

# Blane De St. Croix

## Artist Résumé

Born in Boston, MA  
MFA Cranbrook Academy of Art, Bloomfield Hills, MI  
BFA Massachusetts College of Art, Boston, MA

### SELECTED GRANTS AWARDS:

2009 Joan Mitchell Foundation Painters and Sculptors Grant  
2009 Pollock Krasner Foundation Grant  
2009 Black and White Project Space Prize  
2008 MacDowell Colony Artist Grant

### SELECTED SOLO EXHIBITIONS:

2010 *Broken Landscape II*, Night Gallery, Tempe, AZ  
2009 *Mountain Strip*, Black and White Project Space, Brooklyn, NY  
2009 *Broken Landscape*, Smack Mellon Gallery, Brooklyn, NY  
2007 *Border Sections*, Geisai/Pulse Art Fair, Miami, FL  
2002 *Swallow*, South Florida Art Center, Miami Beach, FL  
2000 *Blane De St Croix*, Laumeier Sculpture Park, St. Louis, MO  
1998 *Blane De St Croix*, Gasworks Gallery, London, England  
1998 *Soil, Ladders, Stools*, Side Street Gallery, Santa Monica, CA

### SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS:

2010 *The No Place*, Rotunda Gallery, Brooklyn, NY  
2009 *Commune*, Black and White Gallery, New York, NY  
2009 *SKW*, Selected by Shamim Momin, Fort Zach State Park, Key West, FL  
2007 *Latitude*, Fieldgate Gallery, London, England  
2007 *Enchanted*, Nash Gallery, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis  
2006 *Think Warm*, Tomio Koyama Gallery, Tokyo, Japan  
2005 *Codependent*, Art Basel Miami, The Living Room, Miami, FL  
2002 *Consortium*, Palm Beach Institute for Contemporary Art, FL  
1995 *Crossroads*, Sculpture Symposium, Republic of Ireland  
1994 *International*, Socrates Sculpture Park, Long Island City, NY

### SELECTED ARTIST IN RESIDENCE:

2010 Special Editions, Lower East Side Print Shop, NY  
2009 Artist Alliance Studio Program, NY  
2008-2009 Abrons Art Center, NY  
2008 MacDowell Colony, Peterborough, NH  
2008 Art OMI Artist Residency, Ghent, NY  
2003 Djerassi Resident Artists Program, San Francisco, CA  
2000 Kohler Arts/Industry Residency, Sheboygan, WI  
1998 Gasworks, Triangle Arts Trust, London

### SELECTED PERMANENT COLLECTIONS:

Laumeier Sculpture Park and Museum  
Kohler Corporation  
Decordova Museum and Sculpture Park  
Europos Parkas Sculpture Park  
Albrecht-Kemper Museum of Art  
Reese Collection, University of Tennessee

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### F.A.R. (Future Arts Research) @ ASU

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Installation views at Smack Mellon, Brooklyn, NY  
Photography by Etienne Frossard

# Blane De St. Croix's Broken Landscape II

This project is presented by F.A.R. (Future Arts Research) @ ASU

Exhibition Dates: April 1–23, 2010 | Night Gallery, Tempe Marketplace | 2000 E. Rio Salado Parkway, Tempe  
Hours: Tuesday–Sunday, 6–9 p.m. Closed: Monday

# Introduction: by Bruce Ferguson, director of F.A.R. (Future Arts Research) @ ASU

Good works of art create immediate bodies of knowledge through an aesthetic and visceral realm directly connected to the emotional and intellectual body of the viewer. If they are really good, they continue to make this connection through time as history, in effect, adjusts itself to them – not the other way around. *The Sphinx* and *Mona Lisa* come to mind as structures and images whose very reticence to reveal their full meanings impose an impressive condition of continuing interpretation. The more information we have about them, the more their meanings morph into further layers of complexity. As they emerge, newer methodologies from the sciences and the humanities are brought to bear on them as their enigmatic forms continue to frustrate the full status of truth and fascinate the possibility of it at the same time.

