

Karl Roeseler Artist's Statement

Art is always a process of discovery for me.

One of my goals as an artist is to coax viewers into noticing more details about their environment through the experience of looking at or remembering my paintings—perhaps, if I'm successful, sharing or extending my own process of discovery.

I've always had figurative and abstract bodies of work. In general, my work tends to reflect my environment. I've been based in San Francisco since 1986, so my work tends to explore what's unique about this urban terrain.

When I began my black and white figurative paintings, my studio was in a building that spent its first 100 years as an indoor bocce-ball court at 22nd & Bryant. These paintings feature white lines on a black textured background depicting an interior living space, with just a hint of color, often in the guise of an upside-down cityscape in a window or a reflection. The details of these buildings reflect the Edwardian and Victorian trimmings that caught my eye during my daily walks through the Mission.

The Cubical City, a current body of abstract work, takes a familiar motif from my figurative work, the upside-down cityscape, and abstracts from it. I began this series when I worked out of a converted apartment at Pine & Stockton. The view from the bay window where I painted was of other Edwardian apartments densely packed before a background of Oz-like high-rises in the Financial District. One painting in this series, Schema, juxtaposes a snapshot of the linear structure with the fully abstracted image. My hope is that this juxtaposition leads the viewer into a kind of speculative calm, a no space.

So why the upside down cities? Perhaps because, when I was a small child, I enjoyed lying upside down on the sofa (feet on the sofa's back, my head dangling close to the carpet)—I loved looking at the ceiling—it seemed a hidden landscape that most people ignored. Even today, when I walk down the street, I can't help looking at cornices, roofs and chimneys.

In February 2009, I moved into new studio space at 340 Bryant, an industrial building that squats in poetic heaviness beneath the onramp of the Bay Bridge. I'm excited to see how working in this new space will affect my work.