



THE BOUNDARY LAYER

PRESENTED BY THE PRAIRIE ART GALLERY

SEPTEMBER 18TH TO OCTOBER 25TH, 2009

CURATED BY CATHERINE DEAN

LARA ALMARCEGUI

ROSA BARBA

PATRICK BERNATCHEZ

CHRIS MARKER

HEATHER & IVAN MORISON

T&T

HISTORICAL PHOTOGRAPHS FROM LIBRARY & ARCHIVES CANADA,

GLENBOW MUSEUM ARCHIVES AND THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

THE MONTROSE CULTURAL CENTRE, FORMER PRAIRIE ART GALLERY LAWN
& COMMUNITY VILLAGE.



LARA ALMARCEGUI
Ruins in the Netherlands XIX-XXI Century, 2008
26 framed photographs, guide books

1

Lara Almarcegui's photographs of recent ruins and their accompanying guide book document them in the manner of important cultural or architectural sites. This treatment, usually reserved for grander buildings whose status has been confirmed by history, continues Almarcegui's close attention to the unspectacular, the neglected and the everyday. Her practice confers importance upon wastelands, empty lots and places such as these fallen down barns and abandoned factories. There is a sense of melancholy in these places left to decay, which Almarcegui sees as blank spaces in an otherwise efficiently developed landscape. With the patience and attentiveness of an archaeologist, Almarcegui constructs a present and a past for sites whose futures are uncertain.



ROSA BARBA
They Shine, 2007
35mm film

1

As a voice tells stories about their rumoured purpose, solar reflectors in the Mojave desert rotate mutely, bouncing back any attempt to explain them just as they do the sun. This is a site whose history of military testing and supposed alien visitation are inextricably entwined, and what we initially recognise as a benign source of renewable energy starts to seem suspicious

and possibly sinister. *They Shine* makes a mystery out of the ordinary, and takes us out of the present into an uncertain future. Or is it a not-so-distant past, where solar reflectors such as these would have seemed unimaginably strange? By making the 35mm projector a character in the installation, Barba further confuses time periods. The antiquated projector takes us back in time to a pre-digital world, while showing a strikingly futuristic landscape with a history of being treated like a blank space on the map, providing Barba with the opportunity to question its history as well as its future.



PATRICK BERNATCHEZ
I Feel Cold Today, 2007
16mm film transferred to digital

1

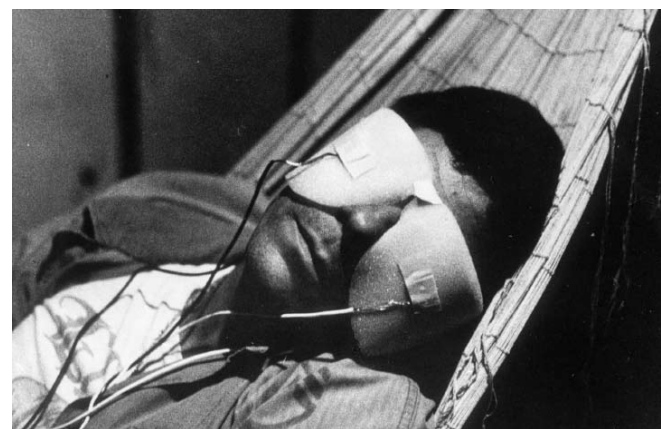
As a stereotypical office space fills with snow in Patrick Bernatchez's *I Feel Cold Today*, there is a sense of foreboding and anxiety as we wonder what has caused the abandonment of this building. Normally carefully heated and cooled, sealed against the outside elements, only a catastrophe could have caused this breach in an office building's defenses. As with

Lara Almarcegui's contemporary ruins, the entry of nature has begun the process of decay, although in Bernatchez's work the feeling is funereal rather than commemorative. With its sci-fi atmosphere, dramatic soundtrack and suspenseful editing, *I Feel Cold Today's* interior implies emptiness on a large scale in the urban world beyond these walls.

THE BOUNDARY LAYER

In its most simplified definition, the Boundary Layer is the thin plane at the surface of the earth where land meets sky. Though we may temporarily escape it in skyscrapers and planes, boats and submarines, this is the only space in the vastness of the universe that we naturally inhabit and to which we must always return. Yet it seems that we take this crucial space for granted, mistreat and neglect it, not considering carefully enough what we add to or take from it or paying close enough attention to its protection.

