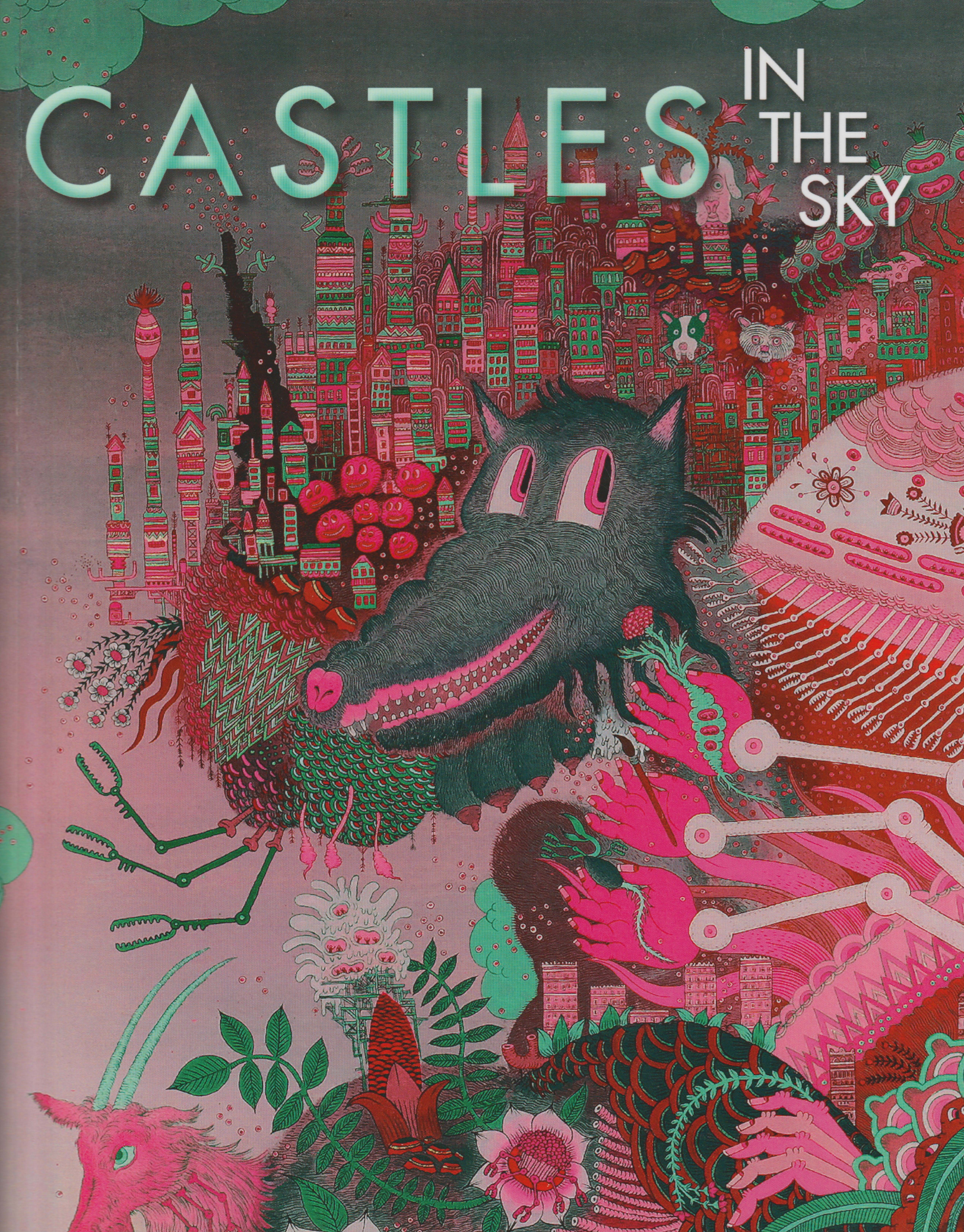
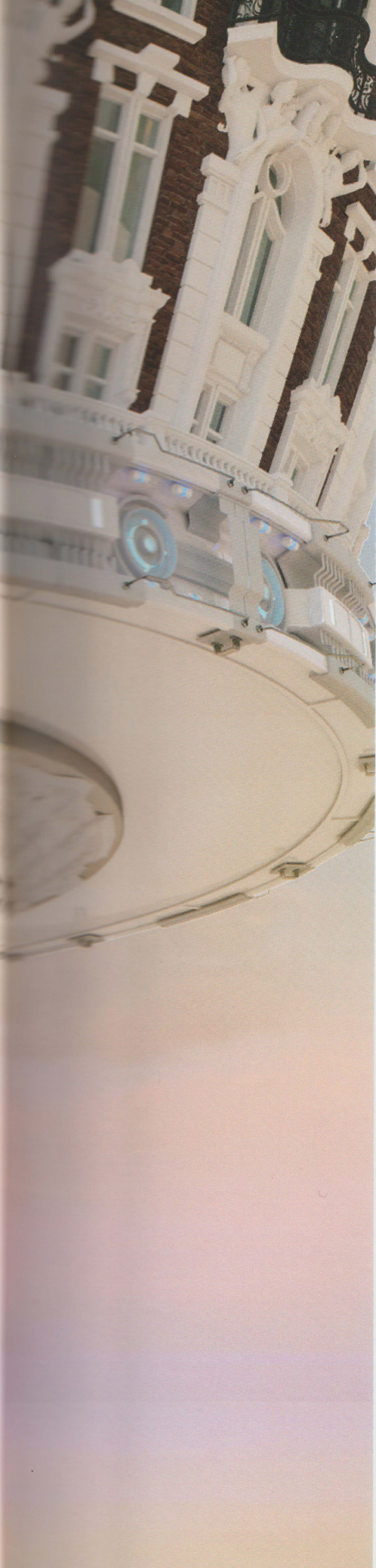


