

PRESS COVERAGE



## The Edge of Intent

May 1 — July 5, 2009

1. art on paper, May.2009
2. Chicago Art Review, 6.29.2009
3. Chicago Examiner, 5.24.2009
4. Chicago Journal, 5.20.2009
5. Chicago Maroon, 5.5.2009
6. Gallery Guide, May.2009
7. Newcity Art, 5.25.2009
8. Photography & Culture, Mar.2010

# The Edge of Intent

May 1–July 5, 2009



Simon Menner, *Chicago Images: Wells and Harrison*, 2005, Courtesy of the artist

# MOC

Museum of  
Contemporary Photography

Columbia 

COLLEGE CHICAGO

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From Chicago Art Review: <http://chicagoartreview.wordpress.com/2009/06/29/the-edge-of-intent-museum-of-contemporary-photography/>

[The Edge of Intent @ Museum of Contemporary Photography](#)

June 29, 2009, 9:37 pm

Filed under: [Chicago](#), [Reviews](#)

Located on Michigan Avenue, Columbia College's [Museum of Contemporary Photography](#) is one of the lucky institutions to be part of that great easternmost edge of the downtown, that decorative sea-wall which can be seen from the parks and water as the outer cliff which begins a city. You can cross the street and turn around and see Chicago. Its a perfect venue for a show about cities, and [The Edge of Intent](#) is all about cities.



Simon Menner, Chicago Images: Wells and Harrison, 2005

That is, its a show about urban planning and cities, and how those two seemingly accordant ideas run into and against each other. To describe it a third time, here we see some creative ways of displaying the conflict between centrally generated urban possibilities and emergent urban realities. Its a classic human struggle between our individual nature (that of the artist, the single-point generator) and our group nature (that of the ant), which is of course a hopelessly intractable battle which must be fought

forever and is my favorite and gives form to government agencies of white collar sisyphi and chaotic satellite [photographs](#).



David Maisel, Oblivion #5n, 2005

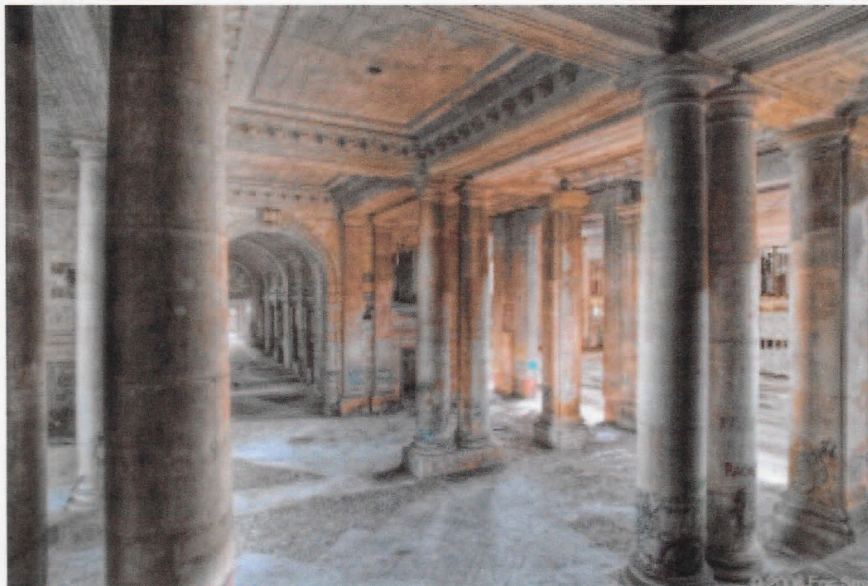
Most of the works here cheer for one side or the other, showing us direct reimaginings of recognizable cities or unusual, unplanned, or subverted portraits of familiar urban elements. The show is hung in complementary pairings, with a lot of proximal conversation between the works. [David Maisel](#)'s *Oblivion* series, which shows highways slashing with alien precision through organically chaotic human neighborhoods, shares space with [Dionisio Gonzalez](#)'s *Nova Heliopolis III*, a gorgeous digital image of a Brazilian favela, modified here with modern architecture. The two works together present us with a clear statement of conflict between the two ways cities are built: centrally planned development and emergent, organic development.



