

distance they resemble empty musical staves. Headphones, dangling from the ceiling, play a slow and dramatic succession of single, stabbing, seemingly random piano notes.

Macchi is also clearly obsessed with ordering and cartographical systems and how they can be altered or rewritten. In *La ciudad luz*, 2007, a Michelin map of Paris is placed atop a table under an overhanging light; beneath the table is a larger version of the same map, in darkness. Other experiments tread the line between the conceptual and the purely aesthetic. *Autumn in Lisbon*, 2005, is an expanse of white paper with several splotches on it—the result of Macchi taking a plan of the Portuguese capital and excising everything but the cemeteries. In *Missing Points*, 2007, he has sliced away at a world map until it's little more than vertical and horizontal strips of color forming a delicate, slumping Minimalist grid. The exercise can get repetitive, but Macchi doesn't seem to have exhausted his interest in the art of removal, whether it involves cutting all the text from several sheets of overlaid newspaper, as in *News*, 2008, or, as in *Silencio, ruido y humo*, 2008, leaving a few words behind to form accidental poetry, or, as in *Air de Gand*, 2011, painstakingly cropping out all but the streets from an urban map.

The artist's watercolors wouldn't be noteworthy on their own, but in the context of the show they're generally a delight, although some are little more than visual puns: *Swimming Piano*, 2008, for instance, portrays a piano lled with water, while *Dangerous Waters*, 2008, could be a David Shrigley outtake—a sea of floating knives. *Cool Love*, 1997, is an absurd picture of a two-scoop ice-cream cone cupping two heads locked in a passionate kiss. The exhibition ends with a sculptural work that embodies the same knack for word-play as the watercolors: *Music Stands Still*, 2007, composed of three music stands cut into the titular words. Macchi has a subtle touch, and this exhibition proves that it's possible to be both simple and profound.

—Scott Indrisek



LOS ANGELES

John Divola and Amir Zaki

Angles Gallery // September 10–October 29

IN THEIR TWO-PERSON exhibition “Despite Intentions,” UC Riverside colleagues John Divola and Amir Zaki’s medium to large photographs face off against each other as if tempting viewers to read into the arrangement some form of cross-narrative. Ultimately, however, the works are content going their separate ways. Divola’s contributions are older images from his 2006–08 “Collapsed Structures” series, including three that capture the barest remains of houses or semi-industrial structures sunk into their foundations in the middle of the desert. They’re vintage Divola: beautifully lit, gritty, and poetic in their ability to both memorialize and revel in an end point in time, which they transform into timelessness. The three Zaki photos, from his 2011 series focused on cliff houses, are more conspicuously spectacular. The large color shot *Cliff House (22)* renders the bizarre, classic mushroom-shaped domicile located at the base of Black’s Beach, in La Jolla, in such intense detail—by way of substantial yet well-veiled postproduction work—that the structure and the escarpment rising above it, including the elevator tracks for special access to the private home, become simultaneously canonized and demonized, with a subtle undercurrent of postapocalyptic eeriness. That ominous mood may very well be spilling over from the nearby *Cliff House (2)*, a densely saturated, painterly

black-and-white picture of a starkly lit narrow building looming from the top of its own bluff. The nakedly exposed landscape elicits associations in the viewer’s mind: the issue of private versus public, suggested by the house’s adjacency to public land and the stairs running down the cliff face that may or may not grant public access to the structure; the dichotomy of manmade versus natural, implicit in the apparent dominance of the structure, despite its apparent fragility, over the environment (recalling in this regard the photos Zaki has made of hillside homes that were aggressively cantilevered, the support beams erased by the artist in post-production); and the acceptance of potential exposure to wind or mud slides in exchange for a prime beachfront location.

Seen together, the two artists’ approaches to architectural photography take on new resonance. Divola’s structures are documents of what was; he masterfully mines the beauty in their decay, which will of course continue after the picture has been made. In each of Zaki’s images, the dynamic between the home and its surroundings is fluid, the various elements—stairs, tracks, fences, crumbling cliffs—working in concert to evoke an anti-Xanadu. If Divola’s ruins are decomposing carcasses, Zaki’s cliffs harbor monsters napping just out of sight.

—Michael Shaw

John Divola
Collapsed Structure (A),
2006–08.
Pigment print,
44 x 55 in.