

"There is nothing so \_\_\_\_\_ as that border in the mind"

09 September - 28 October 2006



"The terror and the possibility in the things not seen" (detail) 1997 - 2006

The four works on view in Judith Barry's second exhibition at the Galerie Karin Sachs address contemporary notions of 'border conditions'. These pieces ask: "How can we think differently about the concept of 'borders' within the current personal and political economies of massive 'globalization'?"

As marking the separation between others and ourselves?

As making visible the effects of capital across geographical divides?

As producing strategies for empowerment, through the development of new hybrids and narratives forms?

As forging new identities and social narratives, pathways for people to go from one place to another? \*

"First and Third", presented in model form, is a series of 'as-told-to' stories, which chart how people attempt to make sense of the ideological differences that separate their personal experiences from the contradictory messages of the American dream with its promises of equality and personal freedom. "First and Third" premiered in 1987, as a large-scale video projection, at the Whitney Biennale and has been exhibited continuously to critical acclaim. The work will again be presented, this October in New York, in multiple sites at the 2006 Queens International in the Queens Museum.

"The terror and possibility in the things not seen", shown as an animated three-dimensional model of the spectacular T-shaped billboard that was originally commissioned for inSite97, is a reflection of the relationships that might be posed within a contemporary notion of landscape. What is most striking about the border between Tijuana and San Diego is that they share the same topography, yet they look and feel utterly different. While the concept of landscape functions to frame the dialogue between what used to be called nature and culture, it now also reflects the largely invisible flows of global capital. The photographic tradition of collage has been updated, using digital media, to trace these flows and effects, rendering what is often invisible, more vibrantly visible.

"border stories, working title, from one place to another" is an 'ambient' interactive media network and display, as opposed to a typical television network. Shown as a model in three-dimensional perspective, the work raises questions about what media might be if it was not commercial television or advertising. Commissioned by inSite2000, it presents a mix of cultural programming in the tradition of a Situationist detournement; as you traverse the city you might encounter this streetscape as a guerrilla style action. This 'ambient' network broadcast unconventional media programming into the staid downtown milieu of San Diego. The site itself is a border that separates the new tourist-friendly San Diego from the older derelict port city of San Diego.

Three of the stories that were produced from this ambient network are also available for viewing as a single channel video. Employing a similar methodology as "First and Third", these stories were 'collected' from citizens living between the two cities of Tijuana and San Diego. These stories address the potential fluidity of the border; the ways that people have made use of the specific conditions it allows and disallows, finding potential among its gaps, seepages and elisions, and a way to claim it as their own. In the process they are creating new identities and ways of getting 'from one place to another'. In a cultural sense, it might be said that Tijuana and San Diego are merging to become a new hybrid city.

\* A short note about the space of 'globalization':

We all know that globalization is not a new phenomenon. It has been occurring for centuries. What is relatively new is that powerful digital connections, which articulate every aspect of daily urban life, require us to continually re-think how we negotiate our places and ways through the societies we inhabit. Such processes challenge the privileged status of not only Cartesian geometries and older models of spatialization, but also of cultural hegemonies as well. Infra-structural links and connectors, as well as information exchanges and thresholds, become the dominant metaphors to examine the boundless extensions of increasing expansion. Increasingly, these processes are directly supporting the emergence of an internationally integrated and yet highly fragmented, new work society that straddles the planet. Participation is unavoidable, but is co-optation?

New highly polarized urban landscapes are emerging where premium infrastructure networks -- hi-speed telecommunications, smart highways, global airline networks, international media conglomerates -- selectively connect together the most favored users and places both within and between cities. Valued spaces are thus increasingly defined by their fast track connections elsewhere. At the same time premium and high capability networked infrastructures often effectively bypass less favored and intervening places and what Castells calls, redundant users. Often such by-passing and disconnection is directly embedded in the design of networks, both in terms of the geographies of the points they do and do not connect, and in terms of the control placed on who or what can flow over these networks. Castells predicts that in the near future valuable locales and people will be found everywhere, even in the most remote places. But switched off territories and people will also be found everywhere, albeit in different proportions. How will artists and cultural workers make use of these switched-off places? What hybrid forms may emerge in these sites? For these are the spaces where an oppositional practice traditionally can materialize.

It is precisely here where I would locate the works in this exhibition at Galerie Karin Sachs, hence the title:

‘There is nothing so \_\_\_\_\_ as that border in the mind’

Judith Barry was born in Columbus, Ohio and currently lives between New York City and Berlin. Her work crosses a number of disciplines: performance, installation, film/video, sculpture, architecture, photography, new media and writing. She has exhibited at such venues as the Berlin Biennale ('03), several Venice Biennale(s) of Art/Architecture ('88, '90, '01), São Paulo Biennale ('94), Nagoya Biennale ('93), Carnegie International ('01), Whitney Biennale ('87), Sydney Biennale ('82), and two InSites (San Diego/Tijuana) ('97, '00), among others. In 2000, she was awarded the Kiesler Prize for Architecture and the Arts and in 2001 her work, "Voice off", received "Best Pavilion" and "Audience Award" at the eighth Cairo Biennale. Some recent exhibitions include: "SHOP 1V" Whitechapel Gallery ('06), "Dark Places" Santa Monica Museum of Art ('06), "Wall to be destroyed" Frac Lorraine, Metz ('05), "Baroque/Neo Baroque" DA2 Salamanca ('05), "Phonorama" ZKM Karlsruhe ('04), "East Village USA" New Museum ('04). In the spring of 2007 a traveling survey of her work will open in Domus Atrium 2, Salamanca, Spain and will tour internationally.