



More like this >



Herose Ltd; AIGMA Paper
LNG Safety is a priority at Herose. This is our...



zenith BusReport Russia
Middle & Far East, North Africa and Central Asia,...



The Score Magazine
Featuring the maestro Shashank Subramanyam... promoted



Cinewomen II - Art Cinema Dance



Stigmat VIDEOFocus -

Start publishing >



Flounder Lee

An artist's statement

Flounder Lee grew up on a farm in Alabama, started school for Aerospace Engineering but received his BFA in photo from the University of Florida in 2003 and his MFA in Studio Art from Cal State Long Beach in 2007. He is an artist/educator/curator who is an Assistant

Professor of Studio Art and Photography at American University in Dubai.

Flounder's work has been shown extensively both nationally and internationally including Barcelona Art Contemporani 11; Documentation: Photography as Witness at the University of Maine; Bewegterwind (Moved Wind) in Hesse Germany, and Re/Move at Foto,

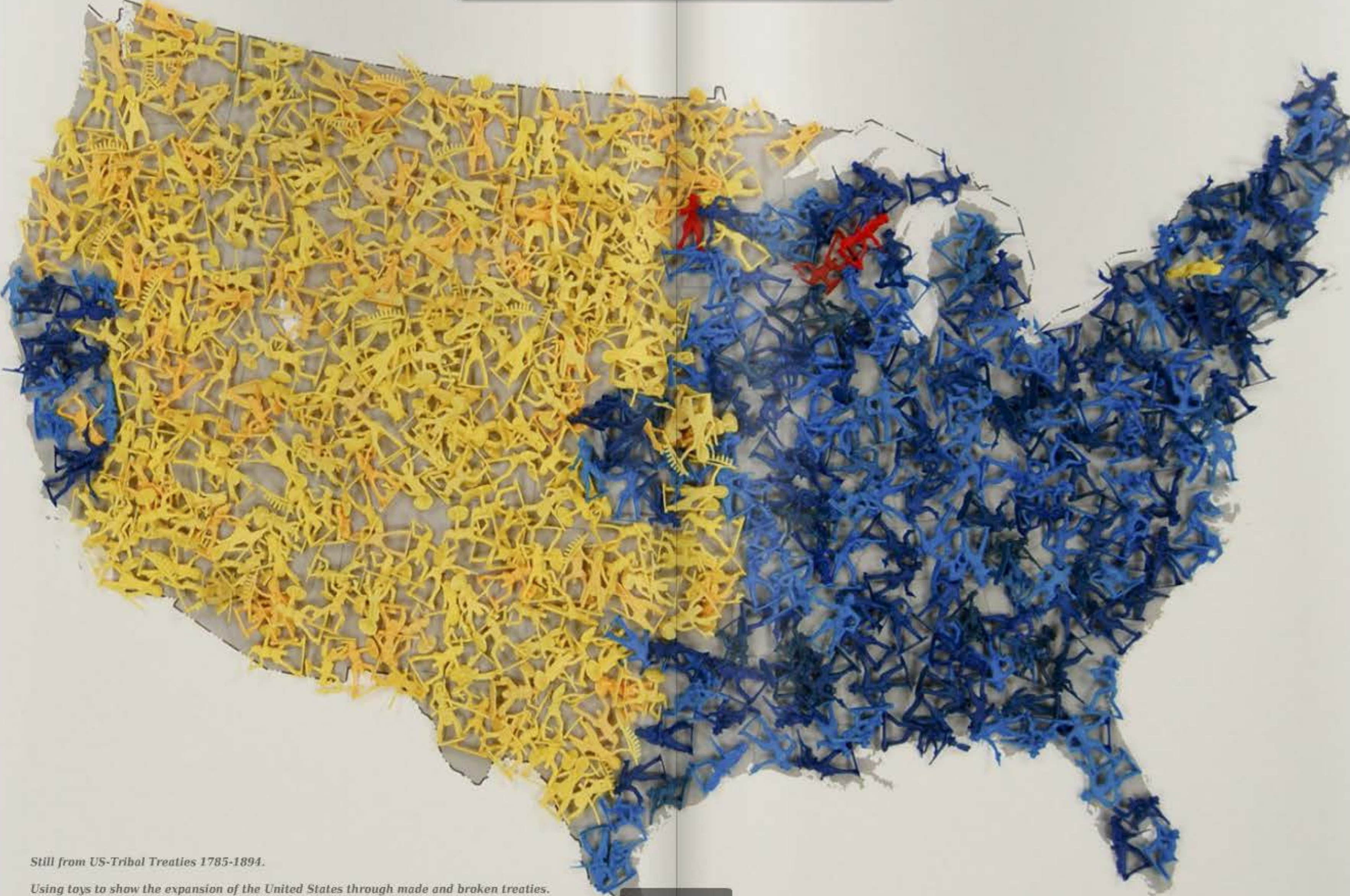
kino i video savez Vojvodine in Novi Sad, Serbia.

