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Cobb, Michael. "On the Cover: James Casebere's Constructed Photographs | December 2021", *Chronogram*, December 2, 2021.

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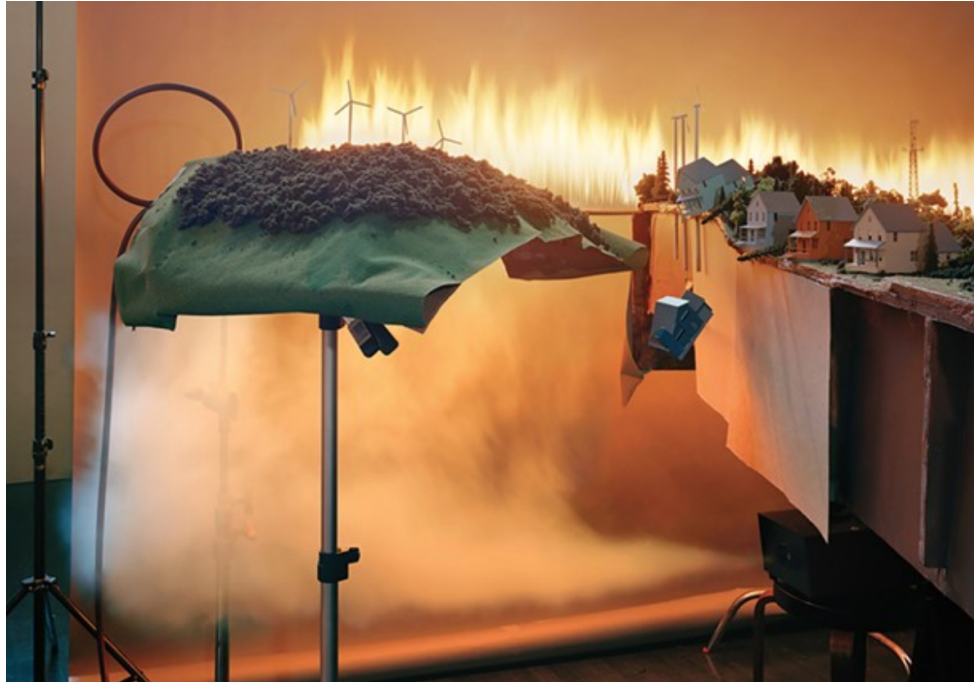
Landscape with Houses (Dutchess County, NY) #12, James Casebere, 2011

At first glance, the bright palette and plastic foliage of James Casebere's *Landscape with Houses (Dutchess County, NY) #12*, suggests an idealized, almost Lego-like world—albeit one with fires on the verge of consuming country homes while windmills stand still. What initially seems playful and innocent is in fact an acerbic comment on the death of the American dream, the net result of capitalism, and impending catastrophe. "I was trying to address the anxiety about the future generated by the dual crisis of the Great Recession, the consequences of global warming, and the absurdity of our oil-based

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economy,” Casebere says. Made in 2011, *Landscape* is a prescient and harrowing look at our present reality from a decade ago.

Casebere has been making and photographing models since 1975, his pioneering work predated by what ultimately came to be known as constructed photography. Originally, he shot film and later transitioned to digital. For this work, he incorporated more detail than previous projects and embraced model-making materials, constructing a large landscape with plaster, chicken wire, and cheese cloth covered with grasses and foliage made for model train enthusiasts.



A process shot of Falling House with Fire (for MK), a 2012 work by James Casebere that uses the same fire bar to simulate flames as in the cover image.

“The pandemic reinforced my desire to affect people’s lives more directly and to leave illusion behind,” he says. “Architectural photography is never the same as the thing itself—it’s often an abstraction or idealization. Discovering Luis Barragan and Mathias Goeritz’s *Emotional Architecture* reinforced my desire to create rather than simply invoke sensations of refuge, solace, solitude, safety, and spirituality.”

As a multimedia artist, Casebere says he always thought more three dimensionally than two, needing to make an object first. “In making a photo of a construction, many other issues come into play: there is the issue of time—the before and after, the control of light and its illusions, emotional impact, and reproducibility. There is also the drama of the shoot. With the digital revolution, our relationship to photography has changed, and we take for granted the falsehood created.”

Casebere has had a studio in Columbia County for the last six years. (His large-scale installation, *Solo Pavilion for Two or Three*, which was unveiled at PS21 in Chatham in May, will be on display through 2022.) Like many other artists, he came upstate to escape and rejuvenate. “Working here, my experience changed with post-pandemic gatherings and art events,” he says. “There is a shared desire to take part in meaningful dialog that is always within reach, if hidden away.”