghe, “Still-Life Painting, Animals and Hunting Figures,” in *Flemish Art and Architecture, 1585–1700* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998), 7.

Nick Angelo (b. 1990, Los Angeles, CA)
Lives and works in Los Angeles, CA

Education

2019

MFA, Photography and Media, California Institute of the Arts, Valencia, CA

2014

BA, Urban Studies, Eugene Lang College of Liberal Arts at The New School, New York, NY

Selected Solo Exhibitions

2023

Raw, Cooked, and Leftover, Los Angeles Contemporary Archive, Los Angeles, CA

2022

432 Park, Solo Booth with Sebastian Gladstone, The Armory Show, Javits Center, New York, NY

Reality Becomes A Playground, Stanley's, Los Angeles, CA

2021

Pinnacle, Riviera Parking, Santa Barbara, CA

2020

Bread and Circuses, F, Houston, TX

2019

Power Gaze, D301 Gallery, California Institute of the Arts, Valencia, CA

2018

(In)Direct Response, Mint Gallery, California Institute of the Arts, Valencia, CA

2017

Fear Gauge, The Shed, Echo Park, Los Angeles, CA

Group Exhibitions

2023

Group Shoe 3, House of Seiko, San Francisco, CA

2021

Project Space (with Riviera Parking), Dusseldorf, Germany

2020

REAL ESTATE, F, Houston, TX

2019

The Conspiracy of Art: Part II, Chateau Shatto, Los Angeles, CA

Future Ghosts, Human Resources, Los Angeles, CA

Haunts, JOAN, Track 16, and Suite 534, Bendix Building, Los Angeles, CA

Compound Fracture, Organized by Skylar Haskard, 181 N. Ave. 21, Los Angeles, CA



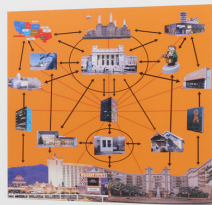
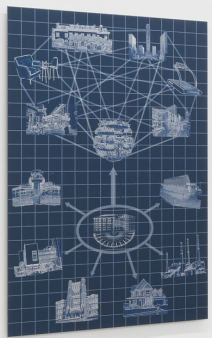
2018

Take Back The House, Francois Ghebaly Gallery, Los Angeles, CA

2017

You Catch More Flies With Arsenic Than Honey, Club Pro, Los Angeles, CA









Nick Angelo

A Celebration of the Union of Dr. Kris Kelvin and TINA Caruso, One for the Ages, 2024

wood, aluminum, astro turf, dollhouse miniatures, LED Lights, model train set, sandpaper, brick, paper, linen, plastic, wallpaper, house paint, oil, and acrylic
 28.5" H (w/ table x 55") x 30" W x 26.6 D
 (NIA34)





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Nick Angelo

My God, Does He Eat Alone! (After Floris Claesz van Dijk), 2024
oil on linen
48" H x 60" W
(NIA33)



Nick Angelo

TINA Caruso, 2024
oil on linen
48" H x 60" W
(NIA32)



