

Sicardi Gallery
Stories About Place



A) Liliana Porter, *Traveler with Lost Things*, 2014. Acrylic, graphite and assemblage on canvas, 12" (diameter) x 1.5" (depth) / 30.5cm (diameter) x 3.8cm (depth)

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Gustavo Bonevardi
Dias & Riedweg
Cesar González
Liliana Porter
Melanie Smith

August 30 to
October 18, 2014

Stories About Place

The stories we tell about the locations we inhabit are weighted with histories, both personal and shared. By telling stories to ourselves and to others, we more fully understand our physical, social, and cultural belonging in specific places; we narrate how we fit within the larger puzzle of a community or a history. More than just the site of an event, a place can allow us to make intangible things — histories, relationships, resistances, and exchanges—more materially present, more concrete and understandable. In many ways, places function as hinge points for the other tools we use to constitute ourselves. That is, in the telling, we tentatively or fancifully, aggressively or imaginatively, connect those constructed selves to a single incontrovertible piece of information: a measurable, mappable, describable location.

From each of the five artists in *Stories About Place*, we present selections from a discrete series of works:

Gustavo Bonevardi is perhaps best known for his design for the *Tribute in Light*, twin beams of light which are projected in New York annually on September 11. Trained as an architect, he also works extensively in painting, drawing, and sculpture, and his pyrophyllite stone sculptures are indicative of many of his larger conceptual and material interests. Fascinated by archeological sites and ruins, Bonevardi incises letters into the soft, black stone. The mysterious relationship between the symbols of language and the absence of identifiable words has elicited comparisons between these sculptures and the Rosetta Stone. In his newest series of work, he also explores the fragmentary nature of the material, using the negative spaces between stones to evoke a history that is at once invisible and suggestive.

Based in Rio de Janeiro, the artist duo Dias & Riedweg consider the conditions of the city through its everyday situations and interactions. For *Malas Para Marcel*, they placed small valises throughout the city and waited for the public to interact with them. As each suitcase was picked up and carried through Rio, the artists videotaped its journey. The videos document the corners of the city, from the iconic Copacabana boardwalk, to an anonymous hair salon, to city monuments, and *favela* music circles. Through the journey, the suitcase provides viewers with an intimate and specific vision of the city's familiar and unfamiliar places.

Colombian artist Cesar González's untitled constellations are ink on paper drawings of small figures engaged in various vignettes and relationships, interacting with landscapes filled with dreamlike objects and creatures. He writes, "I think of these images as aphorisms, not as illustration but as analogies, as concentrations of information and energy, as situations that tend to grow, that tend to develop individually, but not in isolation; images (and the ideas behind them) are interconnected, articulated as thoughts, memories, dreams, projections and realities that generate an environment, a constellation of relationships."

Writing about the figurines she uses in her work, Liliana Porter says, "The objects have a double existence. On the one hand they are mere appearance, insubstantial ornaments, but, at the same time, have a gaze that can be animated by the viewer, who, through it, can project the inclination to endow things with an interiority and identity. These 'theatrical vignettes' are constructed as visual comments that speak of the human condition. I am interested in the simultaneity of humor and distress, banality and the possibility of meaning." In the two works shown here, *Lavandera* and *Traveler with Lost*

Things (both 2014), potential narratives of mundane experience create an empathetic connection between viewer and object. The places indicated are melancholy *heterotopias*: the kind of non-places that we experience everywhere, if we are looking carefully.

Melanie Smith's collages are the product of her recent investigations in the Amazon jungle of Brazil, where she has been working with the legacy of Modernism and American industrialism. These images of local animal and plant life, overlaid on archival documents such as ledgers, diagrams, and machine schematics from the 1940s allude to the complicated dynamic between local and foreign interests in a specific place. The stories they tell are the mixed tales of how a place can be imagined differently, and how the environment plays a pivotal role in those imaginings and their successes or failures.