

Andrew O'Brien

105 N. Berendo St. #4 | Los Angeles, California 90004 | 520.370.7907 | aophoto@gmail.com | www.andrewobrien.info

Artist Statement

Throughout all of my work I am compelled to investigate how and why we experience the blending of environments, ranging from the floating space of a computer screen saver to the seemingly endless expanse of pristine wilderness. I employ materials and techniques that reference and confound these ostensibly opposed worlds so that I may gain a more complete sense of my everyday existence.

In her seminal book *On Photography* Susan Sontag makes a brief statement about being bored, "Boredom is just the reverse side of fascination: both depend on being outside rather than inside a situation, and one leads to the other." In this particularly spatial assessment one might say being bored with the office precludes a desire to be outdoors, while being bored outside may indicate a need to return home. Boredom, a concept less than two hundred years old, is a distinctly modern phenomena and a compelling vein through which to explore our relationship to space and the landscape as a whole. Much of my own work is inspired by what I call *cosmic boredom* - a type of spatial, floating boredom that gives rise to daydreams. This notion has led me to create work that oscillates between permanence and the ephemeral, realism and abstraction.

My interest in the landscape and its cultural and political texture stems from my personal history. During years spent along the Arizona-Mexico border I engaged in extensive documentary projects while working with groups focusing on human rights and immigration issues. Shortly thereafter I spent a year and a half doing surveying and conservation work along the border region as an intern for the Bureau of Land Management. Boundaries or limits, both in terms of their expression and value, have become a significant source in my work. Although I have left this region I remain sensitive to the notion of the barrier or threshold as well as the opportunity to experience a landscape so politically fraught and surreal that every step feels like a movement onto another planet.

The pursuit of an understanding and replication of such intense situations has led me to an exploration of perceptual limits. Various works that deal with the movement from interior to exterior and archive to intuition seek out the possibilities of human and camera vision. For instance, in a work entitled *Dis/Appearance Project* an image is placed on a billboard that depicts not an advertisement but its actual surrounding environment. The result is that at a particular point on the street the billboard seamlessly blends with the background causing it to briefly disappear. For a moment, architecture, advertising, the commute and the landscape arrange themselves into a single point of focus.

I begin my work at a point where interior and exterior coexist. Architectures of consciousness dominate our experience no matter what space we exist in, built or not. However, the differences between the space of everyday life and the idealized space of nature create a spectrum of physical and psychological experience that is regulated by politics, imagery and the popular archive. Across all of my artistic practice I attempt to understand this continuum through the investigation of photographic materials, the limits of perception and the significance of barriers within our culture.