Sebastian Gladstone



Sebastian Gladstone



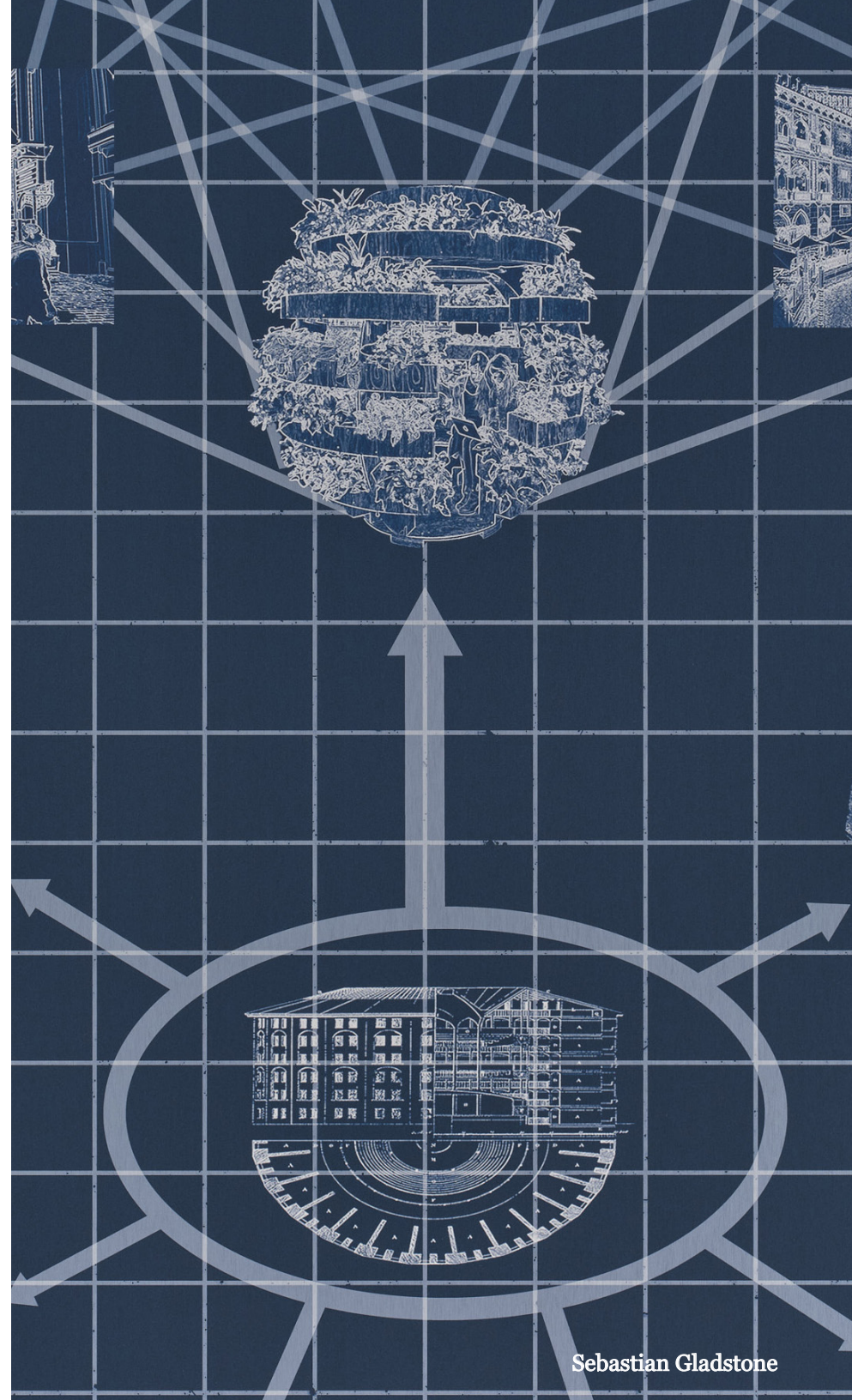
Nick Angelo

Scene of the Crime (After Clara Peeters), 2024
oil on linen
48" H x 60" W
(NIA31)

