

JUDITH HOFFMAN

TEMPO: Portland Maine

Title *The American Dream*

Materials Steel, Enamel

Dimensions 14.5' x 8' x 6'

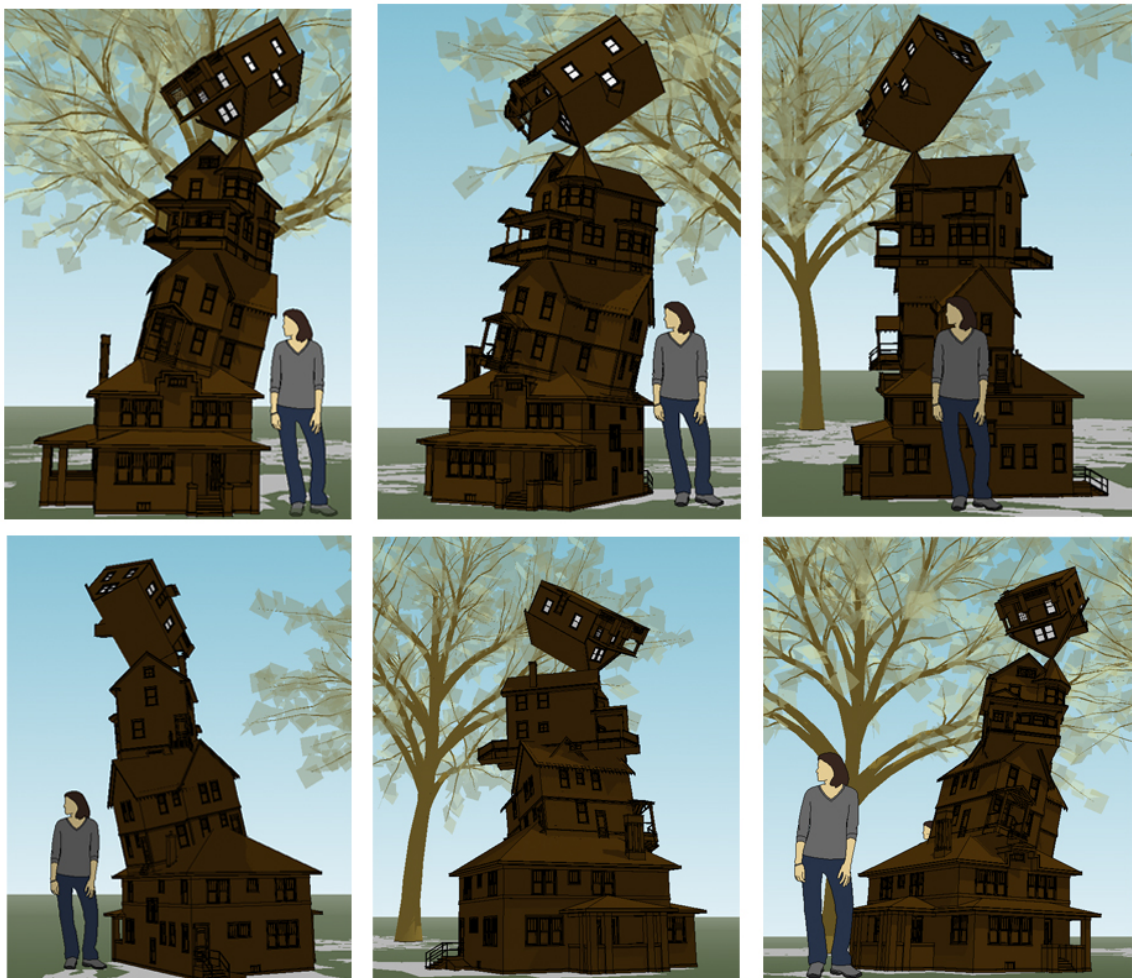
Weight 1,370lbs

The American Dream: if you work hard, with honesty, kindness, and responsibility towards others, you can achieve an ideal of personal autonomy still rooted in community. I believe that this ideal is most recognizably embodied in the free-standing, single family home.

That being said, at different points in history the idea and reality of “home” has had different meanings for Americans. What has however been consistent is the relationship between the individual and society that “home” represents. My work engages this relationship—and the potential tensions it has historically created—by exploring the importance of the single-family house to the “American Dream.” I believe the single-family home is in many ways the most recognizable icon of the American Dream because it simultaneously represents the achievement of both financial independence, and socio-economic belonging.

This irony fascinates me: what does it say about America that private home ownership translates into higher public standing? How does a society that so highly values the material gain embodied in home ownership transcend self-interest and become community? By stacking single-family homes in a vertical totem, I intend to provoke questions about how the American dream home both founded and fractured American communities. In Northwest American Native societies, the totem is a critical symbol of societal cohesion—it is literally the central point of the community’s physical geography. And it represents “home” through strong identification with shared heredity and kinship (both biological and mythological).

By stacking emblems of private achievement in totemic sculptural form, and displaying that sculpture in a public space, I want to raise questions about the fluid meaning of home and belonging, questions that hopefully resonate with the Portland community as it negotiates its own demographic and economic transitions in the 21st century.



Structural Descriptor

Steel I-beams at base measuring 15' (length) bolted to 15' x 9' x 1/2" steel plate. Armature rectangles are made of 2" x 2" x 2" angle iron, pyramid frames are made of 3" rounds, welded together. Vertical strut is 3.5" hollow round with 1/4" walls, and extends to the highest pitch of the interior roofing (approximately 14'). It is important to note that the exterior of the sculpture is made of 14 gauge steel sheets, so these will be welded to the armature further strengthening the structure.