In other words, good works of art promote and encourage discourse or discursivity. Blane De St. Croix's monumentally miniature sculpture, appropriately entitled *Broken Landscape II*, does just that. Without commenting directly on historical boundary architecture such as the Berlin Wall, the Israeli Wall or the Great Wall of China, to name a few well-known ones, *Broken Landscape II* carefully reconstructs at a highly reduced scale the geology and social material surround of a selected slice of the uncompleted U.S.–Mexico border wall at Eagle Pass, Texas. This new wall and its virtual surveillance substitutes, in reality, are at the many crosses of discussions of controversial immigration policies; human, animal and environmental rights; a highly active class of smugglers moving in both directions (drugs, armaments, humans, cash etc.) and even the notion of nationhood itself. By situating itself in the space of the viewer and the mirror image of the viewer, the sculpture manages both to be suggestively benign as a representation and highly provocative by virtue of its implied content. And the conversations it spurs make of it a persuasive object.

*Dominique Nahas is an independent curator and critic based in New York. His essay of Blane De St. Croix's Broken Landscape first appeared during 2009 at Smack Mellon in Brooklyn, N.Y., and has been reprinted with permission.*

## Blane De St. Croix's *Broken Landscape*

Eighty feet long, seven feet tall at its highest and two feet wide, *Broken Landscape*, Blane De St. Croix's painstakingly hand-produced miniature reconstruction of a selected section of an American border town along the Rio Grande, slices and curves impressively through the Smack Mellon space in Brooklyn. With an under frame of wood all of the visible natural forms including cliffs, trees, rocks, soil, shrubs, cliffs, stratum, side and ground, macadam are hand – made from both natural and synthetic materials. The tiny fence is constructed from thin wire and basswood. It has over 5,000 vertical pieces. The actual fence that the miniature one refers to is one of many fragmented sections under construction with the largest section ending up being approximately 670 miles long. The fence in real-life terms stands 14 feet high. It is constructed of welded steel imbedded in concrete footing poured in the road and covered after the fence's installation. The road along the fence remains and the border patrol keep the fence-wall under surveillance using vehicles, often with air assist.

At Smack Mellon, *Broken Landscape's* heft and thrust paradoxically serves as a barrier to the viewer, as if to reiterate the narrative that it bears inscribed on its own body, that of the USA-Mexico border fence and surrounding Landscape of Eagle Pass, Texas. Because of *Broken Landscape's* extension in space, as a road, the observer moves through it as well as above the Landscape. (1) Audience participation adds to the drama and grim humor of the piece; visitors speaking to each other from one side of the piece to the other, that is from the American side of the border to the Mexican side of the border, can, physically and literally speaking see eye-to-eye over the border-line, and joining hands over it, symbolically rendering the limits on Otherness null and void.

As the eye travels along its length in the gallery space it sees the recreation of that locale's Bridge I, part of Highway 57 that cuts into Garrison Street and that goes into Mexico. Following the overpass's road, Ryan Street, which dead-ends at the Bridge, the viewer sees De St. Croix's rendition of the Eagle Pass Golf Course. Despite its monumental ethos *Broken Landscape* acts as a distended or extended close-up, a hand-fashioned synecdoche for the 3169 kilometers (1969 miles) border situation itself. *Broken Landscape*, with its documentary stillness and precision, serves to recall a "fragment" of space from which we can extrapolate and project a general or universal picture in our imaginations of the



border situation, subtly melodramatized and sensationalized. In great measure *Broken Landscape* succeeds visually because, as art, De St. Croix's social agenda is palpable while the diorama is curiously discursive and indeterminate, so carefully are the specifics and universals melded together in this work. This is a history piece, certainly, yet it is also a work that appears suspended in time, appearing in some ways as if it exists anterior to time. *Broken Landscape's* narratological structure allows us to project our own emotional truth through a metaphoric or symbolic equivalency as we move from depictions of foothills of diminishing/ascending heights and perceive shifting terrains along with changing social conditions from rural to exurbia to suburbia. The result is that while we feel an actualized, frozen-in-time environs that refers to the actual locale of Eagle Pass the entire experience takes on added intimations of an evacuated, anthropological, yet, somehow eerily mythic place.

