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SAN DIEGO-TIJUANA

In questioning the logic of borders, Homi Bhabha begins with Heidegger: "The boundary is that from which something begins its presencing." It is interesting to consider the precise conditions of InSite's public art projects' occupation of the highly charged, contentious, politicized border between Mexico and the U.S., and to question how art appears and addresses various audiences in this context.

**InSite: Art Practices in the Public Domain San Diego Tijuana** [August 26—November 23, 2005] asserts itself as an un-biennial, and the project's organizers and curators address issues of border and reception by relating them to various concepts of time, space, publics, and translation.

The promise of such a premise and the elation of the opening events are nonetheless deflated as one blatantly inhabits and is forced to acknowledge one's confinement to the role of tourist, delivered by bus, map in hand, looking for art interventions at Tijuana's border and in adjacent locales. Los Angeles based artist **Mark Bradford's** project *Maleteros* [porters] is perhaps the one intervention that will have longstanding effect on an informal border economy. Bradford's collaboration with the *maleteros* was a self-conscious attempt to redirect InSite's resources to potentially affect the structure of an established network. Working with taxi drivers, porters, and the hierarchy inherent in this cross-border industry, Bradford inserted signs of activity within the landscape. The languages of official and unofficial enterprise were seamlessly negotiated. Bradford's project carefully considers how to collaborate, "pass," and intervene without disturbing or disrupting the established ecology of work. He addresses the border as a spectacular site, where porters occupy a unique position—working at, within, through, and outside the official lines of vision. Reconsidering the branding, identification, and hyper-visibility inherent in the transit across the panoptical border, Bradford negotiates his own activity



Aernout Mik, still from *Osmosis and Excess*, 2005, video installation project for inSite\_05 (courtesy of the artist)

in relation to the visibility of the porter's work and the invisibility of the parallel networks with which he also intersects.

**Javier Telles'** project *One Flew Over the Void* [*Bala perdida*] tackled the problematically spectacular function of the border and the absurdity of its efficacy. Telles orchestrated the hurling of a professional human cannonball, with passport in tow, over the Playas de Tijuana-Border Field State Park border with thousands of onlookers on the beach. The performance was prefaced by a parade of patients from a local health center—Telles' collaborators in costume, music, and opening announcements. The artist, who has been collaborating with institutionalized individuals internationally, did not avoid readings of the piece as an exploitative stunt. The criticality of the piece was perhaps overshadowed by its deliberate sensationalism. Telles may have also intended to directly challenge Armando Silva's pronouncement, in *Urban Imaginaries*, that "the best realizations of public art of recent decades have been fueled by a strong resistance to constituting themselves as spectacle."

**Aernout Mik's** panoramic video installation *Osmosis and Excess* was elegantly installed in a parking garage in downtown San Diego. The viewer or passerby confronted a new rendition of the drive-in. Staging familiar yet uncanny situations, the artist's video reconfigures the pharmacy which positions Tijuana as a destination for American tourists and

nearby inhabitants. Mik restages this site through the choreography of actors and their sully of the sterile locale. Formally, the drug store's color, clutter, and reflective mirrored walls parallel the density and excess of the landscape that Mik also reveals—that of heaps of American cars discarded in Tijuana. Imaging a reservoir of waste, Mik bares the traffic of commodities and refuse across the border in a beautiful mediation on consumption and exchange as both aesthetic documentary and fiction. Mik images the entropic city through a "cars and drugs" vernacular.

A modest, intimate, and curatorless exhibition held at the artist's space Gallery Estacion Tijuana countered and complemented InSite's ambitious undertaking. Mounted concurrently with the opening of InSite, *Touch of Evil* was an "anarchic exercise" that brought together works by **Andrea Bowers, Sam Durant, Calra Herrera-Prats, Teresta Margolles, Daniel J. Martinez, and Rigo 23**. Responding to the currency of evil, monocracy, and failure with a level of risk and confrontation, this project addressed politics in the space of artistic practice, particularly when that site is the border, which Marcos Ramirez has so aptly defined as a "parallel reality." Martinez's signage "You Are Entering Free Tijuana" articulates the paradoxical state of exception that rules over this parallel.

Is the task of InSite and its collaborators to ask how the terrain of the border can be problematized, theorized, and used as parallel, lim-

inal, hybrid, unhierarchical, indeterminate, and permeable? Can utopian discursive models of the border be effective when, experientially, such notions are very remote from material conditions?

