

GREGORY THIELKER, "THE WALL"

Cohen Gallery @ Granoff Center, Brown University

Gregory Thielker's work combines seemingly incoherent media and often politicizes the content of landscape. His most recent series "Unmeasured" takes on a particularly poignant topic, that of US-Mexico border politics, that "maps" itself quite literally over the terrain-subject matter. The most recent exhibition of the series was co-authored by Paja Faudree, professor of Anthropology at Brown. In "The Wall" at Brown Arts Initiative's Cohen Gallery, we see how the different media begin to reflect Thielker's subject.

As opposed to Trump's wall, which signifies "national difference" in a single, solid architectural element, Thielker's wall is comprised of multiple physical, ideological, human and non-human, static and moving agents. Formally, the gargantuan hand-painted watercolor of a section of border fence, seems to dominate the gallery. It assumes an alpha role, yet the trompe-l'oeil clouds of border-vignettes, the video monitor of waves crashing against the wall's ocean ending, and the found-object on a pedestal seem to "sure up" the insecurity with which the single overwhelming landscape is bound to leave the viewer. In speaking about his lens-covering photographic technique (from which the photorealistic paintings are made,) Thielker also points out that it was a metaphor for having one's vision blocked. Are we to understand the wall and the "border politics" as a visual or psychic "block" in the way of the US-Central/South American socio-political realities? In a similar way to Trump's wall, the larger watercolor *mural* (let's not ignore the etymology of the term, here: the Latin *muralis* as "pertaining to a wall") seems to lay claim the conversational and physical space while perhaps obfuscating policies and trans-national histories that long pre-date it.

The by-and-large exclusion of the human subject in this series is deliberate. Thielker and Faudree have adopted a representational mode that centers the thing-ish, spatial, and landscaped histories of the border as opposed to personal stories of subjectivation that may or may not collectively amount to "the Wall."

This exhibition is open in the Cohen Gallery at 154 Angell Street, Providence, RI until March 31st, 2018

-Ernesto Renda