



2 X 2 SOLOS 2011

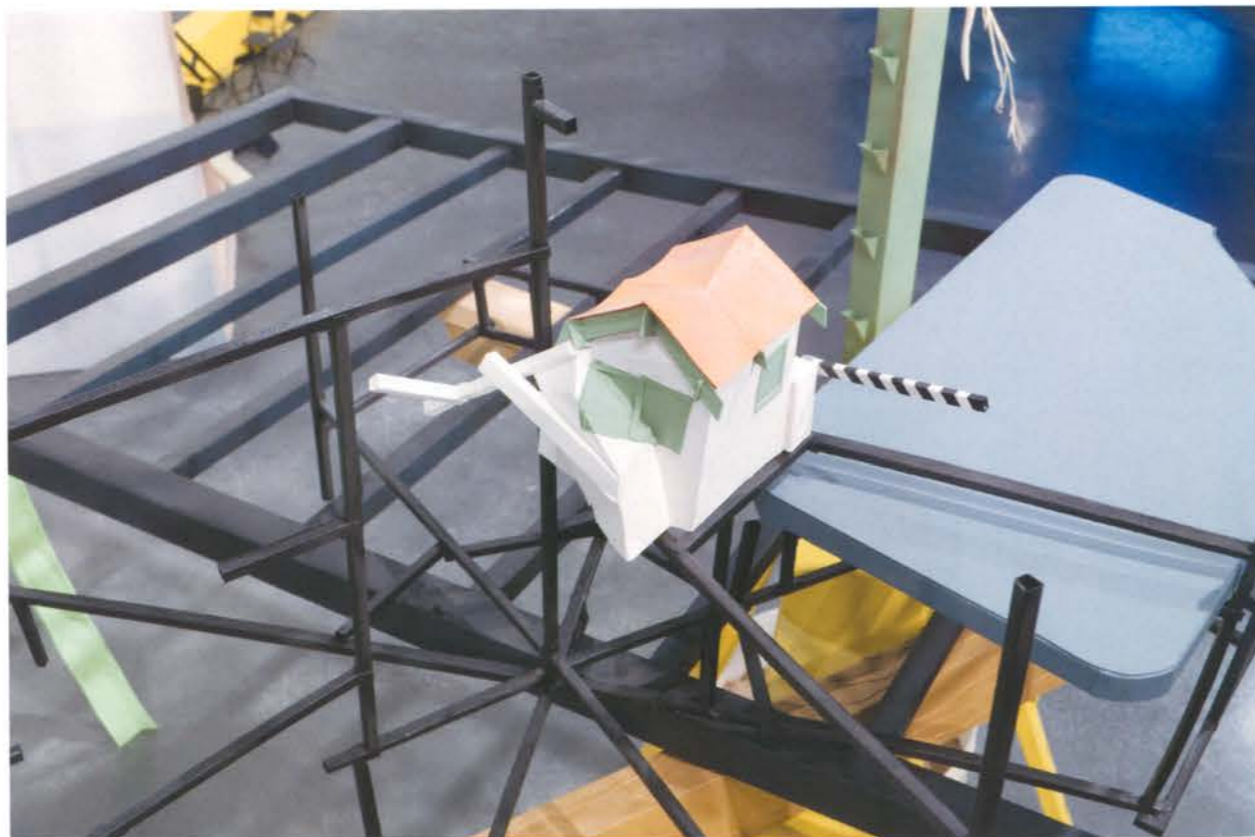
Michelle Blade | Chris Fraser | Taro Hattori | Weston Teruya

Weston Teruya
Curated by Michelle Mansour
January 25 - February 25, 2011



Weston Teruya uses paper to create coded three-dimensional configurations of specific spaces. In his project for 2 x 2 Solos, Weston began with a location in Los Angeles, which includes a juvenile hall surrounded by a public golf course. Working from research documents, photographs, maps, and city plans, Weston reconstructed the site using his own kind of interpretive logic. Cutting, pasting, and fashioning spray-painted watercolor paper, he delicately erects pieces of the actual site—architectural structures, fences, posts, and green space—as well as objects found in transitional construction zones, such as a cement-filled paint bucket, caution tape, cinder blocks, and saw horses. Each and every piece of the installation is made with utmost craft and attention to detail, yet his work also captures a coldness of the site in the flatness of color and purposefully confused sense of scale. Weston carefully considers boundaries and borders of the actual site, translating their meaning through his own compositional choices and spatial relationships. The result is both an acute investigation of relational dynamics and a quiet critique of urban transitional space, through which the viewer can contemplate his/her own place within structured environments.