He has curated numerous exhibitions such as Double Vision: A Dual Channel Video Festival, Mapable, and TPS Reports: Performance Documents. He founded then directed SpaceCamp MicroGallery in Indianapolis, Indiana for three years. The intersections between public and private, art and life, history

Still from Mapping the Juneau Glaciers. Shot at Eagle Glacier

and the present, among others, inform his artwork which is usually video, sound, photo, installation, and/or performance based. His personal work involves lens-based mapping and often investigates post-colonialism, borders, and/or environmental topics. His curatorial work often overlaps these topics but explores a much wider range of media than his personal work.

www.photoflounder.com



Still from US-Tribal Treaties 1785-1894.

Using toys to show the expansion of the United States through made and broken treaties.

An interview with

Flounder Lee

Since the first time we have watched *Mapping the Juneau Glaciers* we have been impressed with your metacinematographic effort: how did you come up with the idea for this project?

Well, this has more to do with failure than anything. I think failure is important and even good for artists. I planned to do this photographic project in Alaska but it was much tougher on the ground that I could have imagined, so the process ended up being more important than the product.

In your work, you document the photographic mapping of the retreating glaciers near Juneau, in Alaska: a sort of quixotic adventure, a path of alternating ups and down reminding us of Keith Fulton's documentary *Lost in La Mancha* (2002). We have found this aspect of your narration not only a mark of great autoirony, but also a suggestive reflection on our perception of our limits - like in Herzog's *Fitzcarraldo*. Could you better explain this fundamental aspect of your work?

In this case, as has been the case one or two other times, I underestimated the environment/overestimated my hardiness. I grew up on a farm and so was a fairly outdoorsy person, but there is a major difference between the "wilderness" of backwoods Alabama and the actual wilderness of Alaska or the jungle in Panama. It is hard when you realize that you're in over your head. I was more willing to risk myself in some cases than my assistant, but even then, this environment was intense! I guess in the narration, I was trying to admit the difficulties in a more honest and open fashion. It helped having an assistant,



