


The Yellow Line Project



Simon Rouby

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“Nobody walks in L.A.” This is what I was ironically told when arriving at California Institute of the Arts in 2008. As a foreigner without a car, I had to walk anyways, trying to understand the city of Los Angeles from its limits in Valencia. Every day I crossed a bridge over Highway 5 and each time I stopped to watch the passing cars and trucks.

The bright yellow line painted on the concrete of the road fascinated me: its color and its brightness were a sample of the California sun, a piece of the Golden state.

This yellow line made me discover the city: it brought me to the California Transportation Striping Crew. I followed them while they poured miles of yellow paint onto the concrete of Los Angeles.

With “The Stripers” I got to know the biggest and most congested network of freeways and highways in the United States. White lines, lane lines, elephant tracks, yellow, double yellow, double yellow and black...

Thanks to them, I built my understanding of Los Angeles, a gigantic city where people meet everyday, but at 60 miles per hour on the freeways. Millions of cars per day, from which 75% drive alone. Most people in L.A. drive despite traffic and smog because of a lack of alternative ways of getting around.

In this setup, The Stripers, being the warrants of the security of the traveling public, maintain the functioning of the whole city of Los Angeles. *“That keep everybody in line... uniform.”*

I shadowed the Striping Crew over the years, and gathered collateral materials of their paintings: canvases used to empty the totes and clean spray guns, miles of lines captured on tape, repeated gestures of an endless task, very similar to that of a painter.

With this material, I made a documentary film and multi-channel video installation to show Los Angeles from a new angle and give the audience a different reading of their own environment.

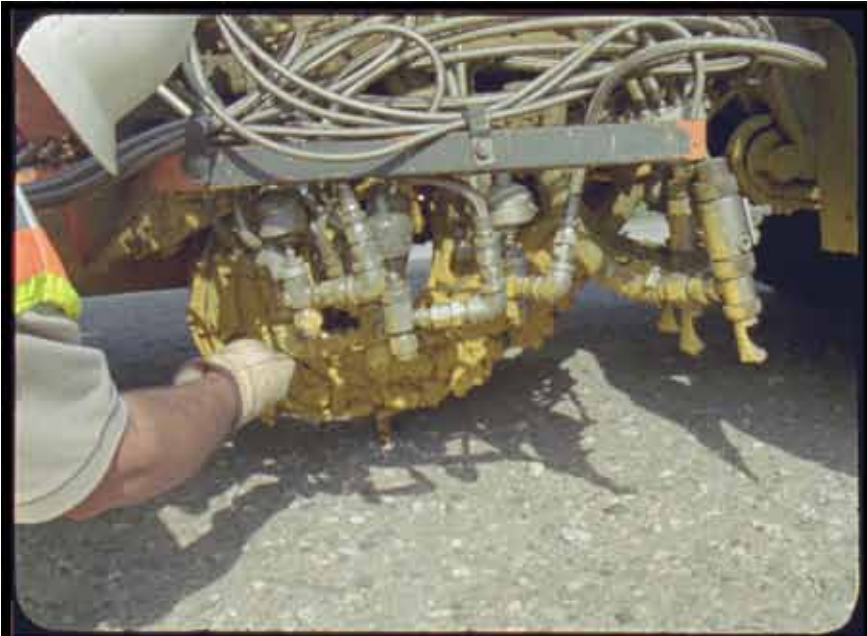
I want the work to bring consciousness on the conventions for dividing forbidden spaces in our daily life, and of our own acceptance of these rules.

My goal is also to trigger new thought about ways of moving around in L.A. in the future. Despite all of California’s environmental efforts, the need for massive transportation is an increasingly important issue.


Showing this work redefines these debates as a playful reflection on Art, framing the simultaneously mundane, beautiful, and epic nature of the yellow linear labor in a new way.

