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Implicit Borders: a cartography of free will

Capucine Gros

13 July — 12 August 2017

New York, NY, July 13, 2017: In Implicit Borders: a cartography of free will, opening on July 13 at Catinca Tabacaru Gallery, Swiss-born artist Capucine Gros explores how geographical bias permeates body and mind, dauntingly limiting anyone and everyone's global mobility and consciousness.

Gros traces the symptoms that are embedded in our existence but particularly noticeable in the peculiar strategies (some) humans invented to own the Earth and to quantify human lives: borders, nations, visas, G.D.P. 1, and media attention. The side-effects are indiscriminate, seen far and wide: from a migrant's interdiction to cross an imaginary line to the common (mis)conceptions of one's place in the world.

Even with the best intentions in mind, navigating the world and seeking to contribute to it may not go far until we first come to terms with our implicit bias. The projects in Implicit Borders: a cartography of free will specifically seek to fight geographical prejudice and help to better direct our moral compass.

There are exercises, simple in form yet deep in commitment: acknowledging every person we love (The Geography of Love, 2015 – present) and recording every death we learn about (Human Strokes, 2010 – present).

There are casual habits, small in constraint, but pervasive in their effect: calling each country by its proper name, widening crop marks, using area-accurate world maps, and counting human beings rather than G.D.P. (Approximately 199, 2012 – present).

There are mental leaps to stretch our conscience: imagining we were born somewhere else, or speculating on how different the world would be if everyone (you, me, us, them, teachers, students, politicians, taxpayers, producers, consumers, writers, readers...) envisioned that they cared about someone in every corner of the Earth. Why don't we, and could we just dream we do so in order to concretely start caring? And how would that change what we say, do, read or buy; where we go and don't go?

There are straightforward questions with not-so-straightforward answers: such as how many countries are in the world?

195 according to the U.S. Department of State but 193 when counting United Nations member states. 201 if adding states with partial recognition 2; 207 with de facto sovereign states 3 and over 300 if considering micronations and governments in exile. 196 countries ratified the Geneva Conventions and 197 the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer. 124 are parties to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court and 197 4 are parties to the 2015 Paris Agreement. There are currently 211 FIFA5 Associations and there were 206 National Olympic Committees in Rio 2016. The ISO 3166 6 has 249 options and there are 259 ccTLDs 7 today. And if one counts passports instead: the number of countries is approximately 199.

There are also not-so-straightforward questions with straightforward answers: what makes a better border? Is it a line, coast, mountain, river, tectonic plate, wall, language, culture...? None, truly: they're all abstract

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and fluid. How to comprehend big data ? Try counting it. How can we see through our own prejudice? Please, draw a map.

NOTES:

The artist will be in the gallery every day at 5pm during the length of the exhibition to work on the on-going, news-based painting Human Strokes (2010 – present).

Documentation of the artist's performance Approximately 199 (March 20 – October 4, 2017) wearing one shirt each day per country in the world can be followed on Instagram @thestudiothatneversleeps

The t-shirts are for sale in the gallery in various colors and sizes. Buyers may select their color and size but not the country they purchase. Countries are randomly chosen, reflecting the fact that no one chooses where they are born.

1 Gross Domestic Product
2 Partial Recognition: officially acknowledged by at least one United Nations Member State
3 De Facto Sovereign States: not recognized by any United Nations Member State but operating independently from the country that claim them
4 197 including the E.U. and the U.S.A. which has announced withdrawal
5 FIFA: Fédération Internationale de Football Association
6 ISO 3166: International Standard for country codes and codes for their subdivisions, typically used in the default drop-down lists of websites across the world
7 ccTLD: Country code top-level domains (two-letter code for Internet domains designating specific countries, states or territories such as .us, .uk or .fr)

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