explored inequities in Parisian life by asking how and how freely individuals may navigate public spaces, and investigating the politics of failed urban planning. Sarkozy's policy was evidence, even before the mass killings in Norway this summer, that Europe is again burdened with xenophobia-tinged questions of national identity. With drawings and sculptures, Fassler foregrounded perspectives on the French capital that darkened its legend as the City of Light, in the process giving form to narratives that challenge the postcard-ready image officials prefer to promote.

The Berlin-based Canadian artist's on-site study of the Place de la Concorde provoked the most layered works in the show. The large-scale drawing Place de la Concorde I (from a series of three, all works 2011) traced individual paths around and across this largest of the city's squares in colored ink (mainly pink), mapping a mesmerizing web of human activity. Briefly annotated field notes, among them, SCAM, WOMAN PRETENDING TO DROP RING!, POLICE PULL OVER DARK BLUE HATCHBACK, and ROMA GIRL RUNNING FROM POLICE (there were repeated references to Roma and police) countered the bland imaginings of exclusionary politics. At the same time, Fassler charted her own presence here via an invented scale measured by her footsteps, which highlighted her experiential process. A pair of drawings, Place de l'Europe I and II, replaced the focus on individuals with an analysis of the array of signs (political posters and stickers, personal ads, graffiti, traffic signs) crowding its visual field. While similar in approach to her earlier street-based projects in London and Berlin, Fassler's Paris observations evidenced troubling racist undercurrents. Superimposed on a graphite diagram of the complex of bridges that forms its intersection, slogans of the far right, including A QUESTION OF BLOOD and THE NATIONALISTS ARE BACK, reverberated through the driving colors of the graphics, above all the blue, white, and red of the French flag.

These colors reappeared with still greater stridency in Les Halles (Tricolore), one of the show's two sculptures, in which Fassler's miniaturized replica of parts of this run-down housing, shopping, and transit complex crowned two fictitious monumental towers painted in the national colors. Constructed in the late 1970s in a wave of "modernization," and having displaced the beloved iron-and-glass arcades of a fabled mid-nineteenth-century marketplace, Les Halles has become infamous as a dilapidated center for drug dealing and petty crime and is suspect, if not, to some of its direct train connections to impoverished suburbs. It is now in the midst of yet another redevelopment. With its cheap and ready materials—largely cardboard and Plexiglas—replicating the site's dereliction as attentively as its contours, the piece intimated links between urban renewal and gentrification, class inequity and claims to urban space, unrest in the banlieues and conservative politics. It was impossible not to think of T. J. Clark's analysis of Haussmannization and its consequences for the struggles between the classes, and of how this manifested in Impressionist painting. But where Clark's attention to social inequalities emphasized ambiguities in class depiction, Fassler's are comparatively direct. By observing details that are ubiquitous but easy to overlook, she verifies that inequity and the political structures that support it are deeply entrenched, an inescapable part of the urban landscape.

—Margaret Ewing

Larissa Fassler
Place de la Concorde I, 2011. pen on paper, 54 7/8 x 75 1/8.