THE PLANT

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A curious observer of ordinary plants
and other greenery

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The Gap in the Map

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Artwork by Formafantasma

It was late November of 1948 when the ceasefire lines between Israel and Jordan were drawn. Two military commanders, Moshe Dayan and Abdullah al-Tal had a map on their hands to delineate the line with two markers: one green, the other red. The lines that emerged from the markers were wide enough to make it 4-5 metres wide in real space, according to the map scale, 1:20,000.

The 'Lawless Line' is a concept coined by the research group Decolonizing Architecture to refer to a new territory, the one contained by the width of the lines that have been drawn as separation lines or border lines. The thickness of the line defines a zone undefined by law, as no one can claim ownership over an undefined territory. Partitions always have side effects. Every time a line is drawn, it creates spatial and legal voids of different kinds. Sometimes, the line separates a person from their workplace, a daughter from her parents, a child from its school. That's the moment when the gap in the map becomes something more than a geopolitical partition.

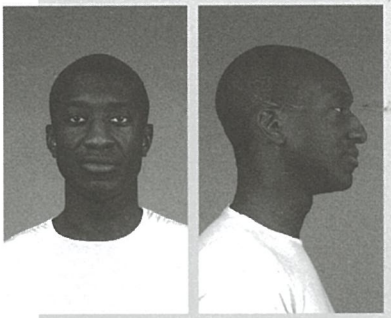
What happens when one of these lines pass by in the middle of a built site or even a domestic space? The story of the Lawless Line between Israel and Palestine is not unique, there are several controversial borderlines around the globe. One of them is between Baarle-Nassau in the Netherlands and the neighbouring Belgian municipality of Baarle-Hertog. The border has such a complex route that it creates several enclaves belonging to one country surrounded by lands that belong to the other, resulting in unusual situations, such as the existence of houses bisected by the border. Derby Line in Vermont, just north of the US/Canada border, is also a troubled case, as the border passes right through individual houses creating curious dynamics, as people have lunch in one country and dinner in another, on a daily basis.

When borders are just lines drawn with political and economic implications, marking where one has to pay taxes or register for a passport, the aforementioned situations can be seen just as intriguing, and even funny. But there are several situations, particularly in conflict zones, where the term 'border' acquires questionable meanings. Borders and walls have recently been the focus of political meetings, mass media reportage, and civilian protests around the world. The refugee crisis that has recently resulted in Europe creating more walls and fences, even in transgression of the Schengen Agreement, is one of many such themes under discussions in political fora worldwide. The barrier that separates Mexico from the USA became the focus of new attention following Donald Trump's declaration that if he won the presidency, he would "build a great, great wall on our southern border," and would "make Mexico pay for that wall."

In this context of constant reinterpretation and negotiations – where borders are used to divide, to control, to separate, and even, to sell in pieces – we wonder if it's possible to go beyond its physicality and try to understand its legal voids as spaces of exception? Following Giorgio Agamben's 'state of exception', political geographer Derek Gregory defines a 'space of exception' as a place where the normal law no longer holds. Until now, the lack of regulation of such places has been an advantage for certain governments to act with impunity; but what if – beyond naiveté – we explore further the limits of what we know about the thickness of the lines, the inbetween spaces created by double-fences and transboundary areas, and make an effort to subvert our orthodox understanding of them, trying to perceive these 'spaces of exception' as spaces for emancipation, to give new meanings and other values to concepts such as trust, togetherness, and otherness, to take advantage of the gaps in the map – and let them affect our daily life.


SCOUT SEATTLE
MADE IN USA

In the collage is pictured a Teste di Moro, a traditional Sicilian ceramic which depicts a face of an afro-arab man's head. This refers to the arab invasion of Sicily in the tenth century and the consequent rise of the Majolica pottery tradition in Europe. The grotesque of the original piece morphs with a portrait of a contemporary refugee as a way to discuss the complex relationship between North Africa and Europe and how it developed through the centuries. This collage can be seen as a foundation of Formafantasma's Moulding Tradition project.



Desire Paths

Words Mercedes Villalba Photography by Ola Rindal

Me adueño así
superficies de placer
dejo crecer
mi tremenda timidez.
Federico Moura y Roberto Jacoby,
'Superficies de Placer', 1987

GRAVITY

What does it feel like, to walk?

To slightly lift a foot, the other one grazing the ground beneath us, tracing it.

To follow the pull towards the specific mass of the future, our speculation that we are, indeed, going somewhere. A gravitational force that imprints the soil, pulling you forward in time and downward in space. The traces of movement left lying on the ground, like yellowing fallen leaves.

The wonderful cadence of not knowing what you are doing, but doing it anyway.

Singing of birds, roaming of cars, honking and early morning light; I'm walking across a conglomeration of bus stops paved only on its sides, framing in its center a field as big as the factory I'm walking towards. I cross the grass

and clovers

the patchy weeds and the flattened ground guide me. I'm not looking at them.

I'm channeling their presence. A medium, traveling in space and time.

DESIRE

Fingers stroking a loved ones' hair. Close to the scalp, feeling the bumps and warmth.

Como creemos en el cielo.

As we believe in heaven.

As we trust in the sky.

As we deem necessary to touch each other, finding a way of skin. How close is too close

to an animal you don't know?

EROSION

I wish this text could be read all at once. To experience it as deepness, an addition of movements and materials, as a path walked by its shape and texture rather than by anticipation. I wish it would heighten desire, opening up a way for the pleasure of surfaces. I wish this text would add up, like a list of synonyms of mundane words, like yes and ground and floor.

Suelo means both *floor* and *I often* in Spanish; and the floor is the ground we've stepped on often enough to flatten it. There is a flattening additive condition to our steps.

Our dancing turns the ground to a dancing floor: we make it so smooth it shines.

You glisten with sweat. I outreach my hand to touch.

Desire and erosion make my weight grave,

grace

for you,

graze

on you.