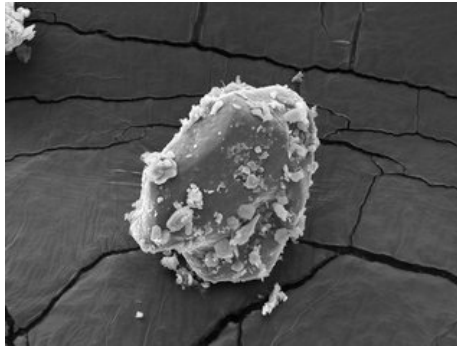


Anya Gallaccio: highway
by Andrea Alessi

Highway

Anya Gallaccio
Annet Gelink Gallery
Laurierstraat 187-189 , 1016 PL
Amsterdam, NL, Netherlands
September 10, 2011 - October 22, 2011

I'm almost ashamed to admit that I've met more Europeans who've navigated the lonesome roads and vast tracts of land west of the Mississippi than I have Americans. I guess I've always assumed that road tripping and the symbolic freedom of the Wild West are part of my cultural heritage, even though the most I've done is fly over the Great Plains, snow-peaked mountains, and once pristine deserts of my home country.

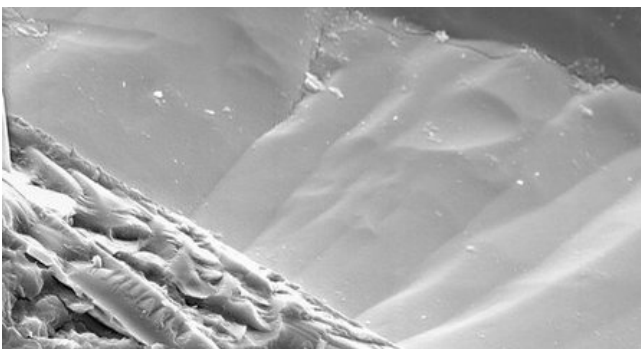


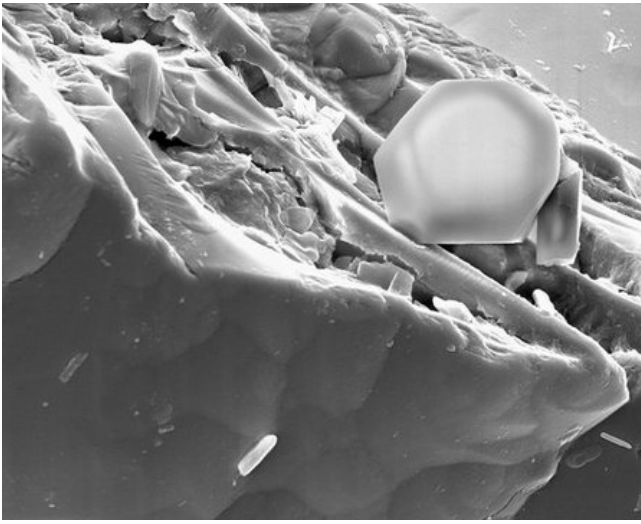
Scottish artist Anya Gallaccio is one such European who's driven through the expansive landscapes and national parks of some of the U.S.A.'s more geometric states. Her understated artwork does not explicitly address the thrill and freedom of the road, but is instead a meditation on nature, landscape, man, and art. Her exhibition highway at Annet Gelink, now in its final week, centers on a boulder Gallaccio found while driving through California, Nevada, Utah, and Arizona.



Gallaccio's boulder made its own journey from the States to Amsterdam, where it (or representations of it) appears in three incarnations on the gallery's floor. We see it as a crater, a negative shape of itself, and as a bronze cast recalling an oversized gold nugget, the likes of which originally tempted dreamers west in the 1849 Gold Rush. The original boulder is found draped in a broken windshield, whose peaks and crags are reminiscent of the young mountains overlooking its southwestern home.

Gallaccio exhibits a preference for natural materials, and in highway she considers her treatment of the rock to be "natural". A car windshield might seem anything but, yet her inclusion of the glass, which she found buried near the rock, references the site of its discovery, which today is a landscape altered, or at least affected by a human presence. Similarly, bronze, an alloy, is itself a natural material, albeit one most often transformed by industrial processes. There is no longer pre-modern; nature and humanity are inextricably connected.





Throughout the work, Gallaccio plays with the scale and frames of her landscapes. In a series of photographs depicting magnified dirt collected during her travels, macro and micro are confused. These tiny particles made large become a rocky alien landscape, something big made small. And while perhaps you can't truly understand landscape within the borders of a photograph, there are nevertheless frames through which we experience it in person – in this case, through the windshield of a car.

In an act of material synecdoche, Gallaccio's boulder becomes landscape, undergoing a transmutation from nature to meaning, and then from symbolic landscape to commodity. Its story is outside of history – that is to say, geological – but also solidly within it. It recalls a place, a journey, a dream. And even though I've yet to travel through its desert home, the referent triggers my imagination, perhaps even my memory.

~**Andrea Alessi**, a writer living in the Netherlands.

(Images: **Anya Gallaccio**, *As the moon turns in space*, 2011, archival pigment print on rag paper, 20.3 x 27.2 cm; *rhymes of goodbye*, 2011, Rock, broken car wind screen Rock: 100 x 70 x 47 cm (at widest points); *plain as your eyes can see*, 2011, 1 of 6 archival pigment prints on rag paper, Each print 27.2 x 20.3 cm ; Courtesy of the Artist and Annet Gelink Gallery)

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