Simon Rouby









“Be careful, children; be very careful!” from CAREFUL by Guy Maddin

We are defined by cues in public space in many ways, some are complex, and some are so simple that we do not even think about them. Those simple ones are ingrained and so transparent that we act instinctively, like the salivating dogs in Pavlov’s studies. One of these most controlling definitions is a safety cue, the ubiquitous yellow line. Think about it for a moment: Close your eyes and imagine yourself in a public setting, say a metro platform, waiting for the next train; or at the intersection of a cross street as you idle your car waiting to make a left hand turn. Invariably, the omnipresent caution line is helping you to ‘be safe’—The yellow unbroken, the yellow broken, the double yellow, and the yellow tape at construction sites. I repeat, “BE CAREFUL, CHILDREN; BE VERY CAREFUL!”

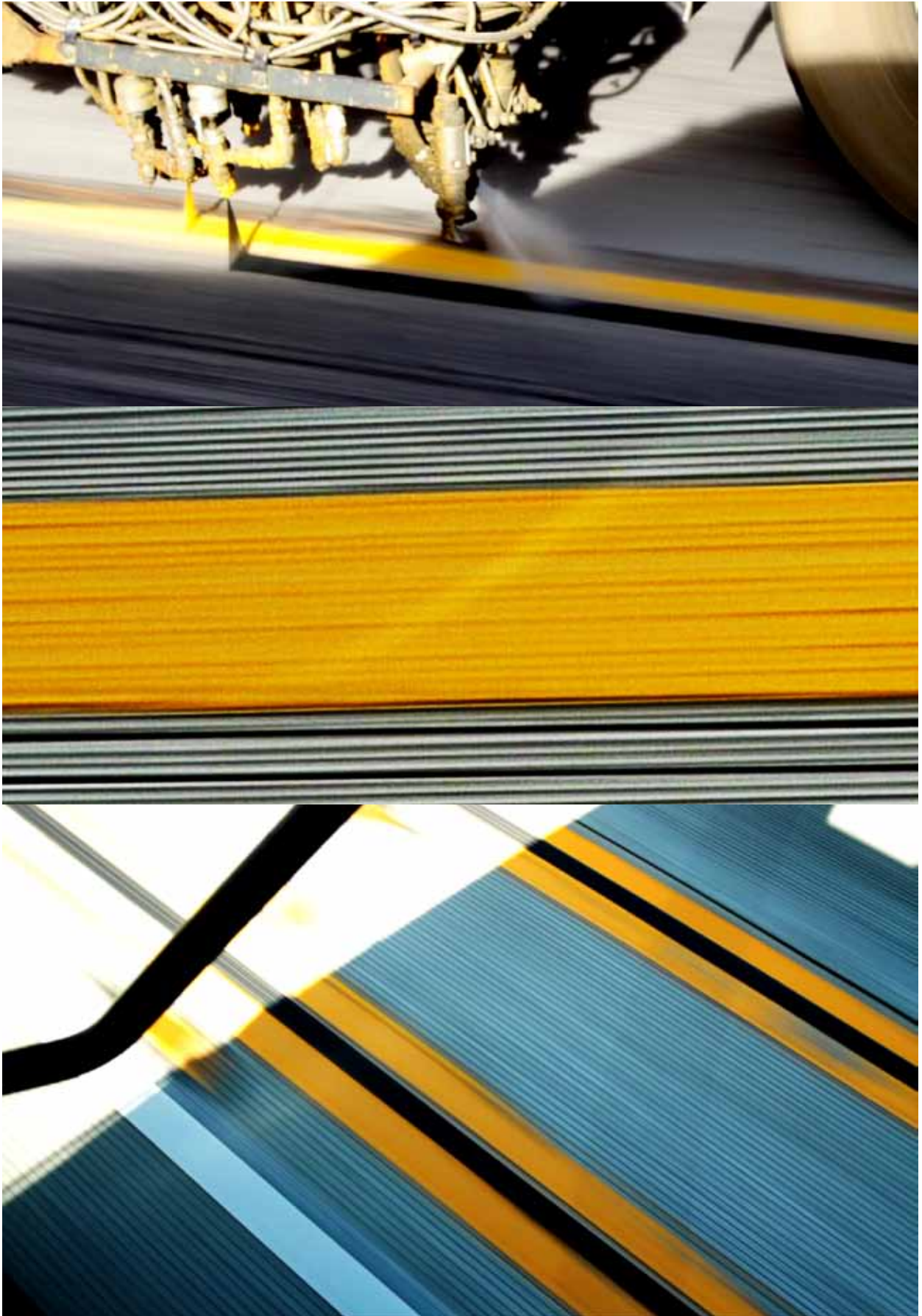
Care is not necessarily the guiding principle in Simon Rouby’s YELLOW LINE PROJECT. In fact, in order to do this work, he sought invitations to ride the machines that paint lines on Los Angeles’ (dangerous) freeways, guided by the women and men who work for the highway system. Rouby’s work—calculated yellows of various lengths, broken and unbroken—has humor and insight, simultaneously. This is the type of humor that brings a smirk to the face, a recognition that things have been rearranged; but the learned response kicks-in nonetheless. It is humorous that he took these embedded cultural prompts and brought them into gallery space, (for don’t they belong at our feet?). Elevated here, we see their simplicity; but bathed in the saturation of the pigment used, we get to note how raw the delivery decisions of the machines are. They show splatter and action once we look beyond the iconic rectangle. These are prints, in the classic tradition of printmaking; they are machine-made and accidental, with moments that show the gesture of their creation. Divorced from their normal setting, the yellow lines read new.

