

New York Times

LAND GRAB

Apexart
291 Church Street, TriBeCa
Through Dec. 22

The artists in this real estate-inspired group show are conceptual squatters in the spirit of Gordon Matta-Clark. Most of their projects exist mainly as maps, deeds and photographic documentation, at least within this nonprofit gallery's tiny footprint.

The mostly European artists treat land as political, not economic, currency. In his project "The Appropriation (of Land) Committee" (1991), the Romanian artist Dan Perjovschi sells a square meter of his country in small packs of soil as a comment on the privatization of land encouraged by the neo-Communist government. The Danish-born artist Jens Haaning proposes a time-share estate on the site of a former German concentration camp.

Other pieces tweak national boundaries in the name of artistic expression. The most bizarre is Lars Vilks's Republic of Ladonia, a square meter of land designated by Mr. Vilks as an independent nation in response to a dispute with the Swedish government over the location of one of his sculptures.

Visual statements are scarce. Leyla Cárdenas creates a maplike floor piece with peeling paint from ruins in her native Bogotá, Colombia. Katrin Sigurdardottir puts a charming twist on Duchamp's "Boîte en Valise" with a suitcase that unfolds to reveal models of parks and nature reserves near the artist's far-flung former homes.

New Yorkers will be most responsive to John Hawke's modified Bedford-Stuyvesant, Brooklyn, bus shelter and to Michael Smith and Joshua White's video "Open House" (1999), in which Mr. Smith gives a tour of the SoHo loft and studio he occupied for 20 years.

"Loft living isn't for everyone," he advises, a warning that barely registers in the current housing market.

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