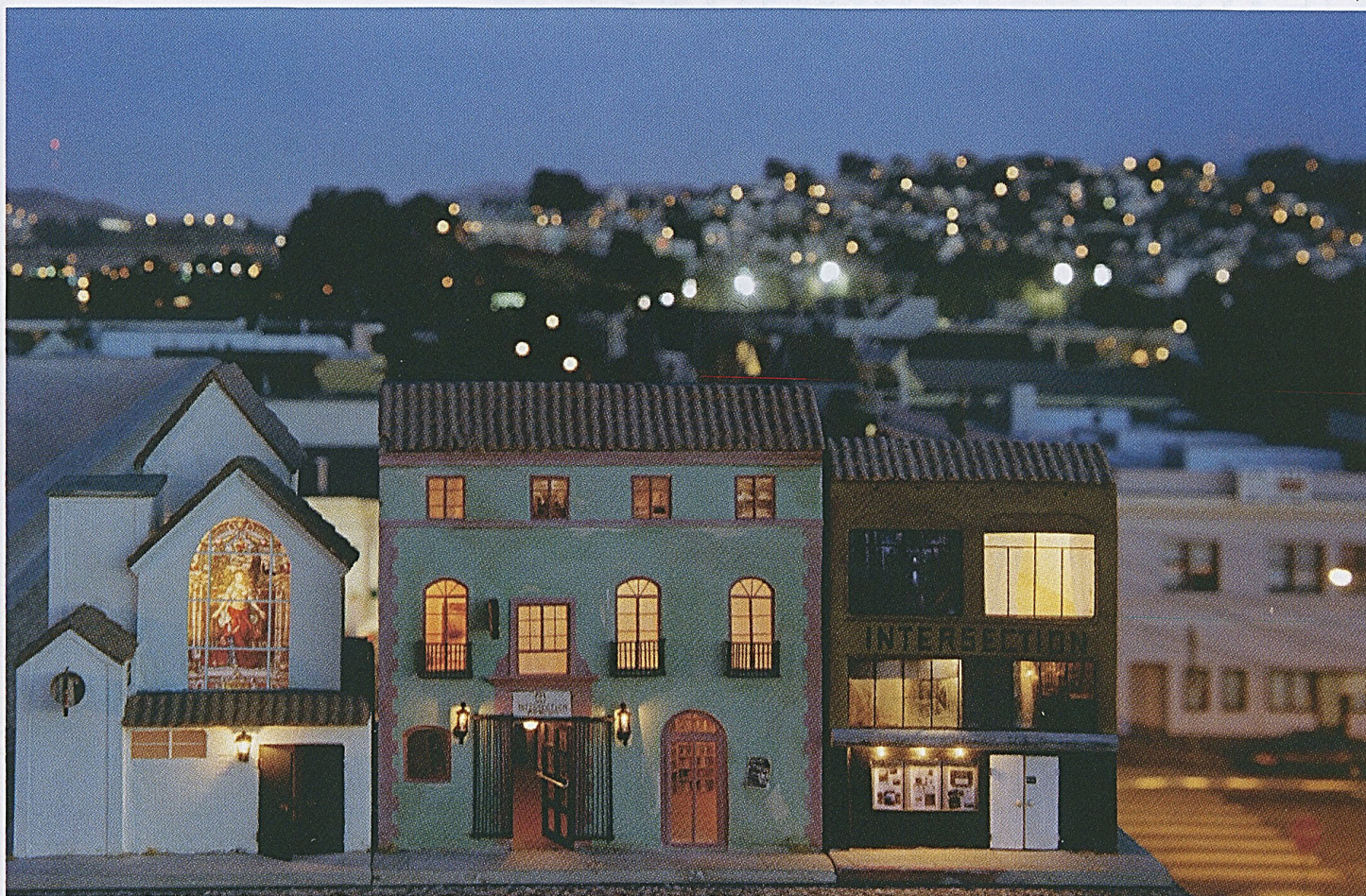
An ambitious research-based project initiated by curator Ute Meta Bauer may indeed tackle these questions. Approaching the politics of the border through historical texts, institutional collaborations, and personal recollections, the Mobile\_Transborder Archive collects documentation. In contrast, InSite's artistic director Osvaldo Sanchez sought to shift the focus from the border as territorial boundary to the "public domain [as] the situational equivalent of a collision zone... the certainty of social mobility exercised in the ethical space of difference. To create public domain is to induce an experience of public," which is in itself the production of new subjects who are made aware of their own interaction. It implies the production of circumstantial identities, movable contexts and continuously negotiated space."

