

FEBRUARY 2017

Robert Olsen Untitled

EXHIBITION DATES

VOLTA NY

MARCH 1–5, 2017

PIER 90 BOOTH F08



Untitled (Overpass 7), 2013
Gouache and watercolor on paper
6.25 x 10.25 inches

Planthouse is pleased to exhibit drawings and paintings by Robert Olsen (1969–2014) at the Volta New York fair, running March 1–5. Following on the 2016 publication of Olsen’s silkscreen edition *Untitled (Overpass)*, for which he completed the drawings just before his untimely death, the works on display at Volta afford an expanded understanding of Olsen’s interest in California freeways and other quotidian monuments of the American road.

A series of studies in graphite, watercolor and gouache reveal nascent aesthetic value in the curves, layers and shadows of overlapping freeway structures. The works are based on Olsen’s photographs, made over seven drives through California’s Central Valley, to and from Sacramento and Los Angeles, in 2012. Olsen contemplated the concrete forms, omitting signs of use, and the serene views recall the dramatic natural landscapes of the western United States.

Olsen also directed his gaze to other sites encountered during travel. The works on paper will be shown alongside a large painting depicting a brightly lit bus shelter at night, its blank advertising wall a glowing beacon, and the reflective glass walls reminiscent of modernist design. It is isolated in darkness, beautiful in its lonely optimism. Additional paintings focused on elements of gas stations will round out the presentation at Volta. Olsen attempted to slow down the repeated, almost thoughtless, action of pumping gas, and also created video works on this subject.

Olsen was interested in the commonalities among freeway architecture, and he searched for the specific design elements imposed by local agencies, but he was equally invested in the absence of place. Olsen’s freeways and bus shelters are decontextualized because he aimed to give “full attention” to objects and structures that are typically “not thought about beyond their temporary use.” As he described in an interview with James Verini of the L.A. Times, his deserted scenes aren’t meant to elicit gloom but are rather attempts to “isolate the ubiquitous.”

ROBERT OLSEN (1969–2014) received his BFA from California College of Arts and Crafts in 1998 and his MFA from the University of California, Los Angeles in 2002.

While in college he started showing paintings through the Susanne Vielmetter Los Angeles Projects gallery. He would later have solo shows at: Black Dragon Society, LA; Plane Space, NY; G Fine Art, Washington DC; and Monte Clark Gallery, Vancouver and Toronto, Canada. He was in group shows at: H2O LA; University of North Texas, Denton; Luckman Fine Art Complex, Cal State LA; Marcello Marvelli Gallery NY; ArtForum Berlin, Germany; Hayworth Gallery LA; Skidmore College, Saratoga Springs NY; Monterrey Mexico; Reed College, Portland OR; Silas Marder Gallery, Bridgehampton, NY; Hartford Community College, Bel Air, MD; CCA at 100, Braunstein/Quay Gallery, San Francisco, CA; Nathan Larramendy; Ojai, CA; Ars Libri, Boston MA; The Green Gallery East, Milwaukee, WI; ACP LA; Silverlake, LA, CA; Torrance Art Museum, Torrance CA; Wonderloch Kellerland, Berlin Germany; Anne Marten's Home, LA; and Begovich Gallery—CSU Fullerton, CA. His last solo show was L.A. Freeways at Planthouse, NY, and his last group show was "I, II, III", at South of Sunset, LA.

PUBLIC COLLECTIONS

Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University, New Haven, CT

Berkeley Art Museum & Pacific Film Archive, Berkeley, CA

Hammer Museum, Los Angeles, CA

Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles, CA

Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, NY

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