The mere idea or intentionality of delimiting wilderness, in fact or imagination is culturally charged and historically specific. Blane De St. Croix has made models of troubled, contentious hot-spots in the world perfectly convincingly rendered in perfect scale that explore the terms of boundary vs. limits, movement, separation, territorialization. In a strong way De St. Croix's work involves Landscape's relation to geography as inscribed by what Foucault has termed an "archeology of knowledge," a memoir-map serving as an instrument of power. The charged subjects of De St. Croix's art since 2007 are the philosophical, phenomenological, cultural and political implications of demarcating and boundary setting. (2) At its core De St. Croix's current work deals with modeling topological settings that are reflective of geographic, cartographic and social dimensions, which refer to actual time-space realities as well as to what Henri Le Lefebvre terms the "anthropological stage" of social reality. (3) The artist's impulses reflect on what it means in terms of desiring-drives when we set up of boundaries and borders, demarcation points, and limits. His work explores borders as a source of security, as territory invested with heterological space of difference and potentiality, but also as a site of retrenchment and of impasse, of refusal. In its broadest terms the artist's *Broken Landscape* and others like it explore "them" versus "me" mindset in its psychological and phenomenological dimensions. It has of course a political agenda as it bears down on issues of control and of hegemony. (4)

Blane De St. Croix, forever fascinated with fixity versus liminality has created a body of work that asks the viewer to consider the crucial need for dialectical structures that can accommodate difference and dialog so as to keep communicative breakdown at a minimum. A commentator notes: "To respond is to be engaged with someone else; simultaneously it is to remain different or diverse...To respond is to pursue further and yet to cross, to mesh but not to fuse, to be inside the interlocutor's discourse and outside at the same time. Not to be absorbed by the other's voice, but not to cease hearing it either." (5)

Blane De St. Croix's new work is a meditation on the possibility and impossibility of intersubjectivity. It's an ode to the need for discourse, a discourse on the relation of the Self to the Other. It attempts to reflect positively on what constitutes an identification towards *communitas*, even a vestigial one, and what it takes for its heart to keep on beating in spite of forces hell-bent on denying its existence.

### NOTES

(1) "The object in its perfect stasis nevertheless suggests use, implementation, and contextualization...the representative quality of the miniature becomes a stage on which we project, by means of association or intertextuality, a deliberately framed series of actions." Susan Stewart, *On Longing* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993) 54.

(2) Finally we must inquire as to what it means to *contain* something. Is it merely a matter of "holding" as is implied by the verb *periechein* – in which case, the emphasis is on the act of delimitation, that is, of *surrounding*? Or is it a question of establishing a boundary- which stresses the *surround*? Where the former interpretation directs us to what is surrounded, the latter points to what is other than, and beyond, the surrounded object (and perhaps even beyond the surround itself). How are we to choose between these two interpretations- one which stresses the container as *limit*, the other the container as *boundary*? And if we cannot choose effectively, are we not confronted with an essentially undecidable phenomenon? Edward S. Casey, *The Fate of Place* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997) 70.

(3) We have defined this stage as the stage of demarcation and orientation...Every social space, then, once duly demarcated and oriented, implies a superimposition of certain relations upon networks of named places, of *lieux-dits*. This results in various kinds of space. 1. Accessible space for normal use...2. Boundaries and forbidden territories...3. Places of abode...4. Junction points: these are often places of passage and encounter; often, too, access to them is forbidden except on certain occasions of ritual import, declarations of war or peace, for example. Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1991) 192-3.

(4) Foucault lays out in his dissection of cartographic language in his essay-interview *Questions on Geography*: "Well, let's take a look at these geographical metaphors. *Territory* is no doubt a geographical notion, but it's first all a juridico-political one: the area controlled by a certain kind of power. Field is an economico-juridical notion. *Displacement*: what displaces itself is an army, a squadron, a population. *Domain* is a juridico-political notion. Soil is a historico-geological notion. *Region* is a fiscal, administrative, military notion. Horizon is a pictorial, but also a strategic notion. "

Michel Foucault. *Power / Knowledge: Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1977) 68. [Translated C. Gordon, et al.]

(5) Richard Terdiman, "The Response of the Other" *diacritics* 22.2 (1992): 2-10.