



Traces and Lines /Western Ave Project Audio/Video/Watercolor on Paper

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2002

I am a filmmaker, and my work is time-based by nature.

Origins:

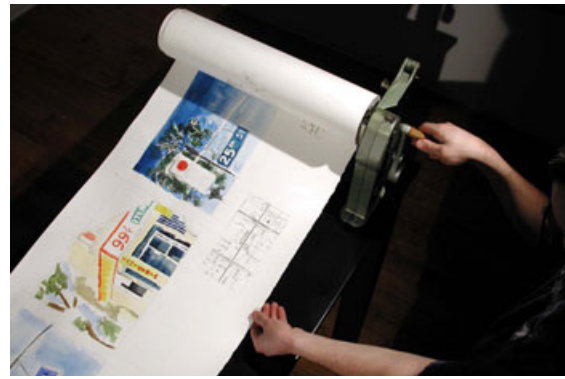
The origins of Traces and Lines /Western Ave Project stem from a film that I completed in 2001 called “The Settler” which is a meditation on Southern California as an “artificially engineered landscape”. This film project involved a close investigation of which brought about my fascination with the longest street in the world, Western Ave, 33 miles long and a literal “line” in space upon which endless stories occur. In this case, I wanted to illustrate the longitudinal nature of a particular landscape (avenue) by using linear strategies such as scroll painting and filmmaking.

The Audio/Video Installation:



The piece consists of two parts, an object and a video.

In one part of the space you come across a consecutive 33 foot long hand painted scroll (watercolor on paper) of images seen from the car window of Western Ave in Los Angeles. The moving painting or movie-painting, can be fast forwarded and rewound back and forth. The images begin at the Southern most point of Western Ave on the Coastline of Whites Beach then work their way through the city to the end at Griffith Park.



Adjacent to this moving painting, is a digital video projection of travelling south/north on Western Ave seen from the car window. This road movie is the source material for the fleeting moments that are painted in the scroll. from inside and outside the moving vehicle.



Concept:

Western Ave, Los Angeles. 33 miles

Los Angeles is a prototype (for good or for bad) of our collective urban future. It's been called the "the World crossroads city". It has many faces, a glamorous one of prosperity, fantasy and play which is projected outward through its own media machine, but underneath lies another more dystopic reality, of polarization between the "haves" and "have-nots". L.A. appears to be without a common narrative, it is a multi-centered sprawl of multi-cultural and multi-ethnic enclaves grafted onto the desert. One of the longest city streets in the world is in LA, it runs North/South through at least 50 different ethnic groups. "Western Avenue", a straight line through the City of Angels is the impetus of this project.

In L.A., Western Ave is what they call a "surface road", not a Freeway, which runs through the heart of the city. It is a river, a central corridor linking civic and commercial zones as well as hundreds of neighborhoods that filter down through it. It is a straight shot through the most impoverished areas of the country to the most affluent areas in the world. Douglas Suisman, author of *The Los Angeles Boulevard*, 1989, argues that in L.A., boulevards do more than establish an organizational pattern, they "constitute the irreducible armature of the city's public space and are therefore, charged with social and political significance."

Los Angeles is a city that is marked by many physical and psychological lines, its freeways are its arteries and its fault lines are its omen. Fragmentation is a central theme. In LA, the way you get from point A to point B is in a car, and you may pass through wedges and citadels of "other worlds" on your way across town. Thus, everyone who lives in Los Angeles is in some ways a tourist. The Hollywood film producer who lives in Beverly Hills is merely a tourist "passing through" when she drives downtown or through South Central, and vice-versa for the West African auto mechanic. They call it urban sprawl or "suburbanization", but in LA it is a "First World City" flourishing atop a "Third World."

As you drive up Western Ave, the signage of the Mini-malls, gas stations, and storefronts blend from Korean to Mandarin, Armenian, Portuguese to Spanish, one language after another united by an address yet standing alone

like islands. This line marks a landscape of many voices, many languages, many lifestyles, all tourists to one another, who cohabit this city with a history of barely 75 years. I see Western Ave as a virtual line transecting this “continuous city” as a metaphor, a symbol of variations and rhythms transplanted onto an artificially irrigated desert. This is LA, “a last-stop” a landscape of the future and a metaphor of the Post-Modern world.

Painted Scrolls and Road Movies:

Trains, Road Movies and Westerns have always been an integral part of film history. The first film ever made in 1895 by Lumiere was of a train entering the Station in Ciotat, France. Trains became a fascination in film because the train was like a metaphor for cinema itself. A fast moving object on a track...which embodies the essence of what a filmstrip is a series of images moving along a track. The phenomenon of “Road movies” grew out of this theme, because of the Americans fascination with the car, the road and traveling through unknown territory. A film, video or a piece of music is a time-based linear “strip”, which you experience from beginning to end. Los Angeles is a horizontal city that spreads endlessly outwards instead of vertically towards the sky. The scroll painting in TRACES and LINES is also a literal “strip”, a visual portrait of a horizontal landscape that has a beginning and end, whose linearity is not unlike a movie. The spaces that are illustrated are those that are seen “passing through” they are the gas stations, the street signs, the billboards... the places that are not landmarks.

In essence, TRACES and LINES is a kinetic landscape painting with sound. It is also a “road movie”. The use of watercolor to paint snapshots seen from the car somehow mirrors the blurring and blending that occur along this “strip”. It explores the fragmentation of the “line” or “avenue” of the longest city street in the world, and investigates the fragmented and blurred experience of seeing the city seen exclusively through the car window.