

Behind the Cover

In an exclusive for the fall issue of *LALA*, Guadalajara's Jose Dávila, one of the stars of Pacific Standard Time: LA/LA, merged his early forays into conceptual photography with his most ambitious sculptural endeavor, *Sense of Place*, a 13,000 pound concrete installation for the Los Angeles Nomadic Division that will travel to all parts of the city over the next six months.

WHILE THE GUADALAJARA ART SCENE IS undoubtedly on fire these days with many thought leading galleries and artists carving out a home in Mexico's second largest city—a scene that recently made landfall in Los Angeles via “Chingaderas Sofisticadas” a multimedia survey of work from nine top Guadalajara-based artists currently up at Kohn Gallery in West Hollywood—when Jose Dávila was growing up in this industrial metropole he opted to study architecture before art. “I wasn’t very excited with what I found in art school in Guadalajara,” explains Dávila. “In studying architecture I realized that I loved it, but I really wanted to be an artist, a sculptor.” As such, after getting his architectural degree he set out to teach himself how to be such an artist.

“I can understand this sort of nostalgia of projects you always wanted to do but that you never did and then they are always part of your symbolic realm,” he says, noting some of his first (and perhaps most iconic) art works are just that. Merging his two passions, Dávila’s *There But Not* photographic series employs images of architectural landmarks (think Luis Barragán to Frank Lloyd Wright) from which he physically removes the buildings in question via X-acto knife to create metaphoric illusions that play with the tropes of light and space and minimalism while adding a fresh reinterpretation of buildings that have become museums unto themselves.

“You’re compelled to fill the image, to fill the void, but you’re either filling the void with memory, or if you don’t have the memory, you’re filling the void with imagination because you’re trying to remember what is there,” he explains. “The image I might be filling that void with may not be the same. All the memories of each one are constrained by your own personal experiences.”

For the cover of the Fall issue, Editor-at-Large Michael Slenske challenged Dávila to marry his conceptual photographic practice with his most recent sculpture, *Sense of Place*. The 13,000 pound platonic cube, which anchors the entrance to West Hollywood Park along San Vicente Boulevard, is comprised of 40 varying concrete geometries that will disassemble in three movements sending the blocks to public spaces around the city—from Plummer Park to the Santa Monica Pier. On the heels of a sunset photo shoot with contributing photographer Jeff Vespa, shortly after the sculpture was assembled in the shadow of the Pacific Design Center, Dávila took Vespa’s portraits back to his Guadalajara studio where he cut out a series of blocks that will soon migrate from their point of origin. The resulting cover image Dávila intervened on at once gives the viewer the best of both his unique visual vocabularies: a sense of place for a sculpture that is there but not.



PHOTO BY JEFF VESPA