

PORT OF CALL



Playback

Density Maps

Neeraja D, Ji Su Kwak, Haerim Lee
Joseph Josué Mora, Annie Raccuglia
Luis A. Sahagun, Yasmin Spiro, Hope Wang

curated by Ahmed Ozsever

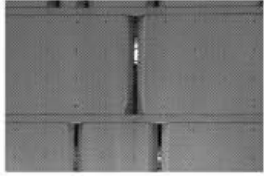
CHICAGO
ART
DEPT

February 8-March 9 2019

Chicago Art Department
1932 S. Halsted

10 km

5 mi



Haerim Lee
Time of
MCC no.9

Haerim Lee's scratched photography disrupts our ability move through space. The photographs are obscured by white redactions that act as both a barrier and a veil denying us access to the space and implicating the viewer as a witness. Initially, one is drawn to the bold contrasting space where light pours into the images, and its relationship to the white marks against the dark images. The second and more important timeline of the images is the surface. The images are created by the removal of another. These marks were not applied via camera, prior to printing -- they are the result of physical eradication. These linear marks that radiate from a central axis appear as trip wires, operating as negations that subvert the ability to ascend the staircase. The images take on a progressively more unstable vantage point; the subjective gaze becomes more disoriented, less able to engage with the pathway created within the stairs. This vertigo reconciles mind and body, the abrupt physical barrier, with that of mental disorientation. This could be anywhere, it could be everywhere, it is not a site but a type. The staircase is subject to the ideas translation. It is a form that is divorced from its location. However, the secondary intervention foregrounds the concepts of origin and destination. The photographs depict an interior space that functions similarly to a port insofar as it is a space of transition and permeability. Through their surface treatment, they bear the physical scars of memory.

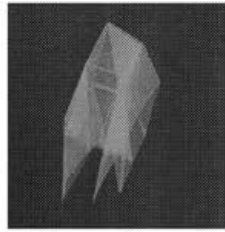
Ji Su Kwak's I've Been Around (For A While) inscribes place to the individual. This series of drawings creates a collection of third person narratives in fleeting glances while simultaneously suggesting the first person gaze. Each is based on a found photograph that has been reproduced on tracing paper with oil pastel. The colors are too rich to document people and places, and the gaps between handmade marks are the result of the inability to achieve fidelity to an original. These drawings epitomize unkept promises of photography. Despite knowing that photographs are never more than partial truths at best, photographs look too close to reality, they make us think we remember more than we do. These drawings remind us that all memory must travel through a physical body, that those errors are what give memory its function. These drawings are the pathways and patterns created by the second definition of the Port of Call, each drawing is a port, both spatially and chronologically.

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Port of Call is a shipping industry term referring to the stops that a vessel makes throughout its voyage. Its secondary and vernacular definition refers to "any of a number of places that a person visits in succession." The adjacency of these terms creates an analogy between humans and the infrastructure of global shipping and transportation. A Port is a location that is both transient and permanent. They are permanent fixtures to house impermanent vessels, goods, and bodies. Ports act as punctuation marks in the language of global infrastructures. These pauses and hesitations are the sites where human experience is situated to that of cargo as it passes amongst locations. Each voyage is a well written sentence that establishes and inverts relationships of subject and object. Subjects become objects insofar as they are acted upon by the vessel of transport.

Port of Call seeks the traces of how infrastructure constructs and shapes individual experience, sense of place, and conception of time. The exhibition channels this relationship through the lens of mediation and technology, material, labor, and memory. Port of Call studies the effects of infrastructures, both those that are highly visible and the unseen or forgotten, on personal and collective senses of place and identity.



Neeraja D. MSKU484229 #5,
Archival Pigment Print, 2019

Screens and lenses are one source by which we can locate, track and trace systems of circulation. Imaging technology and the internet collapse space and allow us to engage with the translocation of space. We seemingly experience transference in real time, only lagging behind by the amount of time it takes for signals to travel through cables that pump information through soil and water. The interfaces are stylized and linked to systems of mapping, but cultivate obsession as we strive to see that which is filtered through lenses and screens. One can engage repeatedly with tracking software reflecting their image on the screen while mentally casting themselves into a satellite image rendered before them. Our imagination of vast expanses of ocean and land we cannot access are linked to the interfaces through which they travel.