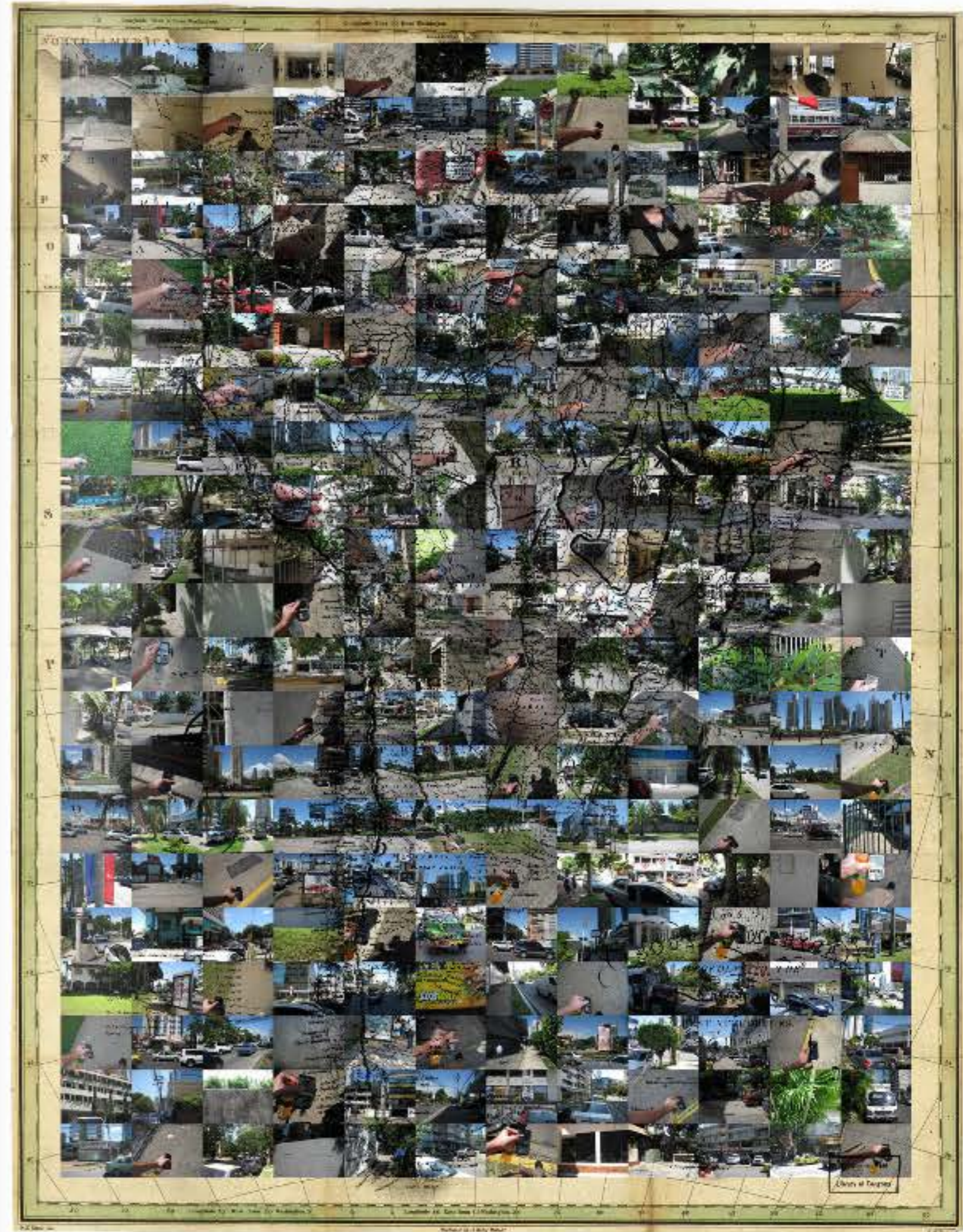
Flounder Lee

Michael Hoefle, to film me working, which is much of the footage in the documentary.

Post-colonialism and borders are often starting point of your artistic research, could you introduce our readers to this themes?

I had taken several classes in graduate school in American Indian Studies which is my first recollection of thinking about these topics deeply. Later, though when I actually started making work, I realized that one of my professors in undergrad was working on these topics in relation to South America, so maybe it had been marinating for years.

I was doing a map of the border of Los Angeles, which is serpentine but had to stop when I was in a motorcycle crash. When I moved to Indiana, I wanted to continue the mapping but thinking of it more to do with specifics of the place so I researched the history. It turns out, like most of the US, it was basically formed through broken and treaties, so I started following those actual borders and photographing at pre-set



South America 1820 in Panamá (city)



Mapping Mendenhall Glacier by Kayak 1 (Block)

intervals. This continued as I transposed maps of colonies onto European soil and then colonizers onto their former colonies. The methodology of following a preset border and shooting at specific intervals went throughout the work.

One thing I've learned is that borders are really arbitrary in most cases. I'm glad that some are in the process of disappearing or at least loosening as in the European Union.

In what manner your work as photographer influences your videomaking?

I guess I don't really think of them as separate. I just use whichever seems to fit for that particular project or part of the project. I guess if I had to answer, then I'd say that

visuals are more important to me than sound. I probably think more in terms of snippets of video than long narratives, I'm sure that comes from thinking photographically. I really don't consider myself a photographer though, and surely don't covet technology like some photographers do so I just use whatever tools are needed to get the job done and idea across.

We find that Mapping the Juneau Glaciers is rich of references. Apart from Gilliam and Herzog we have previously quoted in this interview, can you tell us your biggest influences in art and how they have affected your work?

Wow, wide ranging of course, but video wise, Isaac Julien's multi-channel work has always inspired me. It is beautiful and poignant,



Netherlands in Philipsburg, Sint Maarten

touching on so many important issues. Rodney Graham as well, his pacing and narrative aspects are amazing. Radiolab had a pretty big influence on my narration style. I didn't realize that until afterward though. I think my professors really shaped my work even when it didn't sink in for years afterwards.

As I mentioned before, Sergio Vega does work on post-colonialism, his style of travel and making work was something I always admired. Barbara Jo Revelle does multi-disciplinary work that also influenced me. My grad school professors, Kyle Riedel, Craig Cree Stone, and Todd Gray, really drove me hard and I really thank them for the rigor that now shows up in my work.

Your daily experience is very important for your artist practise and thinking: could you explain this aspect?

I read a lot—blogs and books mostly, so this keeps me thinking. Being an educator is hugely important. I get to talk about the creative process to fresh minds constantly which is refreshing. Speaking of fresh minds, my MFA thesis idea actually was inspired by something my 5 year old niece said at the time. I asked her what she was photographing with my camera. She said "everything". She's 13 now and just joined the robotics team, I hope we can collaborate some day! My wife, Sarah, is a constant source of encouragement and a great sounding board. She's a writer and loves to push back whenever I tell her a new idea I am working on.



detail of South America 1820 in Panamá (city)

Now we wonder if you would like to answer to our cliché question: what aspect of your work do you enjoy the most? What gives you the biggest satisfaction?