- Michelle Mansour



Weston Teruya, *The gracious city at its neighbor's edge*, Spraypaint and drawing media on paper sculpture, 168" x 96" x 92" (Detail)



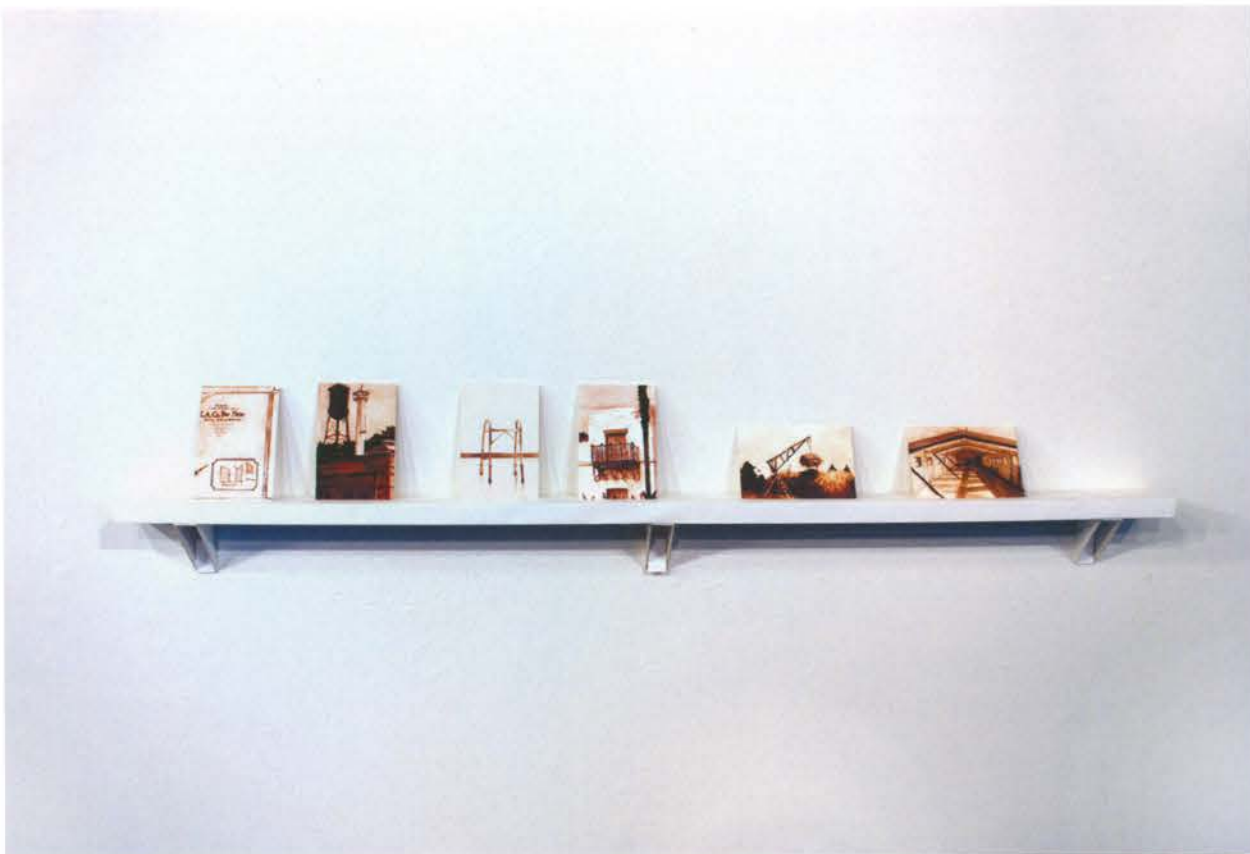
Weston Teruya, *The gracious city at its neighbor's edge*, Spraypaint and drawing media on paper sculpture, 168" x 96" x 92" (Detail)