This work is understated but layered, and the meaning is what you bring to the conversation. Do past accidents surface in your memory? Is the scab of a scraped knee brought to mind once you are closer to the yellow marker? Does the memory of a past road trip simply replay itself in your mind’s eye? Rouby’s gesture is evocative, and he simply says ‘look here’ where rote behavior is, for a second, suspended in order to ‘see’. Caution is not advised.

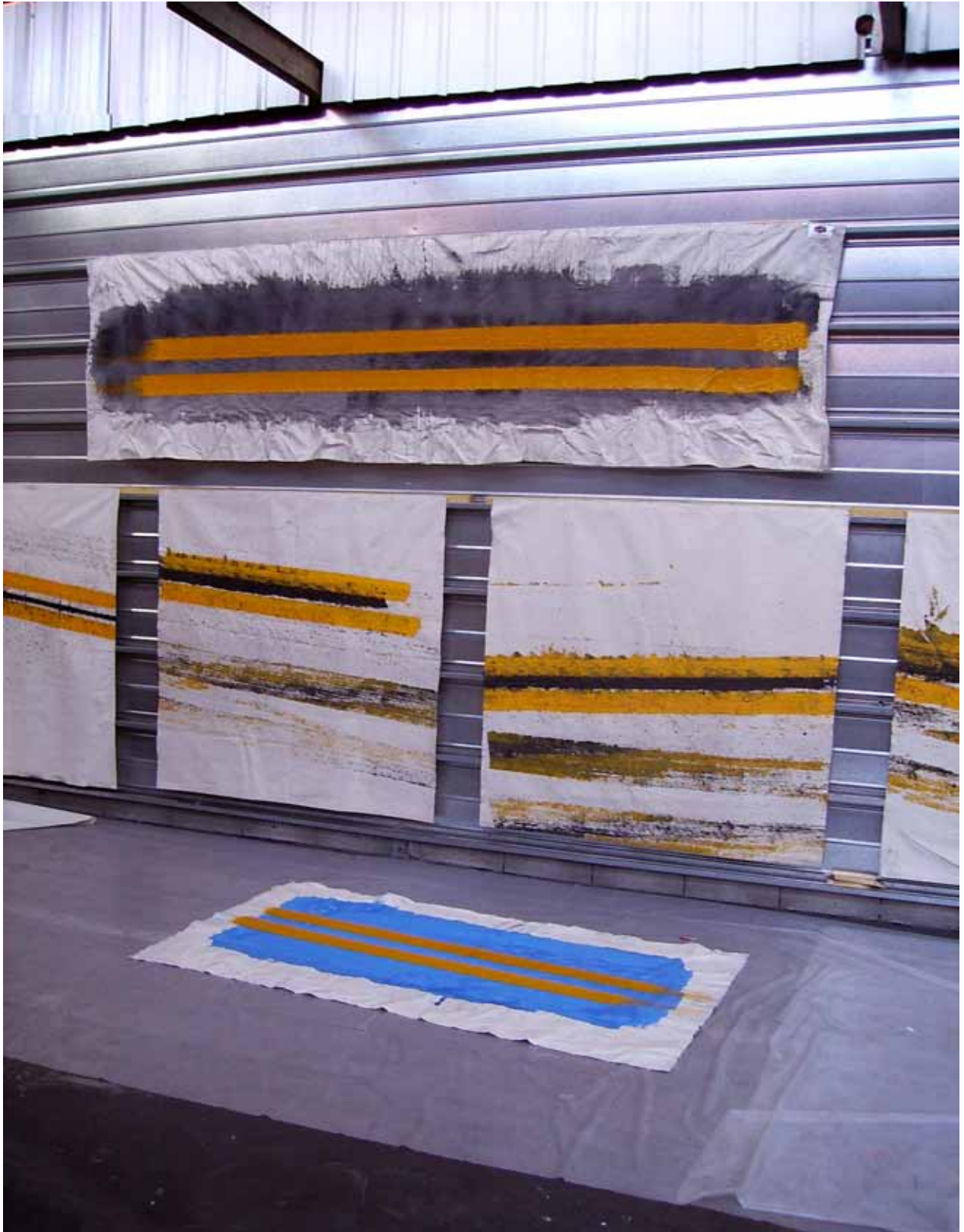
Leo F. Hobaica, Jr.
Assistant Dean, Film/Video
California Institute of the Arts