CASTLES IN THE SKY





CASTLES^{IN}_{THE} SKY

Fantasy Architecture in Contemporary Art

Lehman College Art Gallery City University of New York

Director's Foreword

The genesis for *Castles in the Sky* occurred a dozen years ago on a rainy day visit to my favorite museum in this country — the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C. I spent that afternoon contemplating Thomas Cole's magnificent four-painting series *The Voyage of Life*. Much reproduced at the time of its creation in the 19th century, Cole's cycle shows a journey along a river through the stage's of a person's life, which invariably leads to contemplating one's own life journey. What struck me on that visit, though, was the building at the painting's center that rises as a misty mirage — a castle in the sky — and is the symbol of youthful hopes and dreams. Cole's castle has stayed with me. Combined with an ongoing interest in the work of 18th-century Italian artist Giovanni Battista Piranesi's haunting illusions of a prison, these two artists gave form to the organizing idea of this exhibition — to highlight contemporary fantasy structures created by artists who, though not architects, embrace the architectural imagination.

Many people assisted to create this exhibition. First, I tip my hat to the artists whose unceasing creativity never fails to amaze me. Within Lehman College, I am particularly grateful to President José Luis Cruz, who has recognized the importance of the Gallery, and offered so much gracious support for our ongoing public mission. Susan Ebersole, Vice President for Institutional Advancement and Executive Director of the Lehman College Foundation, has been a great champion of the arts at Lehman College, and has provided enthusiasm and thoughtful advice for the Gallery's development. Before his untimely death, the late Vincent W. Clark, Vice President for Administration and Finance, provided the Gallery with invaluable resources and guidance, for which I am most grateful. Each member of our dedicated and collegial board of directors, chaired by Dr. Cecilia Mandrile, has helped further the mission of the Gallery.

I am lucky to have such a wonderful staff at the Art Gallery. Deborah Yasinsky, Curator of Education, organized the accompanying education programs for the exhibition and Mary Ann Siano, Grants Associate, worked to acquire the funding that allows us to undertake such ambitious programming. Laura De Riggi, Curatorial Assistant, organized a myriad of loan details and shipping arrangements, and served a curatorial role as the editor of a burgeoning list of artworks assembled for this show. As on many of our publications, Alex Stevovich did a fine and careful job with our elegant catalog design. I owe a special debt of gratitude to Linda Locke, my longtime collaborator and editor — she is a creative perfectionist who oversaw every detail of this publication. Finally, I owe my deepest appreciation to Kevin Ritter, my curatorial sounding board for each artist and idea. Thank you always for your love and support.

I hope this catalog, *Castles in the Sky*, will feed your own imagination and dreams.

