ELEVATOR MUSIC 40 MELISSA THORNE— LANDSLIDE/SOLID

DECEMBER 21, 2019 – APRIL 26, 2020

I took my love, and I took it down
I climbed a mountain, and I turned around
And I saw my reflection in the snow-covered hills
'Til the landslide brought me down

—Stevie Nicks, 1975

And with that feeling
We were willing to take a chance
So against all odds, we made a start
We got serious, this wouldn't turn to dust
We build it up and build it up and build it up

And now it's solid
Solid as a rock
That's what this love is
That's what we've got

—Nickolas Ashford and Valerie Simpson, 1984

Melissa Thorne
(born Tallahassee, Florida, 1970, lives and works in upstate New York)

Landslide/Solid, 2010/2019
Two-sided vinyl record, sound curtains, seating, audio table, speakers
Courtesy of the artist

In 2010, I made *Landslide/Solid* as part of a new body of work referencing patterns taken from the streets and buildings of my then home, Los Angeles. After more than a decade of making paintings based on the patterns of interior domestic crafts, I began to explore and sample the exterior environment more purposefully. I became enthralled with a pattern called "rubblestone," a masonry term that describes patterns made from the scraps and offcuts of more precise stonework. Thinking that this method shared some similarities with the thrifty scrap recycling of quilts, I began photo-graphing rubblestone patterns all over the city: on architectural facades, on hand-built walls, and on the sound-buffering barriers that line the freeways of LA. I also documented the unique colors of the rubblestone surfaces: raw rock or concrete, graffiti spray paint, or the range of neutrals made by layers of graffiti. At the same time, I experimented with combining my visual interest in pattern with my experience playing in various bands.

Landslide/Solid attempts to create a dialogue between a real location, its abstracted equivalent, and its narrative corollary. The photographs on the album cover reference both a physical place and the abstracted patterns drawn from that place. The sound curtains are printed with flattened, color-specific abstractions of rubblestone walls and they enclose the audience in a buffered listening environment. The songs on the record offer a deadpan meditation on the symbolic use of rocks as narrative elements in pop music. Covers of pop songs are also used as a marker of place, recalling Los Angeles's history as a productive center of popular music while simultaneously referring to the continuous urban cycle of collapse and recovery. Together, these elements point to a comparison between the solid and the entropic through patterns and songs that amplify ideas of ruin or repair.

In re-making this piece for the Tang Museum, I wanted to emphasize the complexities of romance in the song covers. In *Solid*, Nickolas

Ashford and Valerie Simpson describe the process of overcoming obstacles and hardships in order to strengthen their bond. In *Landslide*, Stevie Nicks sings about the realization that her relationship may not survive the pragmatic difficulties encountered. The two songs (and the biographical references to the songwriters' personal lives within) offer a continuous loop for thinking about the nature of human relationships and the process of disintegration and rebuilding. The seating elements and the purple lighting reference the Jacaranda, a tree common in Los Angeles that blooms in the spring.

—Melissa Thorne
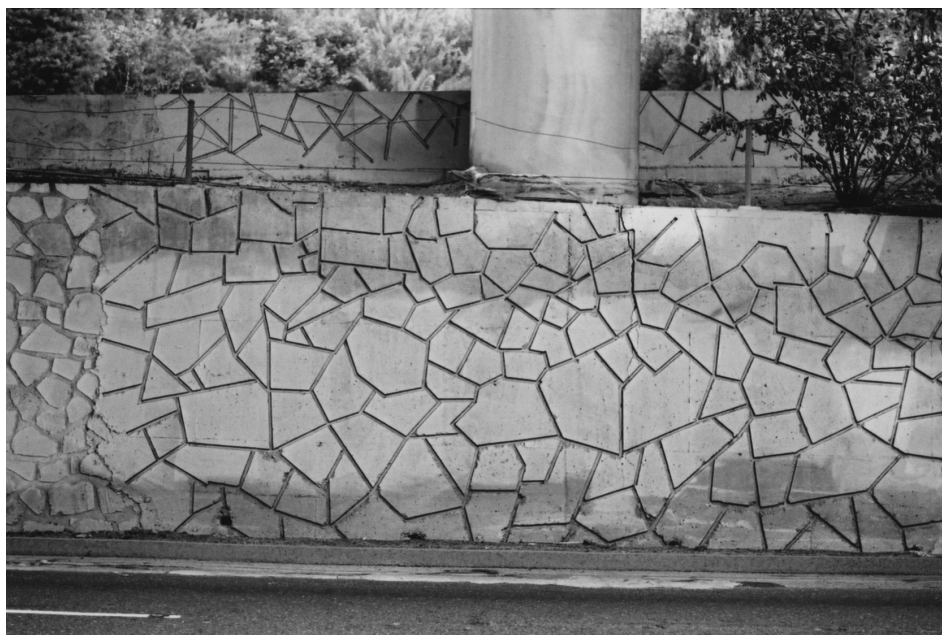
Melissa Thorne lives and works in upstate New York. Her work has been shown in solo and group exhibitions at Susanne Vielmetter Los Angeles Projects; Devin Borden Gallery, Houston; Galerie Rolf Ricke, Cologne, Germany; Galerie Anke Schmidt, Cologne, Germany; and Rosamund Felsen Gallery, Los Angeles, among others. Thorne earned her BFA from Carnegie Mellon University and her MFA from the California Institute of the Arts. She is on the Art and Art History faculty at the University at Albany, SUNY.

Elevator Music 40: Melissa Thorne—Landslide/Solid is organized by Dayton Director Ian Berry in collaboration with the artist and is supported by Friends of the Tang.

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