The Boundary Layer is about the various pasts and possible futures of the civilisation we have constructed for ourselves, as well as the complex relationship to the natural world it is built upon. In the work of Lara Almarcegui, Rosa Barba, Patrick Bernatchez, Chris Marker, Heather & Ivan Morison and T&T, science-fiction strategies, non-linear time and post-apocalyptic themes recur. A parallel look at the possibilities and perceptions of a world long gone is found in *Everyday Nameless Spectacle*, a selection of historical photographs inspired by Chris Marker's *La Jetée*. Like the time-traveling protagonist of *La Jetée*, time for these artists ebbs and flows, the past, present and future becoming indistinct and interchangeable. Whether looking at our existing world or imagining another one, these artists draw attention to our environment and the way we have constructed our lives within it. Concerned with everything being bigger, newer, and more impressive, we sometimes fail to notice the value of what is already here, the small details that we miss, things left to decay or be destroyed that might be worth saving.



CHRIS MARKER
La Jetée, 1962
film, 28 minutes

3

nuclear war. In part, it is a lament for the richness of the world, both natural and constructed, that has been lost. By using archival images to represent the future and images of the present to show the past, Marker creates a world where time is flexible and redemption for even our most destructive behaviour is still possible.

HEATHER & IVAN MORISON
Starmaker, 2005
slide projection transferred to HD digital

1

Starmaker, a slideshow of images from around the world, is Heather & Ivan Morison's attempt to see human endeavour as though through alien eyes. By trying to see our world as unfamiliar, and remarkable in the strangeness of the everyday, they ask us to question more closely our impact on the world around us. Images of dioramas in the American Museum of Natural History give us a clue to the Morisons' methodology of research, collecting and preserving, while the soundtrack of field recordings combined with samples from science-fiction films melds real and imagined worlds. With the Morisons' interest in the rise and fall of civilisations, *Starmaker* raises questions about the sustainability of our behaviour as though it would take an outsider to recognise the extent of our power to change our surroundings in possibly irrevocable ways.



T&T (TONY ROMANO & TYLER BRETT)
Untitled (Carchitecture), 2009

2

In the work of T&T, the rebuilding of society includes radical recycling projects (known as carchitecture) and a community brought back to the basics of survival but whose inhabitants still build movie theatres and bandshells. Although this world exists after some unspecified catastrophe, T&T suggest that maybe we don't need as much as we have, and that with a pared down life we might still be happy. T&T's projects most often take the form of models and drawings (such as *Theatre*, 2008, above) but for *The Boundary Layer* they have created a full-scale carchitecture piece on the lawn of the former Prairie Art Gallery. Part architectural design and part survivalist fantasy, they propose a future society that can be sustainable and harmonious with the implication that maybe we don't need to wait for an apocalypse to adopt a different way of living.



VARIOUS PHOTOGRAPHERS
Everyday Nameless Spectacle:
Photographs from Library & Archives Canada,
The Glenbow Museum Archives and the Library of
Congress.

3

Everyday Nameless Spectacle is a series of historical images whose selection was loosely inspired by Chris Marker's *La Jetée*. Drawn from three major public photography archives, the images here are not of history's most important people or events, but small moments that show the beauty and fascinating breadth of the collective memory preserved in archives such as these. The photographs show a world rich in resources, where oil is inexhaustible, giant trees in never-ending supply, and rivers there for the damming. It is also a world of discoveries, such as the undreamed of power of nuclear energy, and apparently benign asbestos. Like *Starmaker's* imaginary alien observer, we see this world as outsiders but recognise it as a precursor to our own with all of its blindnesses and achievements.