—Lauri Firstenberg

SAN FRANCISCO

A coffeehouse, a church, a mortuary chapel, and a furniture store: over the course of the past four decades, such sites have housed Intersection for the Arts, one of San Francisco's oldest and most vital alternative art spaces. Founded in the early 1960s, Intersection integrated several cultural experiments including The Bread and Wine Mission, The 14th Street Art Center, and The Precarious Vision Coffeehouse, and provided artists who were conscientious objectors with an alternative to service in the Vietnam War. Since then, Intersection has welcomed poets, writers, theater artists, musicians, and visual artists. This year, as the organization celebrates its fortieth anniversary, its vibrant material history is the inspiration for the exhibition **Blueprints** [June 18—July 30, 2005], which represents the reflexive, self-aware nature of Intersection through a series of





Tracey Snelling, *Intersection, Night*, 2005, chromogenic print, 30 x 40 inches (courtesy of Stephen Cohen Gallery)

new works that connect its past, present, and future.

To assemble the show, *Intersection* curators invited eleven local artists to create works that consider the relationship between architecture, history, and memory. They were asked to pay close attention to a central concern of the organization: *Intersection*'s desire to cultivate critical perspectives on social and political issues. As a result, the artists explored the ways in which alternative art and history leave a physical mark in the built environment, providing case studies on the embedding of art in community. The title *Blueprints* is doubly fitting—for its architectural reference and as a visualization of the process of transformation of space into place through art.

756 Union Street, 766 Valencia Street, 446 Valencia Street, 2005, **Tracey Snelling's** mixed-media installation, renders *Intersection*'s previous sites in miniature form through detailed, scaled models of the past three buildings. Juxtaposed, the buildings are transformed into small town neighbors. Light and sound emanate from each tiny interior, aligning past and present in

slightly frenzied unison. In this tiny street section, sites are not mapped by accurate location but instead by *Intersection*'s own biographical narrative.

**Su-Chen Hung**, a Taiwanese artist based in San Francisco, sees memory embedded in walls that surround us. For *Stories in the Walls*, 2005, collages of materials ranging from news broadcasts to TV sitcom theme music—and dating from 1966 to the present—could be heard through ear-shaped perforations in the walls. In this piece, sound and listening require tactile interactions with the gallery walls. Placing their ears over the holes, visitors must take a participatory role. Faint, dirty-gray traces of previous interactions provide subtle evidence of the material awareness that is the focus of the exhibit, and of the institution's historical concerns.

Lining the center of the gallery floor, **Conrad Atkinson's** pigment prints create a carefully placed path. In *Weeds: beneath the paving stones, the beach*, familiar fixtures of the urban landscape—a street curb, a sidewalk—and glimpses of *Intersection*'s own street sign facing onto Valencia

Street can be made out. This layering of images invokes the ability to glean scenes, a sense of presence just below the surface.

**Jos Sances**, an artist who made posters for *Intersection* events in the 1980s, represents time's passage with portraits of United States presidents of the last forty years in *Thou Art Dust*, 2005. Hanging beside the images is a broom meant to symbolize the collective effort needed to sustain institutions. Visitors are invited to use it to add dust to a pile growing under the piece.

Audiovisual archivist **Kush** has documented hundreds of *Intersection* poetry readings since the early 1970s. Beginning with Gary Snyder's *Through the Smokehole* in 1965, all *Intersection* readings have found their way into an audio archive. Kush's piece *Flowers of the Marvelous*, 2005, includes a listening station and television monitor, and reconstructs *Intersection*'s history through the voices and personalities that have resounded in its interiors over the years. Other readings include Allen Ginsberg, Kenneth Rexroth, Michael McClure, Ed Sanders and Diane Di Prima, to name a few. The conversations across individual

pieces in *Blueprints* overwhelmingly reveal that the space is happily haunted and alive with rich, overlapping dialog.

Works by **Claudia Bernardi**, **Carolyn Ryder Cooley**, **Stephanie Anne Johnson**, **Julio Morales**, **Geddes Ulinskas** and **Stephanie Wong** were also included in the exhibition.

White, poster-sized timelines hung throughout the gallery: thumbnail images and text mapping significant cultural and social events shaping the past forty years. Events specific to *Intersection*'s own history co-mingle with events of global importance, so that *Intersection*'s move from Ellis Street in the gritty Tenderloin neighborhood to Union Street, in San Francisco's predominantly Italian North Beach area, can be seen in relation to Martin Luther King's assassination. These visual connections highlight the inextricable links between gallery and cultural context. The timelines are representative of *Intersection*'s overall character—an organization aware of its existence and of its physical residence, but located in and deeply committed to concerns of the historical moment. —Emma Tramosch