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Charles LaBelle
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Titled *Driftworks*, LaBelle's new series of photo-based works draw upon the Situationist International concept of the derive, literally "drift" in English, as a strategy for both experiencing the city and challenging our perception of it.

Purposefully getting lost and wandering aimlessly in a variety of cities across the world- Marseille, Stockholm, Seoul, London, Venice, Prague, Miami, to name just a few- LaBelle records each "drift" by photographing thousands of details along the way. The resultant 1" square images, cropped out of proof sheets, are put together by hand into large grids. Formally intricate, the tapestry-like works coalesce brightly colored details into subjective maps. The city is, in these works, rearranged and exploded; the systems for understanding the space of the urban environment slips into disorder as images of ordinary structures and objects- buildings, shop signs, bus shelters, dumpsters, doors, soda cans, bicycles, and the occasional passer-by give way to an increasingly abstract vocabulary of unidentifiable bits of detritus, close-ups of architectural details, patterns, shadows and ultimately fields of solid color.

The largest work in the show, *Driftworks- Bellagio* (2004), which LaBelle shot during a month-long residency in Bellagio, Italy, is a thirty foot long grid of over 10,500 images. Thus, not only does each work record a "drift" through that particular city, but all the works together form a record of a wider, global drift.

Combining aspects of the flâneur, the tourist and the crime-scene photographer, LaBelle's "investigation" into the city is at once distracted, prone to all the fleeting impressions and chance encounters offered in the modern metropolis, and intensely focused. *Driftworks* are the hybrid by-product of both a cultivated reverie and hyper-consciousness of reality. Continuing the investigation into the relationship of the subject and the city which LaBelle has carried out over the past decade in a variety of media, *Driftworks*, like *Disappearance*, his first show at Roberts & Tilton, and *Dearborn*, his second, is at heart an attempt to apprehend the world and, as LaBelle has stated, "to try to locate myself in the midst of an increasingly transient and transparent notion of 'the real'."