

LISA BLAS

\* Agrarian Pavements 2012 \*

Over the past few years, I have been based in Brussels with frequent travel throughout the European Union, the U.S. and other destinations. These changing landscapes and mobile work conditions have fostered work primarily in photography and collage, prompting me to draw upon the experiences of displacement, work with archives found in libraries, museum collections, and city records, and assemble tiny make-shift studio spaces. I learned to negotiate living and working in a new city for an extended period of time, to participate in the local community, material culture and environment, to witness the inclusion and exclusion of a rapidly changing demography within that community, then to experience my own foreignness in that mirror. This results in a secondary sense of foreignness, and what I have come to define as double foreignness.

The necessary condition of moving to remake oneself in a new land of opportunity is a familiar trope found in the history of the U.S., Europe and elsewhere. However, the stakes are much higher now for survival in the global economy. Citizens who move within their national borders, as I have done from west to east and back west again, have never had the challenge of overcoming language barriers and/or the daunting process of immigration. Upon arrival to Australia for the AAANZ's *Together < > Apart* conference, and seeing the front page news story of the capsized boat carrying refugees, I am reminded of similar stories closer to home, where families seeking political asylum or better lives cross oceans and international borders in fierce conditions often to disastrous ends. Migration and assimilation are the keys to understanding the new mode of hybridized identity, and within these conditions lies the complexity of integration, from city to suburb to farm, and vice versa.

In light of these observations, my recent collages allude to aerial landscapes, where sharply geometric lines suggest neighborhoods and borders in flux, a trace of natural and industrial presence, overgrowth and abandonment. These works seek to hover in an interstitial space, where construction and collapse are frozen in time. Using meticulously cut fragments of paper stock originating from exhibition announcements via the incoming mail and mass-produced paint swatches from hardware stores, I build compositions using bright, flat and metallic color through a system of planar frontality, overlapping density with blankness. Although the works are abstract, they make reference to light illuminating the pavement, barbed wire and negative space as a magnetic field, pushing against the physical boundaries of the paper support. Emerging from the legacy of Matisse, Los Angeles Abstract Classicism, Robert Smithson, the New Topographics photographers, and the history of post-war city planning, new forms are created to envision space as alive, transparent, and inclusive, blueprints for social and political reflection.