Neeraja D interrogates the computer screen in the video SeaLand. The artist obsessively engages the interface that tracks container ships which then translates to the spectator. The tracking was an act of anticipation-awaits the ships arrival, while our viewing it is a memory. The two become intrinsically linked as we are given an affective window through the screen into this autobiographical piece. The piece collapses two infrastructures; that of the vessels that are being tracked with the concealed infrastructure of the internet. The artist makes us passive witnesses to an epic voyage until eventually the system fails and we get trapped in blocks of cerulean blue where the program cannot keep up. The counterpart to this work is Provisions for a Journey #3. It takes the form of an antithetical map insofar as it describes and characterizes movement. The box traveled from India to Chicago for this exhibition and the drawing within was created by the movement made by a ball contacting carbon paper within. Provisions for a Journey #3 therefore makes the exhibition into a point of its own, both in virtual form and in physical objects. The piece also contains a copper plate that has been etched but is yet to be printed. The cubic form inscribed upon it is a depiction of the support structure for a shipping container. These cubes are reminiscent of minimalist sculpture but bear the burden of function. They are the underlying structure of capital and the stabilizing form that underscores the structure experienced in SeaLand. The marks in the plate are a trace and act as inscription. This functions in contrast to the anticipation epitomized by the suspended state of an unprinted plate thereby mimicking the mutability of the material. The cardboard piece is made from the cast of a box that was shipped from the US to India in 2015. In casting the cardboard a prominent red stamp was imposed upon the plaster cast referring back to the source material and mimicking the form etched into the copper plate.

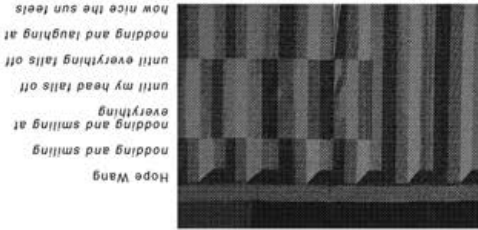


Joseph Josué Mora, From There to Here

Joseph Josué Mora's From Here to There draws from photography and online mapping. The piece is a photograph of dirt and rock that has been contained twice over. First, in the container, that we barely see at the edge of the frame. Then by the photograph itself acting as a container. Dirt is relegated to information and presented by the medium that does exactly what the works title suggests--take (the image of) something from here to there. There is a white mark slashing through the middle of the middle of the image rendering the depicted soil incomplete. The mark is contained within the image, not on top of the print, equating the computer interface with that of the soil and rock depicted in the photograph. The mark appears to be from a map, but not an objective mark. Instead it has the appearance of a path traveled, something logged in a digital mapping interface. This implies two opposing measures of distance, one that equates to the scale of our vision, the other that must be abstracted and reduced in order to be quantified. This mark is a reduction upon the photographic image like a word that has been struck through but remains legible. This photograph raises questions about our access to land and purports the mediated rendering as something that can supplant corporeal experience.



Ji Su Kwak
I've Been Around
(For a While)



nodding and smiling at
until my head falls off
until everything falls off
nodding and laughing at
how nice the sun feels



nodding and smiling at
until my head falls off
until everything falls off
nodding and laughing at
how nice the sun feels

Perceptions of the present and future are predicted on memory, in its unpredictability and unreliability. Memory inscribed in the various sensations. All of these can be listed in images via light and material in the form of photo-grams. Photographs don't give us memory, they don't recall memory, they do not furnish document time and event. They do however, act as a catalyst that evokes the narratives we construct surrounding how we bond to place, individuals and people, groups who migrate between spaces, are linked to complex channels of memory. Those of the prior sense of place -- who may be partially obscured by their present whereabouts, those that operate collectively as being identified as culturally coded groups, and the collective memory that is linked both to origin and destination.



