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Dylan J. Beck • Artist's Statement

“Built space expresses a society’s material and political priorities.”

A Field Guide to Sprawl
Dolores Hayden

My sculpture explores the phenomenon of suburban sprawl in the American landscape. Within this domain, my interests range from concepts of land use and automobile-centered planning to the psychological effects of living in the “non-places” of a hypermodern world. Hypermodernity has created places that have no relation to the natural environment in which they reside. These places include airports, shopping malls, and various housing developments, among others.

Many decisions regarding spatial relationships within our built environment depend on the flow of goods and consumers from place to place. Unmanaged growth, known as sprawl, has been the cause and/or effect of problems with transportation, the environment, and the economy. At the same time, this growth has created new housing and employment opportunities. I situate my work between criticism and veneration. Likewise, there is a dichotomy in my aesthetic attraction to aerial images of suburban landscapes and my feelings toward the issues they illustrate.

I use several tactics to illustrate this dialectic. My sculptures are constructed with materials that are found in the retail and domestic setting along with those used in home construction. Through the examination of aerial photography and satellite imagery I use the same spatial relationships that are inherent in our built environment in my sculptures. The similarities of modern industrial/retail architecture and minimalist sculpture are incorporated into the forms I create through the use of subtle form and design.