Dionisio Gonzalez, Nova Heliopolis III

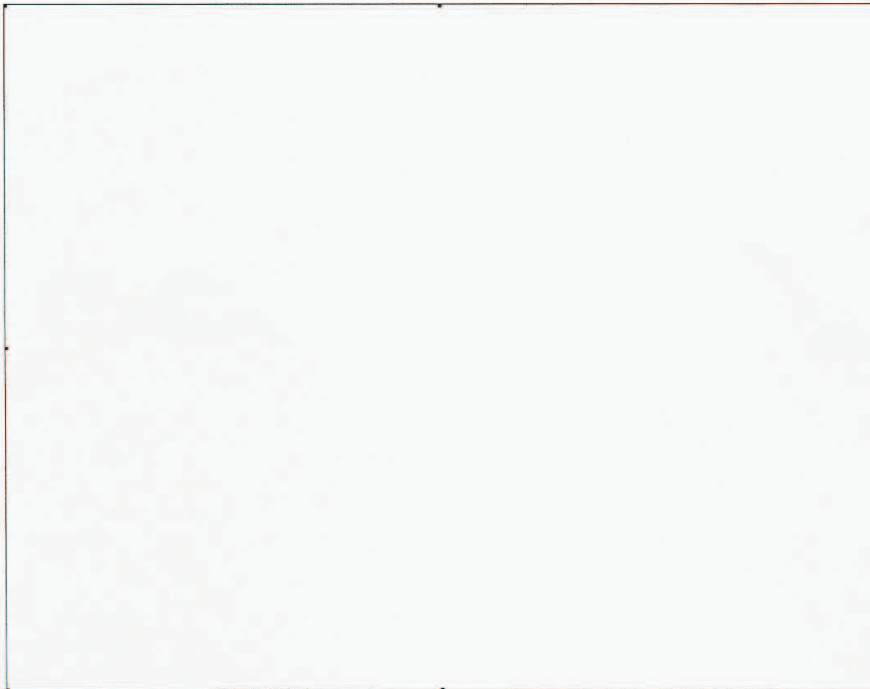
The rest of the show then answers (or dodges) this thesis statement with a mix of absurdity and fascination.

Andrew Harrison's (*new jersey*) collages, Danielle Roney's *eGoli* video, and [Liset Castillo](#)'s impossibly well crafted sandcastle cities all give us imaginative but ultimately dismissive responses. Harrison's works in particular were frustratingly shallow as prints rather than original collages, lacking a hand-made element that would have shown more than a material interest in the subject matter.



Eric Smith, Untitled, from the series Michigan Central Train Station, 2007

More document than critique, Tim Long's excellent kayak photography and [Christina Seely's Metropolis](#) series both take much more quiet, less concerned approaches to the city as a strange and sparking phenomenon. Simon Menner addresses the subversion of designed public spaces by the homeless or displaced, while [Eric Smith's](#) HDR photographs revel in the graffiti ruins of Detroit's Michigan Central Station, both here showing the human element as the quiet opposition to a planner's intentions. Smith's photographs should be seen – they're truly haunting, beautiful pictures of the urb-ex world's eighth wonder and give a strange saturated glimpse into the past and the future.



Joel Sternfeld, Looking East on 30th Street on a Morning in May, 2000

The most constructive pieces in the show come from [Joel Sternfeld](#), who offers not only beautiful images but also poses a way to profit from decrepit planned design by helping us imagine unused rail lines as intra-city raised walkways. Here we have imagination that is practical and intelligent and inspirational. Although its in the same room at the Maisel and Gonzalez pieces which form a thesis for the show, I'd return to it as a closing statement before heading out.

Though I enjoyed the exhibition, I'd say I expected more out of a show which addresses so directly (and academically) the problems that arise when of lots and lots of human beings live close to one another. Instead of more pieces like Sternfeld's, the majority of the work hung restated the problem or pointed out how cool cities look when

photographed at various distances. I *am* a fair-weather geek for this stuff though, so my expectations may have been more than the average fanboy art journalist. The photographs themselves were nearly all excellent (with a few mild exceptions) and the space is so beautiful that the Man wouldn't let me photograph it, and its next to the Spertus which has that neat [Deb Sokolow drawing](#) so ah, go, but then go home, visit [LongNow.org](#) and watch these [two videos](#).

I give it an:

**8.1 (but it could have been better, really)**

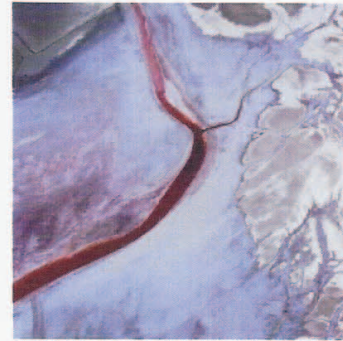
*The Edge of Intent* runs from May 1st, 2009 to July 5th, 2009 at Colombia College's [Museum of Contemporary Photography](#).

## The Edge of Intent, MoCP

May 24, 9:36 AM · Jeff Stevenson - Chicago Museum Examiner

The [Museum of Contemporary Photography](#) at Columbia College, 600 South Michigan Avenue is home to [The Edge of Intent](#), through July 5th 2009. This group show features photographers who in one way or another are documenting, dreaming, confronting or exposing society's ideas and failures of Utopian existence.

