

# Letter From the Editor

The future always looks bright  
in the golden land because  
no one remembers the past.

—Joan Didion on California

It's not uncommon around here to strike up small talk by asking, "how long have you lived in L.A.?", as if we all floated in on a breeze from some other gritty darkness. Didion continues: "Here is the last stop for all those who come from somewhere else, for all those who drifted away from the cold and the past and the old ways." Even the newly appointed (and slightly tone-deaf) MOCA director, Klaus Biesenbach, called L.A. the new Berlin: "so many artists are moving there right now." This mythologizing of the west as the promised land persists.

This idea of short-sighted forward momentum, of denying one's past to enter an ever-more-complex future, is a dangerous one. As I write this, with our print deadline looming and the midterm elections just beyond that, I am aware of the vacuous space that exists between you reading this, and me typing it: those few weeks that will encompass election results, and reveal political realities. It's easy in California—poised at the end of the earth—to look out at the rest of the country as what we have left behind in pursuit of newness. (In other words, to watch election cycles from the safety of the enclave.)

In contrast, this issue, we feature artists who are bridge builders: between genres; between political

vantage points; between modes of representation. They insist on blurry borders and complex realities. Catherine Wagley writes on Celeste Dupuy-Spencer, and the rise of figurative work in contemporary art in parallel with the rise of the political right. Dupuy-Spencer's paintings collapse mega-churches and over-zealous liberals, both unflatteringly affected by the same frenzied mania. Similarly, Nina Chanel Abney sifts through a multitude of references, spanning from police brutality to Miley Cyrus, as a way to collapse arbitrary hierarchies that are stridently upheld in the modern brain. Travis Diehl looks into the paintings of film-maker David Lynch, examining the space between the moving image and the still. In Diehl's argument, the astringency of narrative is lost in the still image; the surreal pathos of Lynch's films become flatly static in his paintings.

In the midst of a political system that increasingly mirrors reality television, striving towards bridge building is a productive way forward, even if it is not always clean, understandable, or even successful. Multiplicity may not demolish demagoguery, but it can certainly allow us to examine more ways of being. Sequestered by the ocean, surrounded by metaphysic obsessions and gluten aversions, it's not hard to fall for a skewed version of reality that supports our westward expansion narratives. Though Lynch's characters are afflicted with amnesia as they roam the Hollywood Hills, it's crucial that we are not. Remembering where we came from allows us to connect to deeper facets of ourselves (even those we've outgrown) and to others, as a means of enacting connections as we navigate towards an uncertain future, messy as it may be.

Lindsay Preston Zappas  
Founder & Editor-in-Chief