

LYNN CRAWFORD
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CLINTON SNIDER

"I have to write things down to feel I fully comprehend them," states the narrator of Haruki Murakami's novel, *Norwegian Wood*, which examines the uneasy union of memory (internal authority) and history (external fact). Clinton Snider's oil paintings—made from his own photo collages—draw upon a similar impulse, but through visual documentation. His scenes of spottily populated urban environments hone in on peripheral structures and activity along with their possible narratives. What lies around the edges of this tree root, house lot, or neighborhood; what lies in between; how did this building, street, or pile of leaves come to be this way; how might any of these things change in the future? *Gaia* (2002) depicts a fragment of a white-shingled house whose roof edge hovers above a yard strewn with manmade and natural debris (laves, branches, a laundry soap container). The scene suggests abandonment while a power line overhead and a large building behind signal the existence of some sort of running social economy. A rough, dark circular space in the low front center indicates a portal (to the past, to the future?) and underscores the artist's fascination with history. The work *Tree of Heaven* (2002) is made up of numerous rectangular wood scraps the artist found and assembled into geometric shape. The painting's backdrop is a vast gray sky and a distant highway; in the foreground stands a towering tree with jagged dark bark, dense, intricate roots, and craggy ground foliage. Viewed from a distance these portraits are clear, crisp, and recall painstakingly precise renditions of a crime scene or film still, yet when viewed from up close the lines and forms blur. Snider is deft at articulating a moment just before it has crystallized or just after it has transpired. He knows well that one can never truly capture an instant, but that the gesture is nevertheless worth aspiring to.