Scenography

The aim of the installation is to immerge the audience using videos, sounds, and paintings to recreate the hypnosis of an endless translation. The multi screen setup will take the audience to its own edit among the different sound and video sources, either projected on walls, canvases, or on the floor.

Lines will be used on the floor to create forbidden spaces within the exhibition room, playing with our proscptions: lines in museums that prevent us from touching the artwork, airport security checks, boundaries, walls between countries... The public will have to take the decision to walk the line. This act might trigger a reflection on our own conditioned reflexes towards them.

The exhibition gathers the following material:

“YL01”, Experimental video, 6’ Loop.

Dancing lines in close up shot, as seen from the trucks of the Caltrans striping crew. They remind early experimental films done in the scratch on film technique.

“The Stripers”, documentary film, 22’

Projected in cinematographic conditions in a dedicated space. The documentary is focused on the striping crew. Mixing voices, “true stories”, and constantly moving footage across the freeways of California.

Photographic series

The starting point of the project. An accumulation of photos of Yellow Lines from all over the US. From New York to Los Angeles. On the road.

Canvases and prints on paper.

Projected 400°F thermoplastic paint and glass particles on large industrial canvases, “drawings” made with the trucks. By the driver and the operator of the striper.

“Human burrito” Sculpture

Where is the right side? A thought about the position of the artist towards the line and the proscption it represents. A both violent and ironic image named by its author.

Simon Rouby, born in 1980 in Lyon, France, took his first artistic steps as a graffiti artist 10 years ago. He then accessed other mediums such as painting and sculpture. From this background he studied film directing, first in Gobelins, Paris then in CalArts, Los Angeles. He graduated in 2007 with two short films, Blind Spot, and Le Présage. Both have been shown in many festivals: Cannes, Clermont, San Diego, Bucarest, Ottawa, Taiwan... In 2009, La Cinemathèque Française acquired is permanent video installation, Gerlach,NV. His last short film, La Marche, was produced by Naïa in 2010, and is currently being screened in various international events.

