

“Redressing Form and Space,” *Aesthetica Magazine*, February, 2017.

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Redressing Form and Space

JAMES CASEBERE

Over the last 30 years, James Casebere has developed an evocative and often disquieting style that places him at the forefront of his field. He creates table-sized models of imaginary spaces and structures, often derived from historical, architectural and cinematic sources, and photographs them in his studio. The ambiguous and uninhabited scenes he creates, ranging from landscapes to theatres, are haunting and suggestive of recent, unseen events. By lacking a foundation in any external, documentary reality, they evoke a sense of the uncanny, and invite the viewer to imagine and to reconstruct their own narrative or symbolic interpretation.

For his first solo show since 2010, and his first in the new space at Sean Kelly Gallery, New York, the artist returns to his exploration of interior spaces, this time in a direct response to the work of the Mexican architect Luis Barragán. The exhibition’s title, *Emotional Architecture*, refers to the name that Barragán and artist Mathias Goeritz coined for their latest approach to modernist buildings; they rejected cold functionalism to embrace space, colour and light and create structures that encouraged meditation and reflection.

Born in 1953, Casebere is often associated with “The Pictures Generation” which came to prominence in the 1980s and included figures such as Louise Lawler, Cindy Sherman, Robert Longo, Laurie Simmons, Richard Prince, Matt Mullican, James Welling, Michael Zwack and Barbara Kruger.

A running theme in Casebere’s work is investigating the iconic spaces and mythologies of contemporary America, beginning with everyday suburban and urban dwellings, as well as images of the West, which often take on a humorous quality. Later, his focus moved towards institutional architecture and its relationship to the concept of control, notably social institutions such as prisons, which developed alongside the rise of Enlightenment thought. Casebere’s work has taken on increasingly surreal and sophisticated levels of interpretation, exploiting the contradictions that are inherent when communal spaces are pictured devoid of inhabitants.

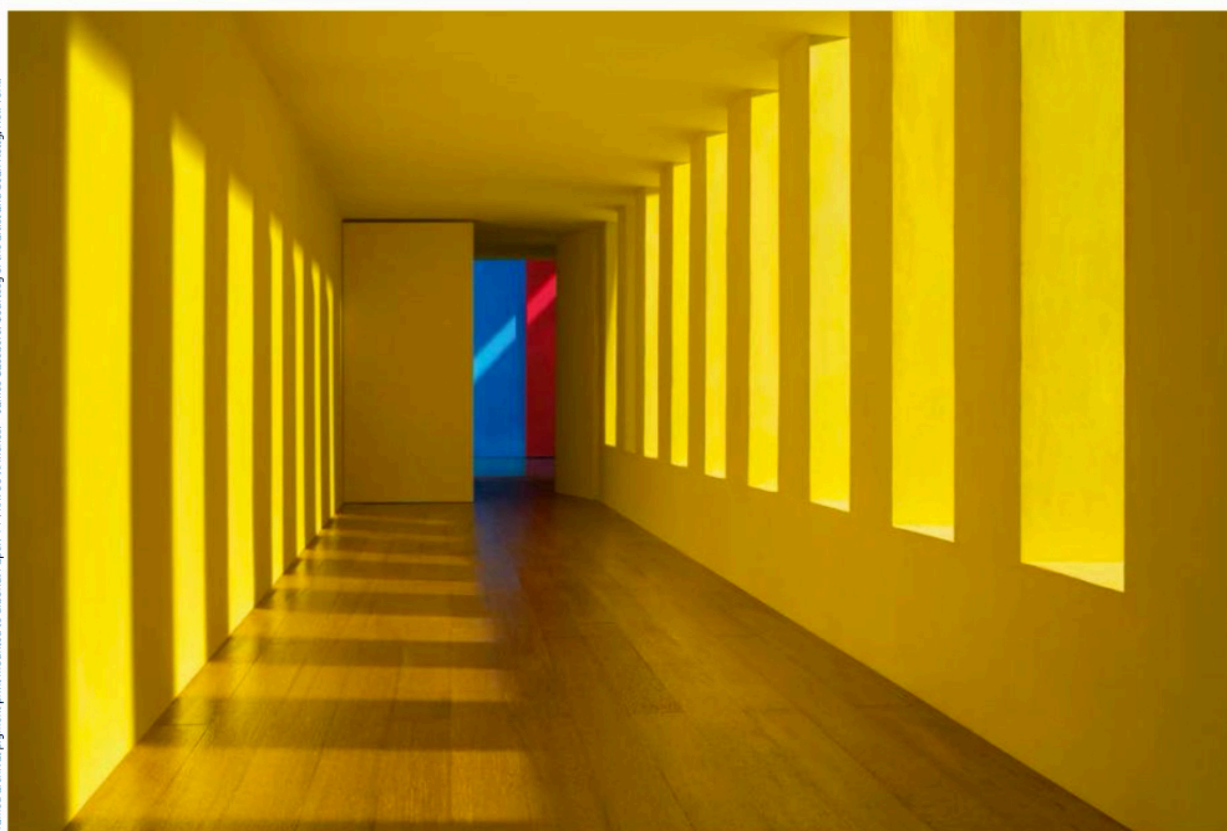
Historical events are often obliquely referred to – *Flooded Hallway* is modelled on the bunker beneath the Reichstag in Berlin, whilst *Flooded Arches. Nevision Underground, Monticello* references the Atlantic slave trade. Following the events of 9/11 and the “War on Terror,” Casebere turned his attention to the architecture of Spain and the Eastern Mediterranean and its historic role as a crossroads of culture and, particularly in the case of 10th century Andalusia, a place where Islamic, Jewish and Christian cultures co-existed.

Though this show shares a sense of serene austerity with Casebere’s earlier studies on prison cells, the atmosphere evoked – rather than isolation and confinement – is one of joy in the spirit of Barragán, whose sumptuous colour and dramatic light combine with simple forms and planes.

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Sean Kelly Gallery,
New York.
Until 11 March.

www.skny.com



James Casebere, *Yellow Corridor*, 2016. Framed archival pigment print mounted to dibond. Paper: 44 1/4 x 66 1/2 inches. © James Casebere. Courtesy of the artist and Sean Kelly, New York.