[David Maisel's Lake Project](#), a series of aerial shots of the Owens Valley in southeastern California are printed in large format. Although the topographical subject is always present, these compositions are beautiful abstractions of saturated colors, swirling shapes, and pleasing patterns. Once drawn in the viewer eventually discovers the sinister catalyst behind the form the landscape has taken – diverted water supply, ruination of the land, wind erosion, and large scale ecological disruption. Read more about the [Lake Project](#).



David Maisel, Lake Project 20 (above) and 22 (left)

Also documenting a failed Utopian dream is the series [Metacity](#) by [Simon Menner](#) where he is recording the homeless and their make-shift shelters and adaptations of specific city structures in [Bombay](#), [Chicago](#), and [Paris](#). These are not photographs of the poor in slums but, rather, how the vision of “the grand city plan” refused to foresee the insistence of the poor and homeless within its structure. The city remains the symbol of the ruling elite reaching for its ideals; the homeless remain adaptive, hungry, and in need. And yet the strength of these works is in the subtlety of the portrayal of the subject.

When figures appear in these large format prints, they are often cocooned, reclining forms that occupy very little of the composition so that the artist is confronting us, the viewers, and letting us off the hook gently; we are both implicated and released of responsibility. In this way the work engages the viewer in several ways and with more lasting effect. Read more about [Metacity](#).



Wabash & Wacker

Through manipulation of the images and juxtaposing shantytowns with pristine contemporary architecture, [Dionisio Gonzalez](#) confronts the viewer with visual conflict that represents the failure of the systems of government reurbanization, specifically in Sao Paulo, Brazil.



The ten artists shown create work varying widely in style, approach, and intent; the fantasy sand cities of [Liset Castillo](#), the 8 minute DVD [eGoli](#) of [Danielle Roney](#), the romantic deserted train station interiors of [Eric Smith](#), the maps of Andrew Harrison. Each artist's work is made more complete through its association with the others. Read [Natasha Egan's](#) (Associate Director and Curator) synopsis of the exhibition [here](#). The excellent curatorial work selecting and

arranging this exhibit provides the viewer with intellectually and visually satisfying experiences.

Another artist's work nearby in the [Nathan Manilow Sculpture Park](#) at Governors State University in University Park, IL, that explores the topic of failed Utopia is [Working on the Failed Utopia](#) 2005, artist: [Christine Tarkowski](#) (American, b. 1967) Materials: screen print on rice paper and laminated fiberglass attached to steel geodesic dome. By carefully composing a repeated image, she elevates this garbage (discarded roman candle tubes, Modelo beer cans, chicken bones, Newport cigarette boxes) to the level of pattern and creates a visually unifying surface design.

Tarkowski writes that the piece, "is not a dystopia . . . but like all





*utopias, failed even before the first shovel struck dirt . . . It doesn't matter if the utopia is in fact realized . . . it is doomed from the moment its founder pronounces the capital "U."*

The need for creating or reaching a paradise or a promised land is deeply imbedded in the human psyche and history. All indications are that it will continue into our future. Artists will continue to explore our human condition by walking this Edge of Intent.



For more information:

[Museum of Contemporary Photography](#)

[Nathan Manilow Sculpture Park](#)

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#### Author



Jeff Stevenson is an Examiner from Chicago. You can see Jeff's articles at: "<http://www.Examiner.com/x-9891-Chicago-Museum-Examiner>"

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## Consider the city

### Art Department

05/20/2009 10:00 PM

Daniel Tucker

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Urban space is a fashionable subject. Walk into Prairie Avenue Bookshop or Powell's on South Wabash and you'll see a plethora of books about the future of the city, the city and tourism, walking the city, the city and technology, sports and cities. And more.

But most of the books are quite useless, in that they have no aspiration beyond describing phenomenon in the city — they want to change nothing. Art shows about cities and space are kind of the same way. You can get away with a lot of vague ideas because the aesthetics of cities, suburbs and other people-populated environments are often exciting and rich with associations and icons viewers know and connect with. You can get away with loose ideas because, hey, cities are complex and complexity is complex.

A number of near-downtown art spaces are currently exhibiting visual works that deal with urban or rural space. Taken together, the art in these shows is compelling. The ideas behind the work? Less so. As viewers and makers of art, we should aspire for more than depictions: We can use our fantastical imaginations to produce future cities.

The most ambitious of all of the exhibits is "The Edge of Intent" at Columbia College's Museum of Contemporary Photography. Featuring 10 artists working mostly in photography, this show was programmed in coordination with Burnham Plan centennial-year events. The show sets out to critically explore the implications and unintended consequences of master plans and urban planning in general — likely one of the only such critiques presented officially within the Burnham Plan celebrations.

Outstanding works include Liset Castillo's large color photographs of sandcastle-like urban environments



"False Promises," by Joel Ross at the Monique Meloche Gallery.



The Museum of Contemporary Photography is showing "Pain is Universal but so is Hope (White)," by Liset Castillo.

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