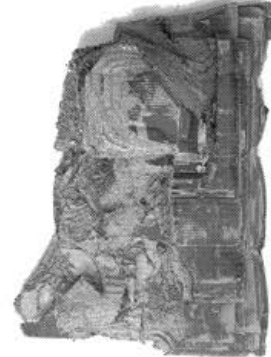
Annie Facuglia, Sunspots

Hope Wang's nodding and smiling -- confronts the viewer with the dissonant relationship of material to image. We see hard congealed strands of magnetism engaged in hundreds of individual threads co-mingling. The warmth suggested by the piece sits in stark contrast to the depicted image of steel that parts of an operator's magnetic field. These mysterious events are the result of concurrent invisible forces, both heat and magnetism. Annie Facuglia's Sunspots create a labor of energy. Sunspots refer to the dark spots in the sun where intense magnetism inhibits the transfer of heat and appear in pairs with counter-acting magnetic fields. The sun's intense magnetism can only be witnessed symptomatically -- we cannot directly see the sun but we see its effect, we cannot see magnetic fields but can observe the convergence of opposite poles. Facuglia gives us a window into the etymology of this celestial phenomenon. Sunspots have historically been tracked in attempt to gather data toward understanding solar events, but also to predict economic catastrophes. Due to the futility of the latter effort, "the sunspot equilibrium" has become a term used in contemporary economic theory as a shorthand for uncertainty in the market. It is a theory that attempts to account for invisibility in relation to the sun's reflection by means of travel and occupying an infrastructure that allows for the reconstitution of vision. In doing so, we witness the coincidence of land, air, vision, and time.

Yasmin Spiro's Sheet Bends (a knot that the knot connects two different kinds of types of rope) simultaneously reaffirms and transforms its source material. The piece is a knot that suggests multiple casts from heavy gauge rope that suggest nautical and industrial use, the type of rope that secures a ship in the harbor, or connects to an anchor. The sections converge and diverge like bodies of water spreading transferring the inner life of the material into an dramatic and immersive wall composition. The material treatment suggests permanence, while the knot itself appears frozen in time, in defiance of gravity, while each unit appears frozen in time, in defiance of gravity, while the material of its most essential quality, its malleability. Therefore, proclaiming itself as a copy. They imply the interior connections of the intertwining strands that we place trust in, both function and provide strength. The surface quality and fidelity to texture reminds that rope contains the traces of the hands that have grasped it. It has been shaped, stretched, frayed from repeatedly engaging and disengaging from ports and harbors. Spiro's relationship to this material is longstanding. Her affinity documenting its own story.



Yasmin Spiro
Sheet Bends



Luis Sabagun
Conflicts of Desire

Luis Sabagun's Cardboard Paintings transform one such material into dazzling textures with their multiple layers of detritus from a given locale. They are joined amplifying the interior structure of the material. The brown piece appears as a land mass, as something that has been meticulously mapped to resemble a slab of something that has been removed or excavated. These pieces make evident the constant accumulation and isolation of bodies in space. They define a space while creating their own.

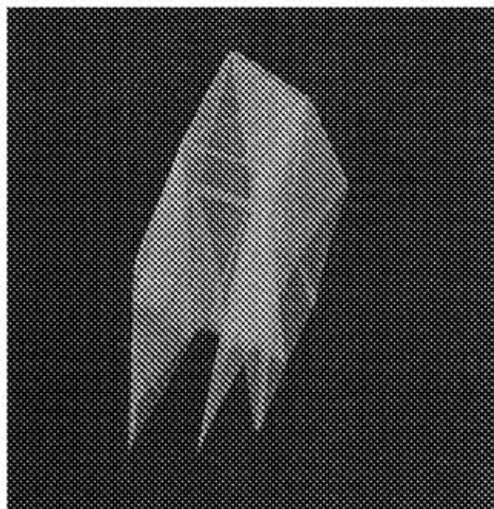
entire zip codes, railways span national borders, highways are the monolithic locks. However, for all of those instances there are numerous examples of invisible, inessential or forgotten infra-structures that carry with them the traces of function that are both specific and collective. Examples of such are often there- that overlooked, or discarded, or are too ubiquitous and therefore presupposed to be inconsequential.

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