Weston Teruya, *The gracious city at its neighbor's edge*, Spraypaint and drawing media on paper sculpture, 168" x 96" x 92" (Detail)



Weston Teruya, *The gracious city at its neighbor's edge*, Spraypaint and drawing media on paper sculpture, 168" x 96" x 92" (Detail)



Westin Teruya, *Ghost town record*, Gouache on paper, 54" x 10.5 x 3"

Westin Teruya

Essay by Shana Agid

To be haunted and to write from that location, to take on the condition of what you study, is not a methodology or a consciousness you can simply adopt or adapt as a set of rules or an identity; it produces its own insights and blindnesses. Following the ghosts is about making a contact that changes you and refashions the social relations in which you are located....

– Avery Gordon, *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination*

At the corner of Los Padrinos Drive and Tranquilla Street in Downey, California, sits a small guardhouse. A wood barrier painted in black and white stripes prevents approaching cars from passing into the Los Amigos Country Club, a public golf course and event center that opened in 1966, which is marked by a low pink parking structure to the left and an expansive greenway to the right. Kitty-corner to the Country Club is the Rancho Los Amigos Medical Center, part of an expanse of land divided by the Imperial Highway that holds what once was the Los Angeles County Poor Farm and has evolved into a world-class hospital for rehabilitative medicine. The buildings of the existing Rancho Los Amigos are to the north of the highway; on the south side lies a decaying network of buildings on small streets—the former offices, factories, and residential buildings of the poor farm, which began treating patients with polio in 1944. At a break in the Country Club's low fences, one can find the entrance to Los Padrinos Juvenile Hall, which opened in 1957 and is now bordered on three sides by the golf course.

To be haunted, and to make from that location, to paraphrase Avery Gordon, escorts us into knowledge simultaneously impossible and inevitable that southeast of LA is this curious and also brutal collision of poverty, farming, medicine, incarceration, and public recreation space and that this space has been produced by the deceptively simple notion that Los Angeles County has big parcels of land and a range of perceived social needs which both change and stay the same over time.

At the center of Weston Teruya's *The gracious city at its neighbor's edge*, the guardhouse is risen up, torqued by its ascendance. It balances on pieces of black square tubular steel, one wall of the house rising up halfway at an impossible angle—impossible, that is, if the structure is to continue to stand. But stand it does. In other words, this is a place made as much as observed by Teruya, imagined as much as documented. Reckoning with ghosts, as he does here, Teruya becomes a fashioner of an alternate world that did not previously exist—except for the ways in which, of course, it did.

The pile of steel on which the guardhouse rests is actually meticulously cut, constructed, and spray-painted paper, as is each and every element in this exhibition. It balances on a conglomeration of what appear to be pieces of industrial gray plastic tabletops and scraps of lumber stacked on a yellow adjustable sawhorse, just beginning to buckle under the pressure. Tucked under one leg of the sawhorse is a plastic bucket of khaki-colored sand, holding a metal fence post that seems to have grown through an unseen sidewalk, uprooting a tree on its path upwards. The tree is now tethered to the metal pole, its roots exposed and its top is severed, missing its foliage altogether.

Roughly perpendicular, a sign pole is felled, its unreadable sign face down on a small pile of cinder blocks across the way. The pole's other end rests across a 1" x 3" jutting out from a pile of small buildings built of paper and made to look like boxes that have been broken down, as if being put out for recycling or held over for some future reinvention of the site. This pile is, in turn, perched on a chair with legs beginning to slouch. The sign pole's roots—a gnarled plug of steel where it has been pulled from the ground—are exposed like the tree's. At the foot of the sawhorse sits another small structure, a water or fire tower, at once appearing lighthouse-like, but in no position to light anyone's way, and proposing a vantage point, a place from which any of these sites might be monitored—now, in the past, or in some imagined future—for surveillance or safe-keeping.

