

Waiting for a Techno-Future

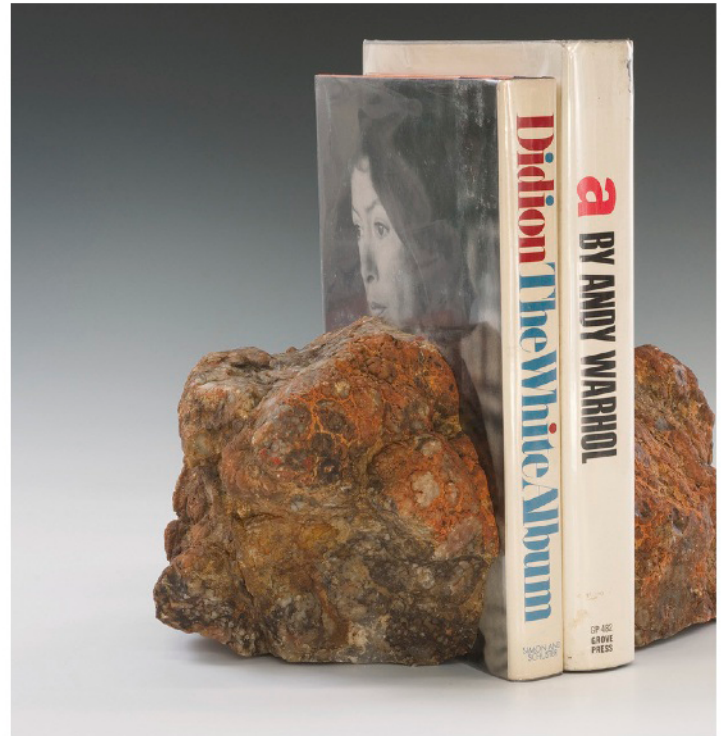
ART LOS ANGELES CONTEMPORARY 2014

10 DAYS AGO

Now on view in the entrance of Art Los Angeles Contemporary, *Ramada Santa Monica* is the fourth iteration in Mark Hagen's series of space frame installations—this time housing the catalog of materials from independent publisher Artbook | D.A.P. Aluminum triangles join into modular architectural units, towering floor to ceiling and enclosing a corner of the lobby, where polished fossils (in fact fossilized feces) act as bookends.

We've seen the future and we're not going titles Hagen's 2012 space frame work, that one affixed with rough slabs of obsidian. The pleasure of this uneasy pairing springs from its clever twinning of aesthetics and eras of technology: the irregular cuts of obsidian with the uniformity of the space frame, the material of prehistoric weaponry with the template for 1950s modular design. *We've seen the future and we're not going* both rejects technological accelerationism and admits a melancholic truth: our utopian techno-future simply has not come.

This ambivalence about technology, the failure of positivism to deliver on its promises, animates Hagen's space frame sculptures, as they call out to (and become implicated in) the sinister evolution of the form. In the middle of the twentieth century, space frames were perfected by utopian architect Buckminster Fuller in his geodesic domes. Now, luxury car manufacturers including Audi and Lamborghini advertise their use of the space frame, testifying to the *recherché* design. This evolution is unsurprising. Buckminster Fuller's ideals of totalizing efficiency as well as neologisms like "synergy" find exquisite expression in corporate management; the hippie communes founded on his principles collapsed within the decade. Rather than build utopia, space frames