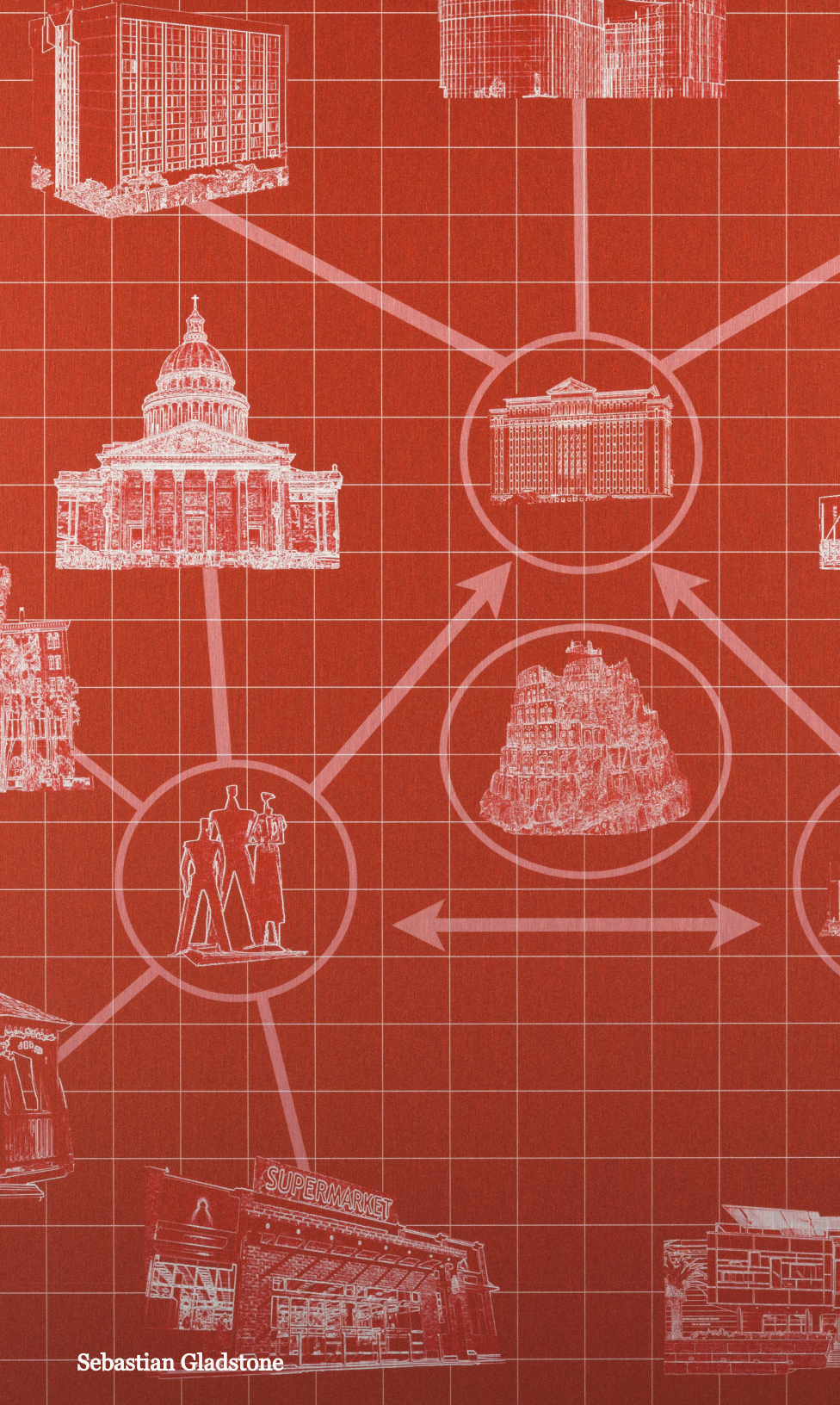


Nick Angelo

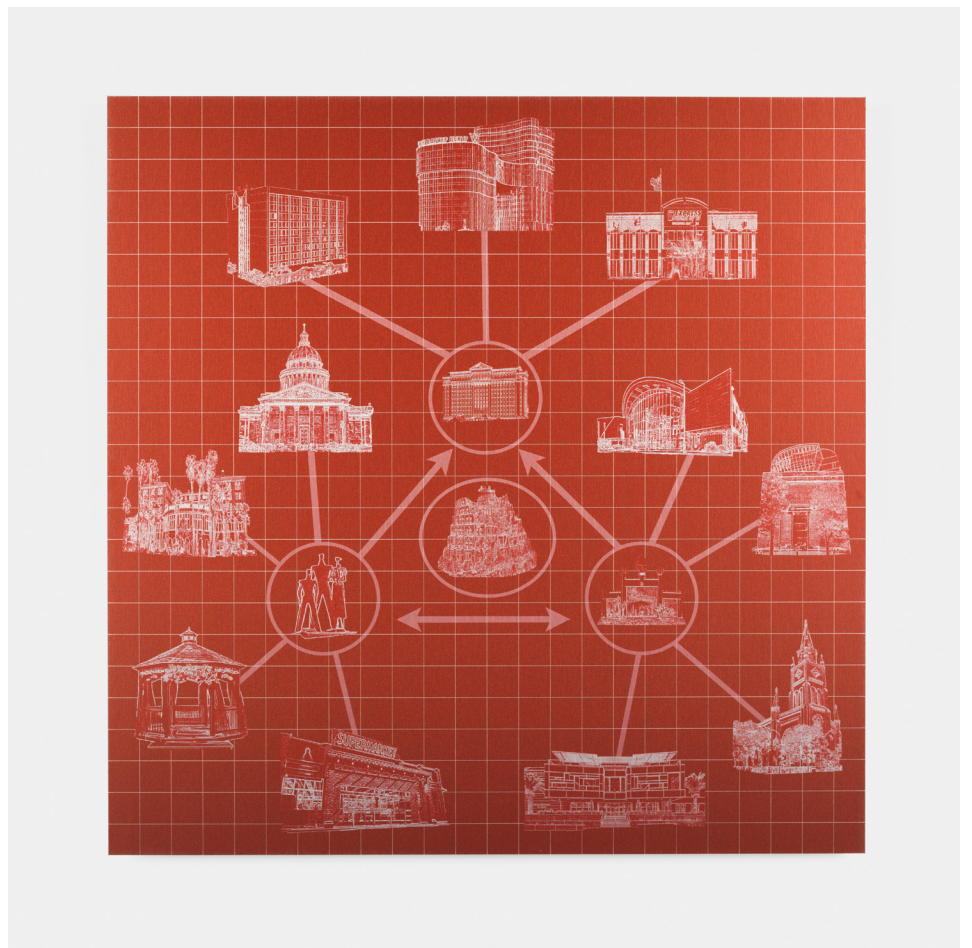
Blue Opal, 2024
Acrylic on brushed aluminum
60" H x 40" W
(NIA37)



Sebastian Gladstone



Sebastian Gladstone



Nick Angelo

Red Opal, 2024
Acrylic on brushed aluminum
24" H x 24" W
(NIA37)