The materials for building are all here, if not in any quantity to allow for building: a pile of cinder blocks, some scraps of lumber, the sawhorse, the black steel tubes, the unfolded box-like structures stacked and waiting. Alongside these pieces sits a partial wall that reads in plain black letters:

RINOS ENILE L. This is the right half of what Teruya re-figures as the (perhaps temporary?) front wall of the Los Padrinos Juvenile Hall. The wall-as-movie-set-prop is supported by a frame of 2" x 4"s and metal clips—all made of paper, the wood grain carefully glued to the surface of the lumber, the tension in the clamps evident, if non-existent. This wall backs onto a single parking space, demarcated by a yellow cement tire stop, against which is a semi-circle of black folding chairs. The circle, already cut in half by the barrier, is also bisected by a shoot of steel bar, coming in at a sharp angle through the partial prison wall.

The space is devoid of human presence, yet evidence and detritus of human involvement is everywhere. This is a world either gently laid to waste or rising up out of the ground in a kind of perpetual renewal, or both. There is no question the chairs are meant for some kind of meeting, that the metal clamps holding a golf-themed brochure advertising services for selling one's home were put there by someone looking for another someone, that a person has shored up a too-short piece of lumber in the partial wall's support with a clamp and a pack of pencils, perhaps intended for golfing— or for the juvenile hall's school. As if to be sure we've noticed, Teruya's included *Ghosttown Record*, six small gouache paintings of the historical site, that sit on a wall nearby, on a shelf also made of paper. These are sepia-toned records of inhabitation and use. The actual ghosts, now present. The paintings look onto the sculpture like spectators, regarding what has become of them.

Looking at the Southern California site from above, as I can now do via Google from my desk in Brooklyn, what I see supports Teruya's initial hunch, evident in earlier work about this site, his drawings with collaged elements of thread and paper that sketched out the bleeding yet rigid boundaries between the jail and the golf course and proposed transformations in the environment: colored paper moved through and remade the graphite of chain link fences; black folding chairs stacked up against trees, making precarious escape routes; figures representing the youth and the guards in the Hall circled each other or made allegiances among their own. Something about the locked world of the Hall surrounded on three sides by the greens of the Country Club seems both obvious and deeply in need of articulation. Add to the story the name of each place, roughly translated as

"The Godfathers Juvenile Hall" and "The Friends Country Club," and you have a site steeped in a kind of irony and clarity particular to urban planning and the relegation and regulation of spaces for control and play (although if I'm to believe the movies, much more than play happens at a golf course...).

These are spaces for a range of publics. But stories of ironic juxtaposition, told too frequently in art, evoke something more interesting. Teruya's early work with this site already surpassed that basic formula, and his continued exploration, including the spaces and histories of the Los Angeles County Poor Farm and the Los Amigos Medical Center, has effected a kind of zooming out from the clear incongruity and basic injustice of a prison space embedded in a play space to the (even) larger historical legacy of the land and its uses, the accretion of an expanding city through the rise of industrialization and capitalism, through the continued construction of race and class in the US, and in Los Angeles and Southern California, in particular.

The story behind *The gracious city at its neighbor's edge* and *Ghosttown record* is one of the quiet tenacity of the impossible (and I do not necessarily mean hopeful) shape of constructed landscapes and social relations. In other words, they tell the story of cities. Teruya's reconstruction of the lands just north and south of Los Angeles County's Imperial Highway follows what has gone missing, what becomes most visible in the contours left by its absence. To be haunted, and to make from that location, is to see new relationships and to understand, in bits and pieces, what they can tell us that we did not already know, except, of course, how we did. And then the stories are told to us as much as we are the ones to tell them. We become conveners of voices that did not appear all together before we went looking for them.