

## GAGOSIAN GALLERY

The New York Times

INSIDE ART

### CHRIS BURDEN'S CARS IN LOS ANGELES

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Published: November 18, 2010



Gagosian Gallery  
A detail from Chris Burden's  
"Metropolis II," which will be installed  
at the Los Angeles County Museum  
of Art.

The California artist Chris Burden may be in his 60s, but he is still playing with toys. The thing is, the older he gets the more outrageously complicated the toys become.

Two years ago he created a 65-foot Erector Set skyscraper that stood in Rockefeller Center, and in 2004 he made "Metropolis I," composed of 80 Hot Wheels toy cars zooming around two single-lane highways along with monorail trains chugging on tracks of their own. The piece was snapped up by the 21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art in Kanazawa, Japan.

"I was happy with 'Metropolis I,' but it kind of disappeared once it went to western Japan," Mr. Burden said in a telephone interview from his studio in Topanga Canyon in Los Angeles County. So in 2006 he and a team of eight studio assistants, including an engineer, began "Metropolis II," a far more ambitious version. It includes 1,200 custom-designed cars and 18 lanes; 13 toy trains and tracks; and, dotting the landscape, buildings made of wood block, tiles, Legos and Lincoln Logs. The crew is still at work on the installation.

In Los Angeles, by his calculation, "every hour 100,000 cars circulate through the city," Mr. Burden said. "It has an audio quality to it. When you have 1,200 cars circulating it mimics a real freeway. It's quite intense."

When Michael Govan, director of the [Los Angeles County Museum of Art](#), saw it in Mr. Burden's studio at the outset of the project, he knew the museum had to have it. "I reserved it the day I saw it," said Mr. Govan, who has been making regular studio visits to chart its progress. "It's a portrait of L.A."

Mr. Govan's enthusiasm was shared by the artist's dealer, [Larry Gagosian](#), who said he was happy to see "Metropolis II" go to a public institution, and one of the museum's trustees, Nicholas Berggruen, who has agreed to buy the work for the museum. "We didn't just buy this piece — it's part of a bigger effort to bring more contemporary art to Lacma," Mr. Berggruen explained. Mr. Govan would not disclose the price.

"Metropolis II," which is expected to be finished in about two months but take 18 months to install, will be the second monumental Burden work for the museum. At the entrance Mr. Burden created 200 lampposts from the 1920s and '30s arranged in formation, a sort of electric mini-Parthenon.