

Andrea Zittel

29 October - 08 December 2001

A-Z 2001 Homestead Units

American artist Andrea Zittel returns to Sadie Coles HQ to present the "A-Z 2001 Homestead Unit," the latest in her series of "A-Z Living Units" concerned with contemporary perceptions of freedom and personal liberation.

The "Homestead Unit" is the first piece to be produced at the "A-Z (New) West" studio, located in the California high desert adjacent to Joshua Tree National Park.

The design of the "A-Z 2001 Homestead Unit" is inspired by the tradition of homestead cabins in the desert region surrounding "A-Z (New) West." In the 1940s and 1950s the U.S. government gave settlers five acres of land for free if they could "improve" it with the construction of a minimal homestead structure. The result is a seemingly infinite grid system of dirt roads that cut up a very beautiful desert region. In the middle of each perfect square of land is a tiny shack - most of them now have now long since been abandoned.

The original pioneering spirit of the "frontier" considered autonomy and self-sufficiency as prerequisites of personal freedom. At A-Z west, Zittel investigates how such perceptions of freedom have been re-adapted for contemporary living. Zittel believes that personal liberation is now achieved through individual attempts to "slip between the cracks". Instead of building big ranches and permanent homesteads, today's independence seekers prefer small portable structures, which evade the regulatory control of bureaucratic restrictions such as building and safety codes.

The "2001 A-Z Homestead Unit" reflects the qualities that Zittel feels create independence for the owner and user: compactness, adaptability and transportability. Because the unit is less than 120 square feet, it is zoned as a "temporary structure" and does not require building permits. The entire unit breaks down into a series of panels and can be transported and erected by two people in an only few hours.