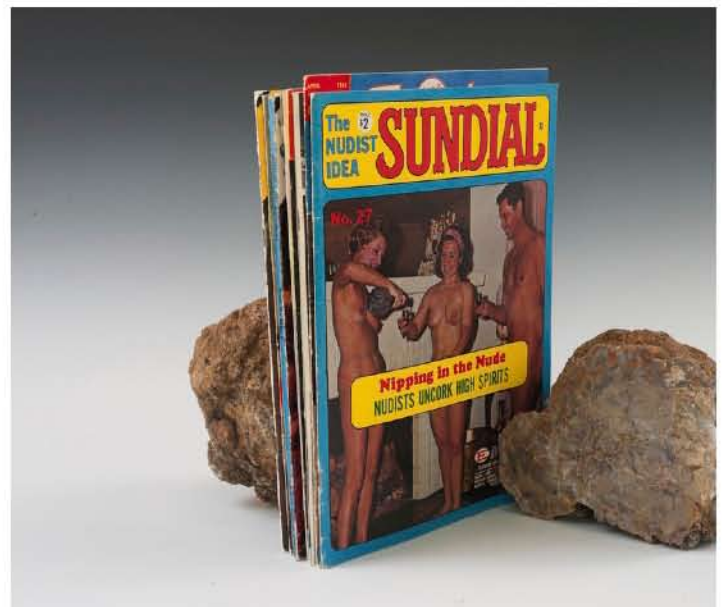


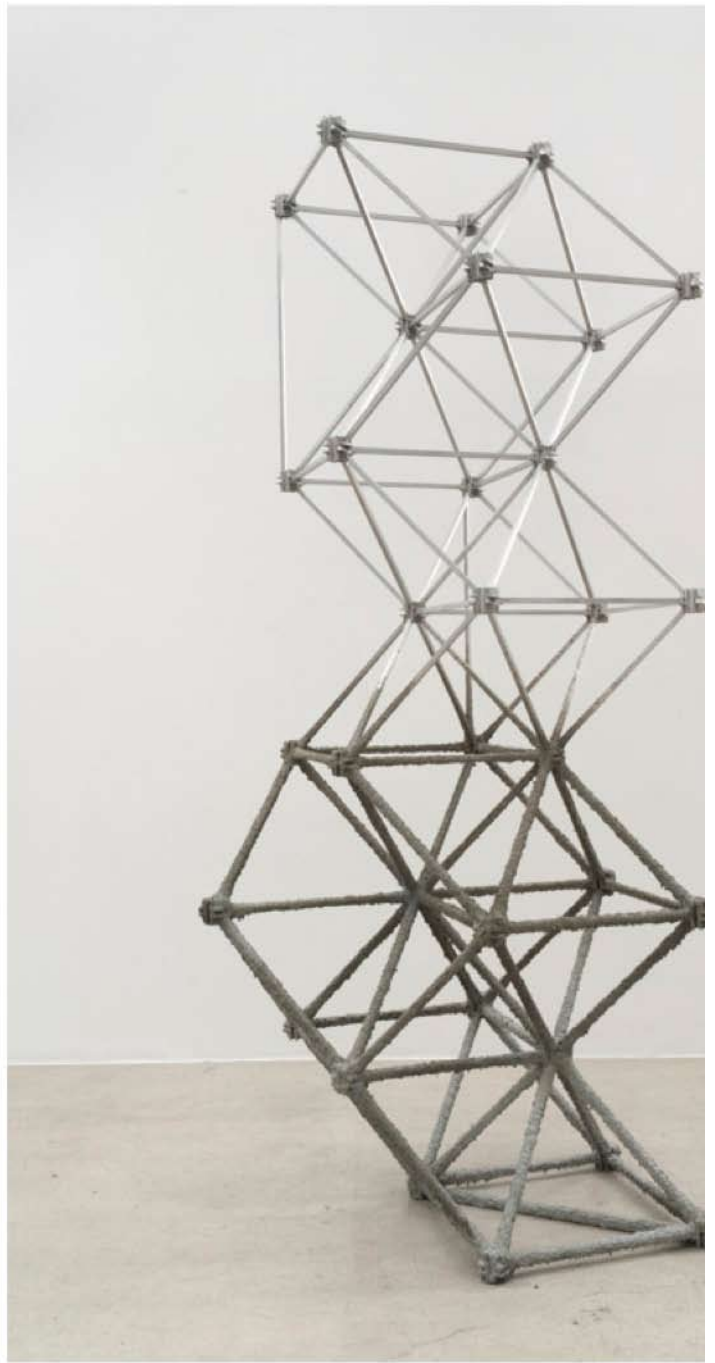
have successfully secured capitalism's hold on utopian rhetoric—the revolution happens in Silicon Valley each day. Space frames enact Adam Curtis laminations in *All Watched Over By Machines of Loving Grace*, echo David Graeber's recent eulogy to flying cars. Contemporary technology presents conservatism dressed up as change.

How do the structures of capital modulate our ability to imagine? Mark Hagen often titles his sculptures "additive," "subtractive," or both, attuning us to his process not as one of creation but modulation, of accrual and removal. Irrespective of material, obsidian or aluminum, Hagen's modulation can produce both cynicism and (nostalgic) wonder. From utopian to neoliberal design, art object to vehicle for commerce—I've seen the future, and I'll see you there.

Written by Tracy Jeanne Rosenthal.

From top: Scott Benzel & Mark Hagen, *Against*, 2012, books, cut and polished coprolite; two views of Mark Hagen, *Ramada Santa Monica*, 2014, aluminum and stainless steel space frame, melted down space frame parts & car rims, wire anodized with Diet Coke, dimensions variable; Benzel & Hagen, *Sundial: Nudists Uncork / Ankh: Something is Happening and You Don't Know What It Is...*, 2014, coprolite bookends, naturist magazines, 1963 - 1969, 11" x 8.5" x 13"; Benzel & Hagen, *Concrete Poetry*, 2014, coprolite bookends, pulped copies of *Un coup de des jamais n'abolira le hasard* by Stephane Mallarme, Gallimard Edition and "Pages intentionally left blank, 12" x 14" x 9". Bookend photos by Robert Wedermeyer and installation view photos by Stefanie Keenan/Getty Images.





Mark Hagen
Ramada 2, 2013
China Art Objects Galleries