



Rula Hawalani
Intimacy, 2004
Archival Inkjet Print



Adriana Rios
There Is No Time, 2005-2007
Single Channel Video

Looking at **Adriana Rios's** video "There is No Time," it is apparent that the experience of place and time are entirely subjective, based in no small part on a host of social determinants. Time clearly moves more slowly for those with either no place to go, or those lacking the agency or station to determine their everyday movements in the world. The subjects in her video occupy socially and politically charged spaces that suggest a host of lingering tensions pulling at the edges of daily interactions.

Taken together, the various works in this exhibition challenge any easy sense of just where "there" is in the physical, geographical, political, and psychic landscape.

Dawoud Bey

Dawoud Bey is a professor of photography at Columbia College Chicago. His photographs have been exhibited internationally, and are included in the collections of museums throughout the United State and Europe. His critical writings and essays have been published in *High Times*, *Hard Times: New York Painting 1967-1975*, *Third Text*, *After Image*, *C: International Contemporary Art*, and other publications. His curatorial projects have been presented at the Addison Gallery of American Art, the Museum of Contemporary Photography, and other institutions.

Oscar Palacio
Plymouth Rock, MA, 2007
Archival Inkjet Print
Courtesy of the Artist and Howard Yezerski Gallery



Curtis Mann
A New Understanding (Rock), 2007
Clear Acrylic Varnish, Graphite, Bleached Found Photograph



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ARE WE THERE YET?



CURATED BY DAWOUD BEY

HOWARD HENRY CHEN ALAN COHEN CHRISTINE DITHOMAS ARON GENT
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ARE WE THERE YET?



Alan Cohen
Lines of Authority (Panama-Panama Canal Zone) 04-02, 2001
Silver Gelatin Print

Americans have tended to take their ability to move freely through the world for granted. This ability to enact one's own mobility defines in some way an indelible aspect of the archetypal American character. To get in one's car and "hit the road" as a form of wanderlust has long been a part of the popular construct of the American leisure ideal. It is apparent, however, that this ability to move freely through the world is not a privilege that extends to all quarters, and even

Americans are finding increasing intrusions into their travel routines now imposed by both the present national security dictates and the rising cost of gasoline. But still American's penchant for casual wanderlust persists as a kind of psychic birthright. For others the act of travel and moving from place to place can be a much more complex experience, enacted for any number of reasons, of which pleasure might be the least of them. Whether to escape political persecution or to better one's station and opportunities, a vast number of people are in movement from place to place for reasons of a more urgent and imperative nature.

The camera itself has a long history of being used as a kind of passport, making accessible the inaccessible, and legitimating the photographer's presence in a place that would otherwise be off limits. This desire to venture out from home may, in fact, also be motivated by a desire to re-establish just what and where home is in relation to one's personal history, since in the case of immigration or voluntary or self-imposed exile the notion of home may not be a singular and fixed notion. Often the journeying out into the seemingly familiar reveals information that gives the lie to the reassuring sense of familiarity we expect to find in the places more close at hand.

Cover: Howard Henry Chen
Entrance Gate to the Tropical Fruit Festival, Fairy Spring Amusement Park, near Ho Chi Minh City, 2005
Archival Inkjet Print, Courtesy Schneider Gallery

The exhibition **Are We There Yet?** examines, through a range of lens-based work, the ways in which a shifting sense of place is visualized through various conceptual strategies. In the photographs of **Howard Henry Chen**, we come face to face with the artist's own dual sense of home, and his attempts not only to visualize that back and forth journey, but also his efforts at cultural and personal retrieval. Born in Vietnam, Chen, at age three, left with his immediate family to come to the United States just as the war broke out in the mid-1970s. In his pictures we see a Vietnam that conforms to neither



Christine DiThomas
Untitled (Red garage), 2004
American Gothic series
C-Print

the war-torn popular media image nor do we see the pre-war Vietnam that he left behind. Instead, the present Vietnam is a place where history, tourism, and a global culture and economy are surreally co-mingled. **Alan Cohen's** photographs depict the sovereign borders of nations, states, and institutions throughout the world, the locations and markers that separate "here" from "there." Using a highly formalized and consistent visual strategy to achieve his ends, along with the reductive materials of black and white film and prints, he reduces these sites to cryptic descriptions that are as visually restrained as they are loaded with social history and tension. The photographs made in the Panama Canal Zone depict the site where, in 1964, Panamanian students challenged the imposition of this internal and international border in a struggle with U.S. Marines, with fatal results. **Christine DiThomas's** photographs, made in passing from the windows on numerous long-distance rail train trips, describe an experience that will appear familiar to many, even as the motivations for those trips are as different as each person engaged in them. Nonetheless, the scenes themselves exude a quality of déjà vu that makes us feel that these experiences are ours as well, and that we remember seeing them before...somewhere. These haunting views of the passing American landscape evoke a timeless sense of longing, unmoored wanderlust, and endless travel. For **Aron Gent**, the rather bucolic sense evoked by his photographs of his family gathered at their summer home on the lake is offset by the presence of his aunt, who has Down syndrome. Currently looked after by Gent's aging grandparents, her care when they depart lingers as a concern that



Aron Gent
Sun Sets Over Lost Lake, 2006
Digital Inkjet Print
Courtesy Reuben Kincaid

Surendra Lawoti
Fish Tank, 2004
C-Print



helps to infuse these otherwise pastoral and leisure vacations scenes with a sense of uneasiness. Deftly staging these pictures, in which he often appears, Gent at once creates photographs rich in behavioral nuance and the evocation of place.

The various encounters between Israeli soldiers and Palestinians at the Qalandia checkpoint, one of the largest Israeli military checkpoints in the occupied West Bank, are the subjects of **Rula Halawani's** photographs. In these pictures we see not the faces of the subjects locked on two sides of this tense interaction, but rather the isolated gestures of power and need, as papers, possessions, and person are scrutinized in a relationship of unequal power. In Halawani's photographs one's right to passage is literally and visually scrutinized in such a way that even as we can't identify the subjects, we can indeed discern the tense social narrative of closely monitored and regulated movement.

The transient experience of recent immigration is the subject of **Surendra Lawoti's** photographs. Himself Nepalese, his photographs are made amongst this particular immigrant community. The photographs are rich in the material evocation of impermanence, and contain visual signifiers for the urgent moving from place to place, without ever setting down deep roots that marks much of recent immigrant life at the social margins. **Curtis Mann** has taken a radical material means to deconstruct the sense of place in his pictures. Beginning with appropriated photographs downloaded from different online photo sites, he then prints and chemically removes a good deal of the visual information in the photographs—along with the attendant specific narrative of place—leaving just enough information on which to then create his own fantastical and variously charged landscapes of the imagination. In **Oscar Palacio's** photographs we are made to confront the distances between the mythology of historical sites, and the actual underwhelming experience that often occurs when one visits them. The mundane physical experience of these sites often stands in stark contrast to the constructed and received histories of them that compel us to drive endless miles across country to bear personal witness to them.