Bartholomew F. Bland

CASTLES IN THE SKY

FANTASY ARCHITECTURE IN CONTEMPORARY ART

The buildings in our mind's eye are limitless. In our dreams, we unlock doors to unknown passages and climb unending stairs into the darkness of rooms never seen before. Not tied to the reality of bricks and mortar or ground and gravity, we imagine any structure — the American “dream home” on a coveted suburban cul-de-sac beyond our reach, or the wild acid-trip floating balloon palace of a magical unicorn.

Jarring the laws of actual architecture, the imagined palace functions as very real foundation, buttress, and pillar for *Castles in the Sky*. From Claes Oldenburg's proposal to replace the Washington Monument with a gigantic scissors to Laurie Simmons' photograph of candy castles atop a cake weathering a blizzard of confectionery snow, the 30 artists in this exhibition develop bizarre, impractical, enchanting, and inspiring unbuilt (and likely unbuildable) designs, and gather inspiration from famous sources.

Lothar Osterberg draws from the etchings of 18th-century Italian artist Giovanni Battista Piranesi, the creator of images of dark and cavernous spaces — the nightmarish side of the architectural dream. Will Cotton's candy castle shows a fantasy continuum of the art of 19th-century American landscape painter Thomas Cole, who, in *Youth* (1842), pictures a man rushing towards the mirage of a castle in the sky, the locus of all his youthful dreams. In Salvador Dali's *Gala's Castle* (1974) an elephant on attenuated legs tiptoes across a castle crenellation in Surrealist activity, which we spy, again, today, in Adrien Broom's improbable scene of a Victorian woman standing in her drawing room open to the sky and filled with a wandering zebra.

Castles in the Sky plays tribute to the ceaseless meanderings of the human imagination and the creative fantasy that hovers in the recesses of every artist's mind.

Above, Jonathan Monaghan. *Disco Beast #1 and #3*. Ink drawings on paper, 2016

Below, Thomas Doyle. *Subsidence (Cobble Hill)*. Pencil drawing, 2007. Collections of the artists

Artists

- 3 Gustavo Acosta
- 6 Diane Arbus
- 7 Clint Baclawski
- 10 John Bowman
- 13 Hannah Raine Brenner-Leonard
- 17 Michele Brody
- 20 Adrien Broom
- 24 Dean Byington
- 27 James Casebere
- 30 Laurent Chéhère
- 32 Thomas Cole
- 36 Béatrice Coron
- 40 Will Cotton
- 41 William Richard Crutchfield
- 44 Linda L. Cunningham
- 46 Salvador Dalí
- 50 Thomas Doyle
- 54 Peter Hamlin
- 55 Cameron Hayes
- 60 Robert Hite
- 64 David LaChapelle
- 67 Julie Langsam
- 70 Armando Marino
- 71 Jonathan Monaghan
- 75 Juan Garcia-Nunez
- 78 Claes Oldenburg
- 79 Lothar Osterburg
- 84 Kevin M. Paulsen
- 88 Laurie Simmons
- 89 Rachel Sydlowski
- 94 Eric Wesley
- 95 Xing, Danwen

Castles in the Sky: Fantasy Architecture in Contemporary Art
was organized by Lehman College Art Gallery and curated
by Bartholomew F. Bland, Executive Director



Julie Langsam

Gropius Landscape (Director's Residence), 2012

Oil on canvas, 42 x 42 inches



Gropius Landscape (Master's House Kandinsky / Klee), 2014 (Opposite)

Oil on canvas, 63 x 63 inches

Courtesy of 532 Gallery Thomas Jaeckel

Langsam combines classic Modernist art and architecture on her canvases, presenting a study in contrasts. In her *Gropius* landscapes, she places “portraits” of some of Modernism’s best known architecture, painting its severe lines and pristine whiteness against highly colored abstract forms and romantically stormy skies. Each canvas shows a house designed by Walter Gropius, a founder of the Bauhaus School known for arts and crafts design and architecture. Langsam isolates the houses among dark clouds that partially obscure the sunset, and below paints reproductions of abstract paintings that resemble those by Modernist painters Josef Albers, Ellsworth Kelly, Ad Reinhardt, and Brice Marden. In her paintings Langsam creates a reverential space for these Modernist structures, a very different feeling from the omnipresence of Modernism in the mass market we visit every day and she returns a glamorous promise of tomorrow to the high-Modern architecture receding into the historical past.