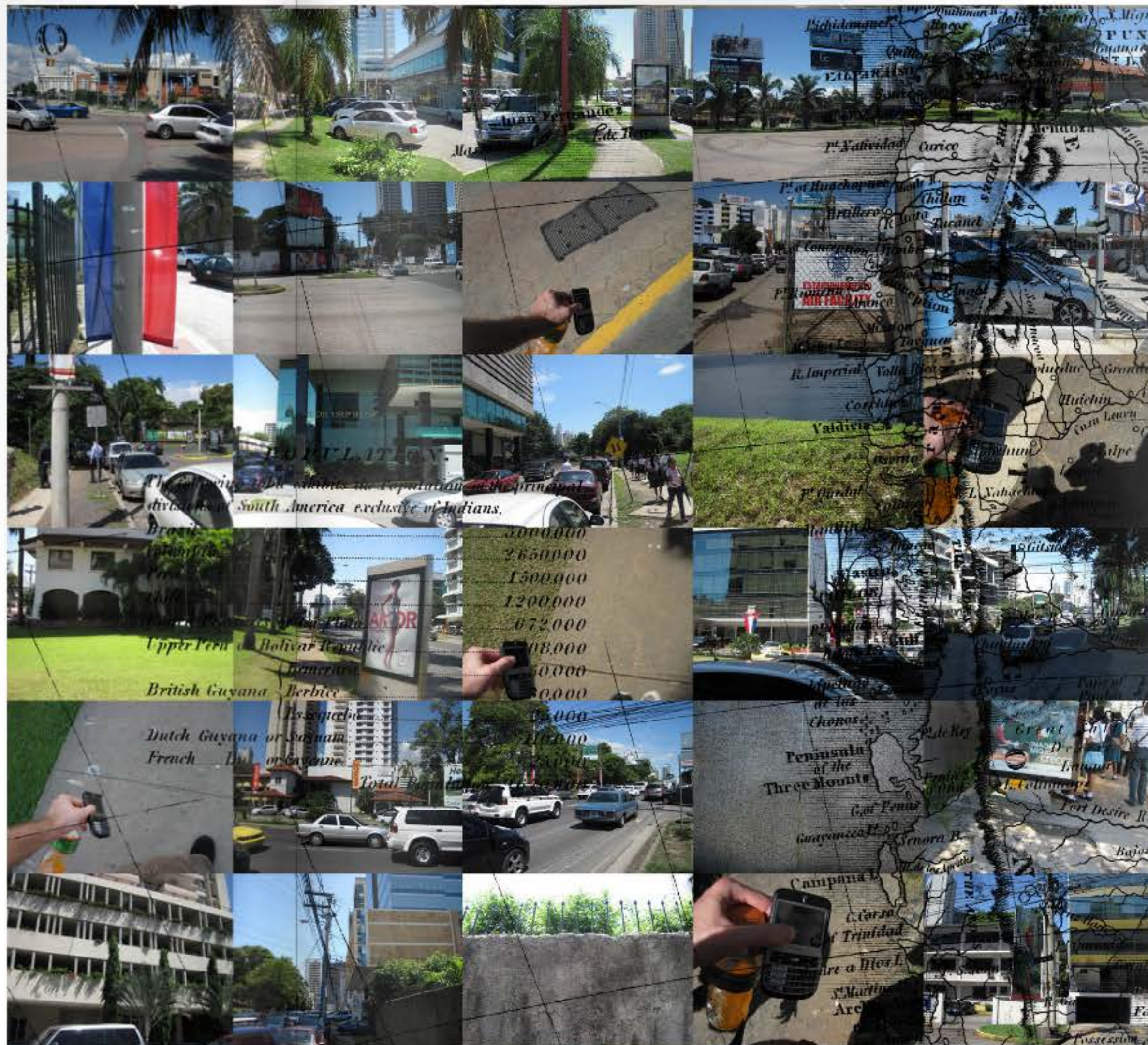
Travel is hugely important to my work. I get inspired by new places. I also really love curating, which I haven't talked about here, actually. Seeing other people's art and helping them realize it, really pushes my own work as well. Overall I guess getting people to think about an issue that they maybe have never really thought about is key for me.

Thanks for sharing your time and thoughts, Flounder. What's next for Flounder Lee? Are there any projects on the horizon?

Well, I just moved to start teaching at American University in Dubai. The printmaking lab is next to my office so I hope to get in there and see what happens. Dubai is a futuristic city in an impossible environment so I imagine that'll influence future work. Recently I've been working on a 4 channel video with surround sound about travel, I'm hoping to finish that in the near future. I have also continued to work on environmental and post-colonial projects.

Thanks for the interview, some really great questions that pushed me to think more introspectively about my work than I have in a while, so I really appreciate that!

www.photoflounder.com



Eagle Glacier, Juneau, Alaska, 225cm panoramic archival inkjet print