MAP & LOCATIONS

1. Community Village, 10113 103 Avenue

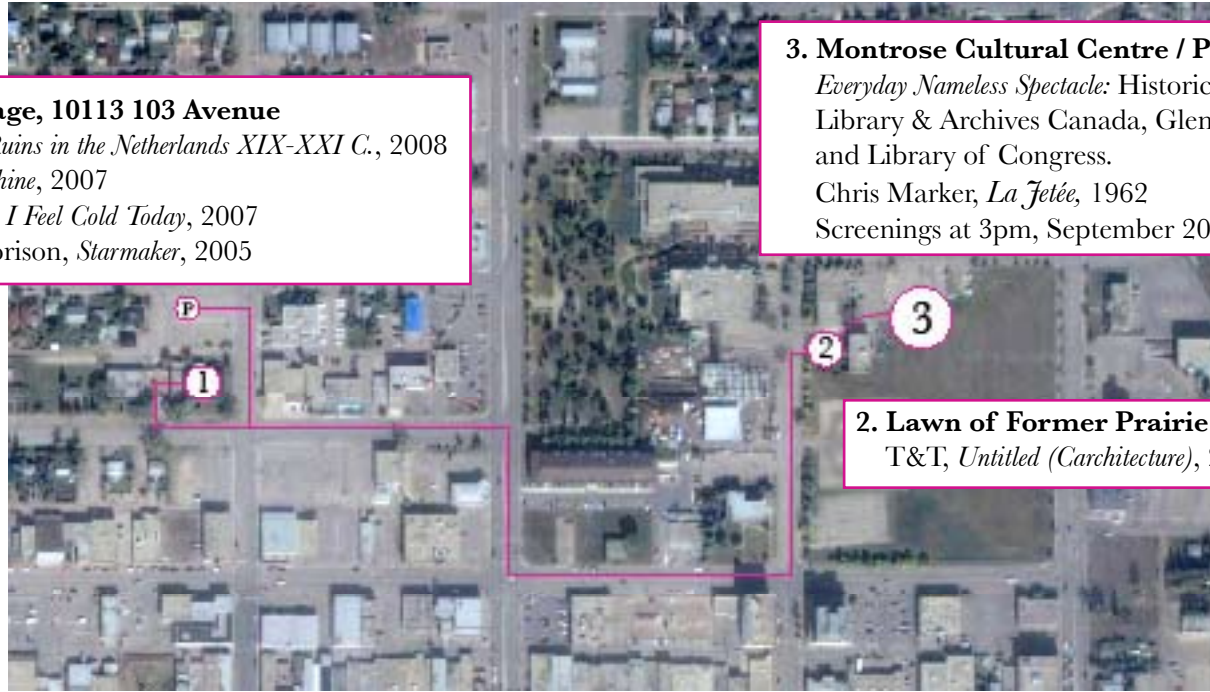
Lara Almarcegui, *Ruins in the Netherlands XIX-XXI C.*, 2008
Rosa Barba, *They Shine*, 2007
Patrick Bernatchez, *I Feel Cold Today*, 2007
Heather & Ivan Morison, *Starmaker*, 2005

3. Montrose Cultural Centre / Prairie Art Gallery

Everyday Nameless Spectacle: Historical Images from Library & Archives Canada, Glenbow Museum Archives and Library of Congress.
Chris Marker, *La Jetée*, 1962
Screenings at 3pm, September 20th and October 25th.

2. Lawn of Former Prairie Art Gallery

T&T, *Untitled (Architecture)*, 2009



INFORMATION

SEPTEMBER 18TH, 2009, 7PM UNTIL LATE:
OPENING EVENT, IN CONJUNCTION WITH ALBERTA ARTS DAYS
MONTROSE CULTURAL CENTRE. 103-9839 103 AVE, GRANDE PRAIRIE

SEPTEMBER 20TH & OCTOBER 27TH, 3PM:
SCREENINGS OF *LA JETÉE* AT THE MONTROSE CULTURAL CENTRE, FOLLOWED BY A WALKING TOUR OF THE EXHIBITION

CALL 780-532-8111 FOR INFORMATION, HOURS OF OPERATION AND TOURS

WWW.THEBOUNDARYLAYER.CA

SPECIAL THANKS TO DONALD BROWNE GALLERY, MONTREAL & EMMANUEL GALLAND (PATRICK BERNATCHEZ);
CARLIER|GEBAUER, BERLIN (ROSA BARBA); CLINT ROENISCH, TORONTO (HEATHER & IVAN MORISON AND T&T);
TAMASA DISTRIBUTION, PARIS (*LA JETÉE*); LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES CANADA; THE GLENBOW MUSEUM ARCHIVES AND
THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS PHOTOGRAPHIC ARCHIVES.

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ALL TEXT AND GRAPHIC DESIGN BY CATHERINE DEAN



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